

CLASSICS

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FEATURING STORIES BY THE
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THE COSSACK CHIEF

NIKOLAI GOGOL



THE COSSACK CHIEF

(TARAS BULBA) by Nikolai Gogol

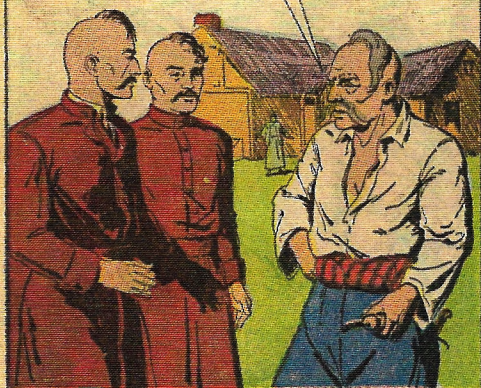


In the grim fifteenth century, the whole of primitive Southern Russia was laid waste and burned to the ground by the Mongols. Robbed of house and home, men grew daring. A warlike flame fired the Slavonic spirit and begot Cossackdom.

There sprang up formidable settlements bound together by common danger and common hatred of the Mongols. The Cossacks settled on the ashes of their homes, amid formidable foes. They grew used to looking peril straight in the face and forgot there was such a thing as fear in the world.

Taras Bulba was one of the original, old Cossack colonels, born with a restless, fighting spirit. He greeted his two sons, Ostap and Andrey, who, after finishing their education at the Kiev Academy, had returned home.

Well, turn round. Let me have a good look at you. What long coats you have on! Just run a little. I want to see if you do not get tangled up in the skirts and fall down.



Don't laugh at us, father. Because, though you are my father, if you laugh, by God, I will give you a thrashing.

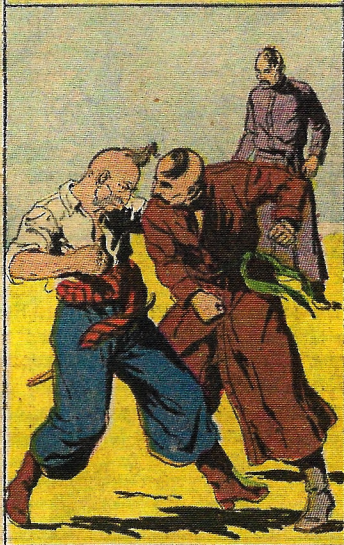


Taras Bulba stepped back in amazement.

And how will you fight me? With your fists? Well, let it be with fists, then.



And father and son, in lieu of a pleasant greeting after their long separation, began to pommel each other on ribs, middle and chest.



Taras paused.

Why, he fights pretty well! He will make a good Cossack!



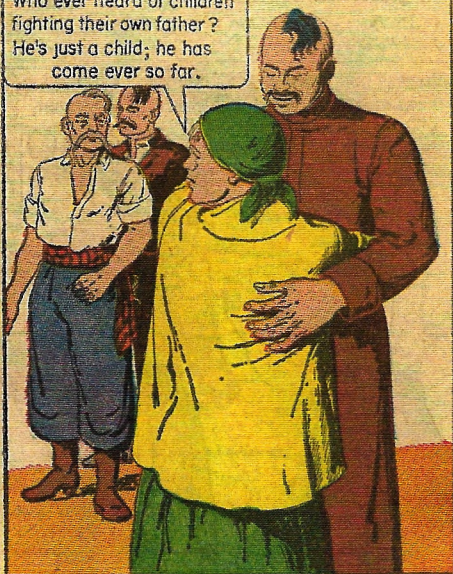
Father and son fell to kissing each other. Then Taras Bulba turned to his younger son.

You hound's son, aren't you going to give me a drubbing?



The mother was already hugging her youngest.

Who ever heard of children fighting their own father? He's just a child; he has come ever so far.



Don't mind the mother, sonny; she is a woman and knows nothing. Do you want to be a tenderling all your life? Look at this saber--that's your mother!



It is all rubbish they rammed into your heads--the Academy, and all your books and primers, and philosophy. There's something better than all that. I had better send you both to the Setch. That's the school for you!



Are they to stay only a week at home? I'll have no time to feast my eyes on them.

Have done with your whining, old woman! A Cossack's not made to spend his life with women. Away with you!



Bulba led his sons into the best room of the house.

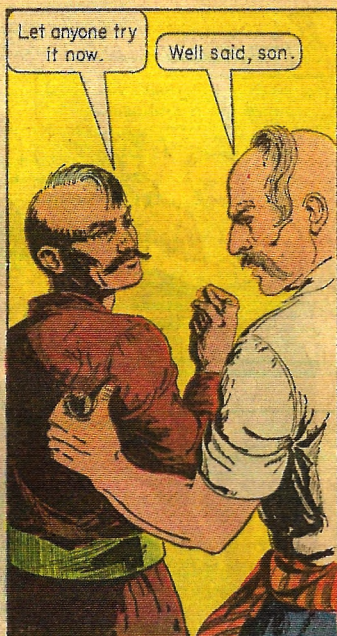


Confess now, my boys, did they not lash you good and proper?

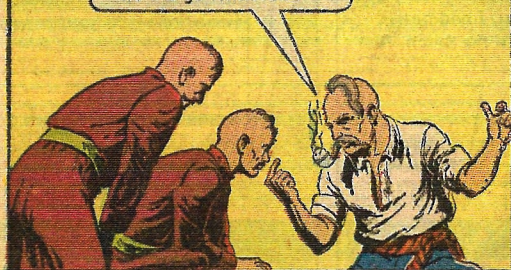
What has been done is done with.

Let anyone try it now.

Well said, son.



And since it's come to that, I'm going with you to the Setch. What the devil should I stay here for? Become a housekeeper, tend sheep and swine, and wear my wife's petticoats? I am a Cossack; I'll have none of it! We will go tomorrow!



Well, children, we must sleep now, and tomorrow we shall do what God wills. Don't bother about beds; we will sleep in the open.



Night embraced the heavens. The poor mother alone slept not. She hovered over her children like some solitary bird of the steppes. Her sons, her darling sons, were being taken away from her.



It was grey morning when they left. All three rode in silence. Old Bulba was thinking of his past and his youth.



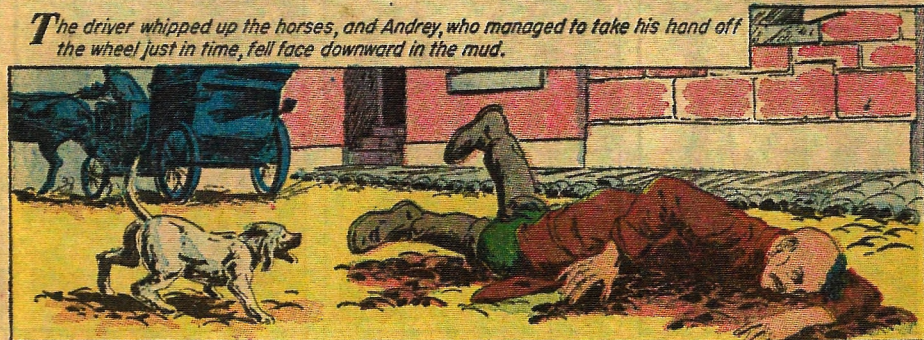
Andrey's thoughts wandered to a day in Kiev when he had nearly been run over by a Polish nobleman's coach.



The young collegian flew into a rage. With thoughtless daring, he seized a hind wheel with his powerful hand and stopped the coach.



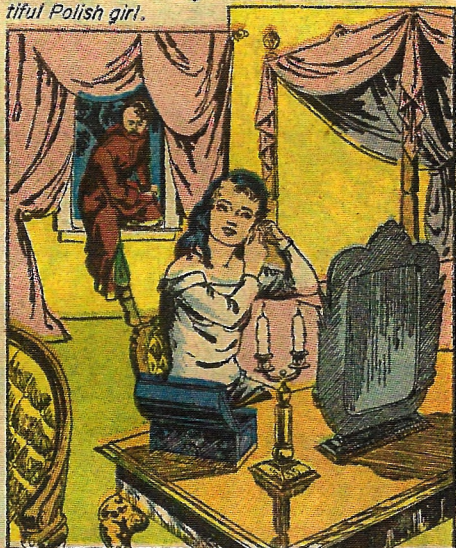
The driver whipped up the horses, and Andrey, who managed to take his hand off the wheel just in time, fell face downward in the mud.



The sweetest and most musical of laughs resounded above him. He looked up and saw, standing at a window, a beautiful girl-- dark-eyed and white as snow.



At length he learned that she was the daughter of the governor of Kovno. The next night he scaled the governor's garden wall, climbed a tree and made his way into the rooms of the beautiful Polish girl.



When she recognized the boy she had seen fall into the mud, she began to laugh again. She boldly approached him and played a thousand pranks with him. This only increased the

boy's confusion.

Afterward, the girl's waiting maid conducted Andrey to the garden. In clearing the fence, Andrey woke the watchman. The servants rushed out and belabored him in the street.



Andrey found it very dangerous to pass the house after that night. He had only another glance of the Polish girl before the governor left Kiev.



This is what Andrey thought of as the three Cossacks rode along the steppe. Three days later, they were near their destination, the Dnieper River



At last the travelers rode into the Setch. Here was the lair of men proud and strong as lions. From here poured Cossackdom over all the Ukraine.



Bulba soon spied a host of familiar faces. He began to ask questions about his old comrades.

Where is Borodavka ?
What of Kolopoyr ? How
fares Pidishok ?



Borodavka has been hanged,
Kolopoyr was flayed alive, and
Pidishok's head has been
salted and sent in a keg to
Constantinople.



Ah, but they were good
Cossacks !



In their first week in the Setch, Ostap and Andrey troubled themselves but little with military training, for the Setch educated its youth by experience alone.



But old Bulba had in mind other exploits for them. He sought out the Koshevoi.*

Well, Koshevoi, isn't it high time we took the field? I've two sons here, both young. Neither of them has been to the wars. It is not seemly for Cossack strength to lie idle and for a man to die without any good work.



* leader of the camp

We can't have a war, either with the Turks or the Tartars. We have promised peace to the Sultan.

But he is an unbeliever. God and Holy Writ command us to punish all unbelievers.



Must Cossack strength be wasted in vain? What, then, do we live for?

All the same, there will be no war.



Bulba went off meditating revenge.

Wait, you devil's son! I'll show you!



He talked with this comrade and that, and treated them all to plenty of liquor. Soon the tipsy Cossacks made for the square and began to beat the drum used for summoning councils.



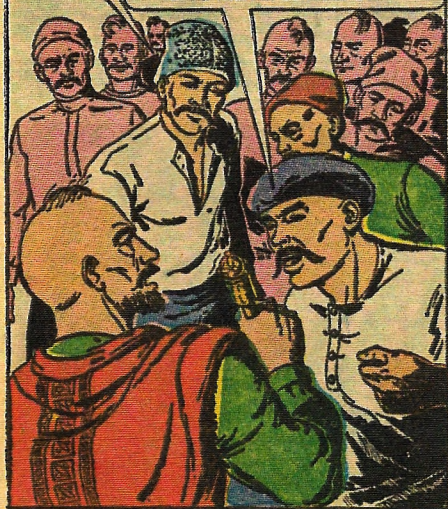
The kettledrum boomed, and the Cossacks came swarming up like black bumblebees. The Koshevoi appeared with his mace, the token of his office.



Shouts and curses silenced him.

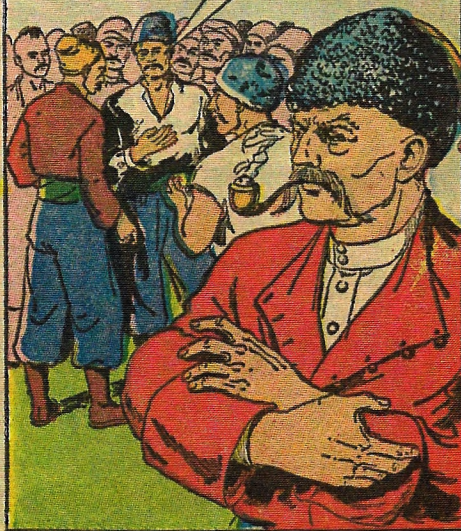
Put down the mace at once,
you devil's son!

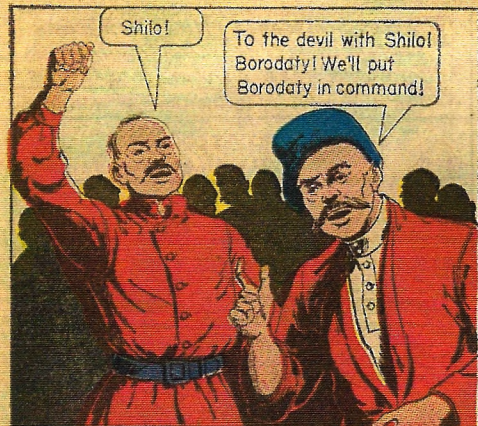
We don't want you any more, be-
cause you are an old woman, and we
want a man in command!



Knowing the excited, independent crowd might beat him to death, the Koshevoi bowed very low, laid down the mace and vanished in the crowd.

And whom do you now choose
as Koshevoi?





They began to settle the question by blows, and Kirdyaga triumphed. A good ten men left the crowd, made for Kirdyaga's hut and dragged him to the square.



One of the elders gave the mace to the newly elected Koshevoi, as the crowd cheered till the earth shook.



Then the crowd began to celebrate the election with such merrymaking as Ostap and Andrey had never seen before. Finally, drink and confusion got the better of these strong heads, and everywhere Cossacks rolled on to the ground until at last all the Setch slept.



The next day, Taras Bulba discussed with the new Koshevoi the best way of committing the Cossacks to action. But before they could carry out their plan, a ferry boat neared the shore.

Have you heard what is happening to us in the Ukraine? Roman priests are harnessing their carts with Orthodox Christians. We are being tormented by the Poles and the Jews.



The Cossacks gave vent to their fury. They rushed to the suburb to massacre the Jews who lived there.

Hang all Jewry!

To the Dnieper with them!
Drown them all, the heathens!



The Jews were seized and thrown into the water. One long, thin man grasped Bulba's legs.

Most illustrious sir! I knew your brother, the late Dorosh. I gave him eight hundred sequins when he needed to be ransomed as a captive of the Turks.



You knew my brother?
What is your name?

Yankel.



Taras Bulba turned to the Cossacks.

Give him to me for now. There will always be time to hang him later.



Taras Bulba then went to the square, where the Cossacks were gathering, all eager to march straight into Poland to avenge the injury and disgrace to their Orthodox faith and their Cossack glory. Some mended the wheels and tarred the carts, some loaded the wagons with ammunition and other stores, some drove horses and oxen in from the steppe.



Presently the Cossack cavalcade stretched out across the plain. He who would run from its van to its rear would have a long run before him.



All southwestern Poland was soon panic-stricken.



All who could arise and fled to the towns that boasted anything approaching a garrison or fortification.



The Cossacks turned up where they were least expected, leaving nothing but death in their wake. Wherever they set foot, they left a horrible trail of atrocities--a sight common enough in that half-savage age.



Ostap seemed born to tread the path of war. He never faltered or flinched under any circumstance, and had a coolness almost unnatural in a man of twenty-two.



The Cossacks marched on the town of Dubno, where, rumor had it, there were wealthy townfolk. But the inhabitants were determined to defend Dubno to the last.



The Cossacks, who disliked sieges, did not prolong the conflict. The Koshevoi ordered them to fall back.

We'll just let them be, but may I be a pagan Tartar if we let so much as one of them out of that town. Let them all starve like the dogs they are!



For lack of anything better to do, the Cossacks busied themselves with laying waste to the surrounding countryside.



Then they drew their wagons in double rows round the town, smoked their pipes and looked at Dubno with murderous indifference.



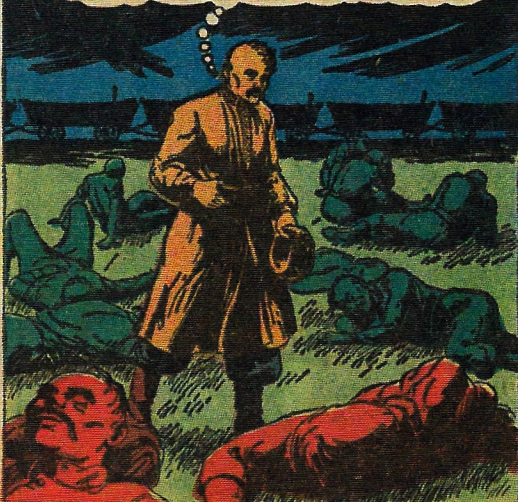
The younger Cossacks, especially the sons of Taras Bulba, fretted at this inaction. Andrey was plainly bored.

Patience. A good warrior must learn to endure all things, even idleness.



Andrey, though he knew not why, felt a stifling weight at his heart. One beautiful July night, too restless to lie down, he wandered round the Cossack camp.

The sentries doze, having stuffed themselves with true Cossack appetite. It is well that there is nothing to be feared from the enemy.



At last, he climbed into one of the wagons and dozed fitfully. Then some strange form seemed to be hovering over him, and he opened his eyes wider.

Who are you? If an evil spirit, be gone; if human and alive, I will kill you with one shot.



In answer to this, the specter put its finger to its lips and seemed to entreat silence.

It seems to me I have known or seen you somewhere.

Two years ago in Kiev.



He gave her one more intent look.

You are the Tartar woman--the servant of the governor's daughter!



Why are you here? Where is your mistress? Is she alive and well?

She is in the town.



How fares she now?

She has not eaten for two days. It is long since the townsfolk saw as much as a crust of bread. They have nothing but earth to eat.



My lady saw you with the other Cossacks under the ramparts. She said for me to come and ask you for a piece of bread, for she will not see her mother die before her eyes.



Many conflicting feelings kindled and burned in the young Cossack's heart.

But how did you get here?

By the underground passage, down the bank and across the stream.

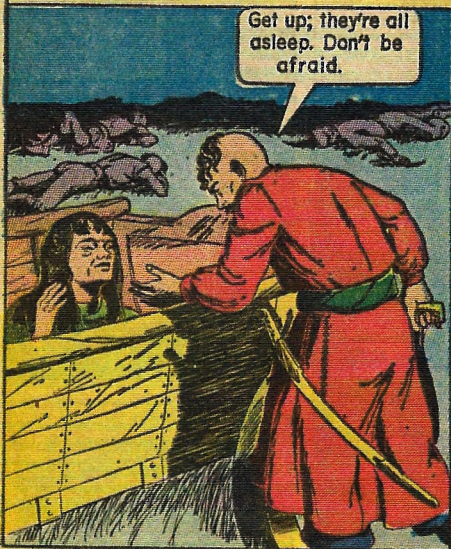


Andrey rose.

Lie down in the wagon. I'll be back directly.

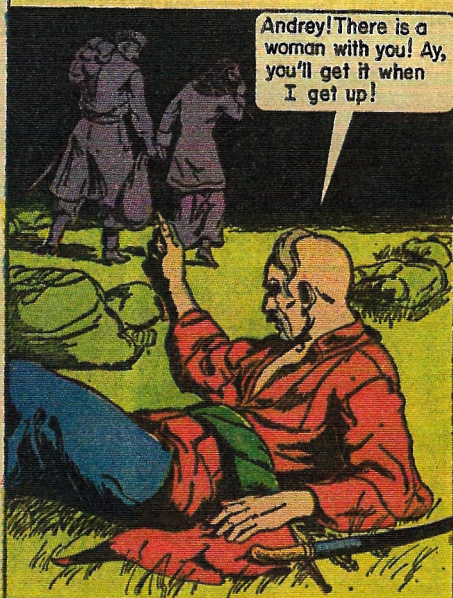


With fast-beating heart, he went to the wagons where the provisions were stored. There gleamed in his memory the Polish girl's beautiful arms, her eyes, her laughing lips. He took a sack of bread and went back to the Tartar slave.



Get up; they're all asleep. Don't be afraid.

He caught up another sack full of millet and walked boldly between the rows of sleeping Cossacks. As he passed his father, old Bulba called to him.



Andrey! There is a woman with you! Ay, you'll get it when I get up!

Andrey stood there, more dead than alive, not daring to look at his father's face. When he did raise his eyes, he saw that the old man was already fast asleep.



Andrey turned to look at the Tartar woman. She stood before him, heavily veiled, like a dark, granite statue.



He followed her to a river. Wading through the rushes, they came at last to a heap of brushwood.



Here is the entrance.

The slave crouched through the opening. Andrey followed her, and they suddenly found themselves in darkness.

We are coming to the place where I left my lamp.



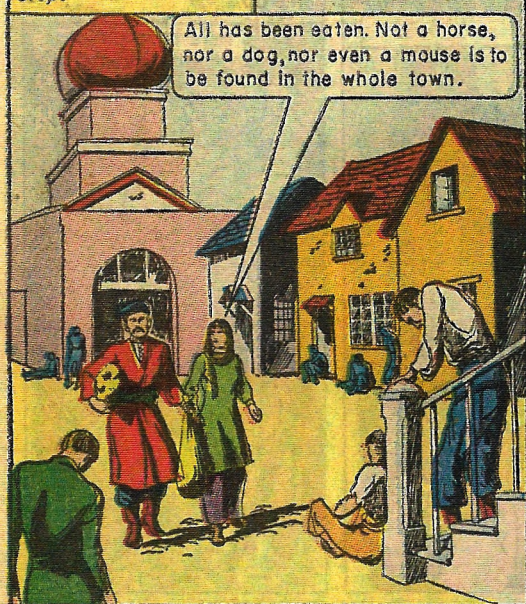
When they reached the lamp, the slave led the way down the passage to a small iron door. Andrey knocked, the door swung open, and a monk stood on a narrow stairway.

It is all right. Let us in.



They passed through an abbey and reached the town square. Signs of famine met them at every step.

All has been eaten. Not a horse, nor a dog, nor even a mouse is to be found in the whole town.



Why do they try to hold the town, then?

'Tis likely the governor would have given in, but yesterday the colonel sent a hawk with a letter telling him to hold out, that he is coming.



They came to a red-brick house and mounted the stairs. Andrey's guide pointed to a small door. He entered and saw a woman coming toward him.

She is twice as fair as she was two years ago!



Andrey stood spell-bound before her.

I lack the power to thank you, generous knight. God alone can reward you.



Andrey longed to tell her what was in his heart, but could not. He cursed his Cossack nature. Then the slave entered the room with some of the bread upon a golden platter.

Have you taken some to my mother and father?

I have.



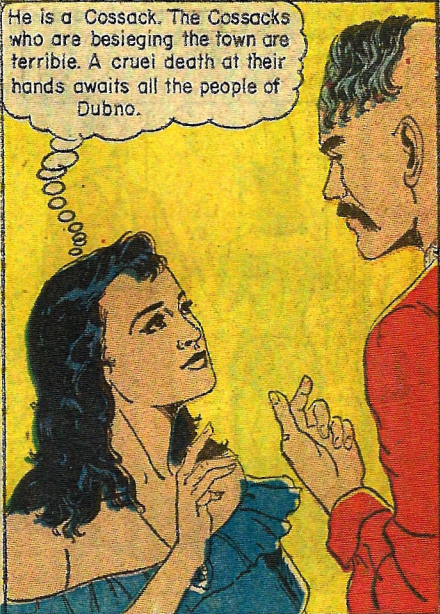
The girl took a slice of bread and raised it to her lips. Andrey's heart and soul, his whole being, brimmed over with emotion.

Set me the most impossible task in the world-- I will do it even if I have to die! You are a creature unlike us all; only the angels in heaven are worthy of serving you.



She raised her lovely face toward him, was about to speak, but checked herself suddenly.

He is a Cossack. The Cossacks who are besieging the town are terrible. A cruel death at their hands awaits all the people of Dubno.



The girl's eyes were full of tears.

But why are you so sad? Tell me, why are you so sad?



O my cruel fate, thou didst bewitch my heart, not with any of the best warriors of our land, but with a stranger and a foe!



Don't deceive yourself and me, brave knight. I know, alas, that you may not love me. I know your duty and your faith. Your father and comrades and country call you, while we--we are your enemies.



Andrey drew himself up as straight as a poplar on a river bank.

And what are my father, comrades and country to me? My country lies where my heart is. And for that country I will give up and destroy all that is mine!



Like a beautiful statue she stood, then she fell to sobbing and threw herself on his neck.



At that moment, muffled cries, together with the sound of trumpets and drums, were heard in the street below. The slave, mad with joy, rushed into the room.

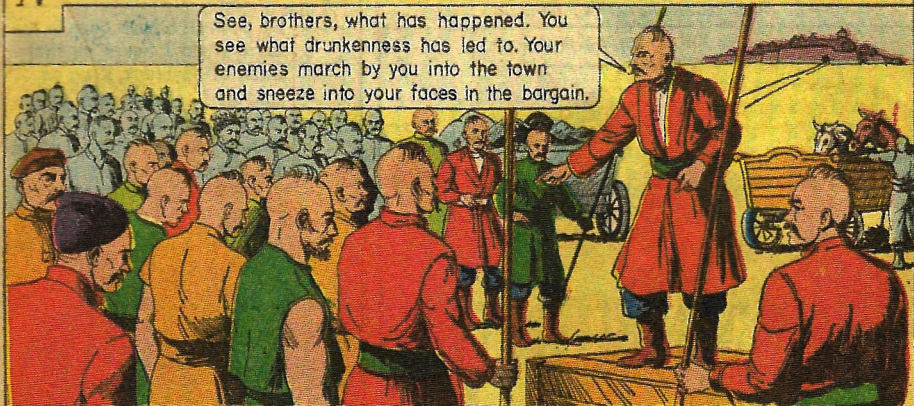
But neither of the two cared who had entered the town or who were the prisoners. Andrey kissed the sweet lips, and he was lost to all Cossackdom.

Saved, saved! Our troops have come into the town. They have brought bread and corn and flour--and Cossacks all bound with rope!

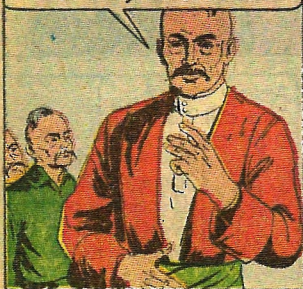


Noise and commotion filled the Cossack camp. The Koshevoi ordered all to assemble.

See, brothers, what has happened. You see what drunkenness has led to. Your enemies march by you into the town and sneeze into your faces in the bargain.



However, as far as I can see, the Poles haven't taken much food into the town, for they had very few wagons. The people in there are sure to gobble it all up at once. Then the army will come out.



Divide into three parties and stand on the three roads that lead to the gates. The other divisions will go into ambush to the right and the left of the camp.



Preparations began. Swords and guns were tested, powder flasks filled, wagons brought up.



All the way to his regiment, Taras Bulba wondered what had become of Andrey.

Did the Poles catch him sleeping? No, it is not like him to be taken alive.



He was so lost in thought that it was a long time before he heard someone calling him.

Who wants me?



Before him stood Yankel, the Jew.

Sir Colonel! I have been in the town. When I heard all that noise at daybreak, I ran as hard as I could to see what the shooting was about. I ran through the very gates, just as the last of the soldiers went in.



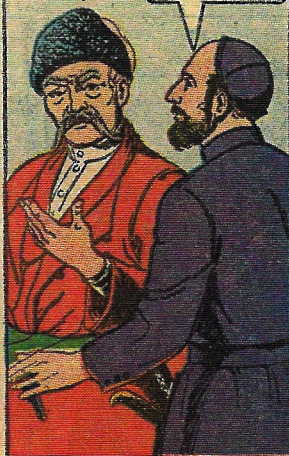
What, then, did you do in the town? Did you see any of our men?

Certainly! Isaac and Rahoom and Samuel --



What do I care for your Jewish brood! I'm asking you about our Cossacks.

Our Cossacks? No, I didn't see any of them. I only saw my lord Andrey.



Andrey! Where? In a cell? Bound?

Who would dare to bind my lord Andrey! He is such a grand knight now, I hardly know him. He's all shining in gold, just like the richest Polish lord. And the governor gave him his very best saddle horse.



Taras Bulba was petrified.

Who forced him to do this?

Does not my lord know that he went over to them of his own free will?



You lie, you swine's ear! From what you say, it means that he has sold his country and his faith. Why?

The governor has a beautiful daughter. He went over for her sake. The Tartar serving woman at the palace told me everything. Andrey has promised to drive the Cossacks away.



And you saw him face to face?

Yes. He said, "Yankel, tell my father, tell my brother, tell my comrades, that I will fight them all!"



Bulba roared and drew his sword. Yankel, terrified, ran off as fast as his legs would take him.



But Taras stood where he was. At last, his grey head bowed.

I cannot believe that so shameful a thing has happened, that my own son would sell his faith and his soul.



The Cossacks' movements were heard in the town. The Polish knights crowded on the ramparts. In front of them was the colonel who had relieved the town. He was so stout that his ample overcoat barely covered him. Three Cossacks rode out from the Cossack ranks.

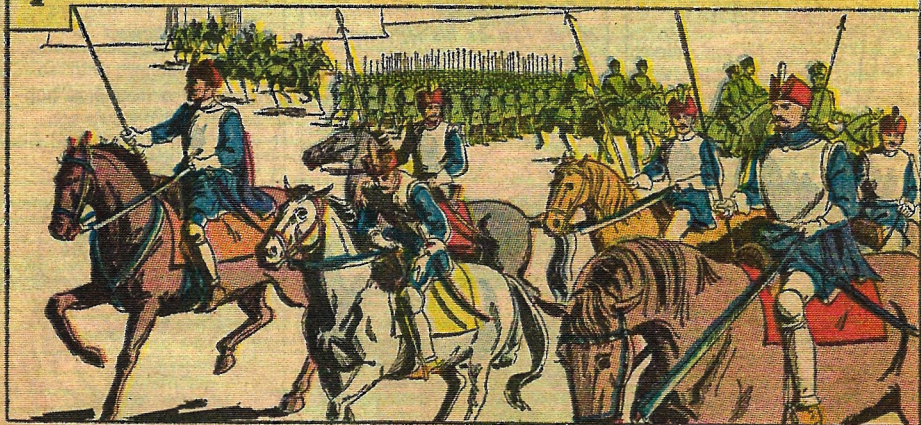
The whole Polish army could hide behind that colonel's pot-belly!



The enraged colonel waved his hand. The Cossacks barely had time to get away before grape-shot rained from the ramparts.



Then the gates opened, and the Polish troops sallied forth.

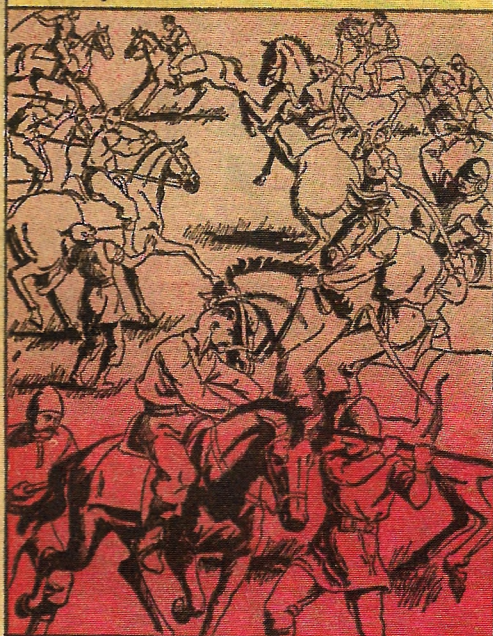


The Koshevoi yelled to his men.

Don't let them range themselves! Attack! Break up their ranks! Scatter them!



The Cossacks charged from all sides, rushing in among the Poles.



They were all bunched together, and every man had a chance to show his mettle. The ataman* of the Uman division slew seven Polish nobles. As he stooped to strip one of them of his rich armor, he was in turn slain by a Polish officer.



* military leader

As the hawk swoops down upon the quail, Ostap Bulba flung a fatal noose round the Pole's neck.



When the Uman Cossacks heard their ataman was no more, they left the fight and hastened to recover his body. While they paid it last honors, they began to discuss whom they should make ataman.

We cannot choose a better ataman than young Ostap Bulba. True, he is younger than us all, but he has the judgment of a much older man.

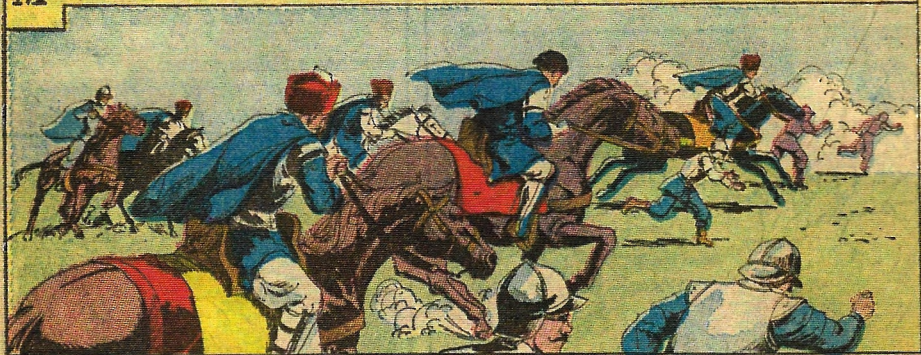


Ostap doffed his cap.

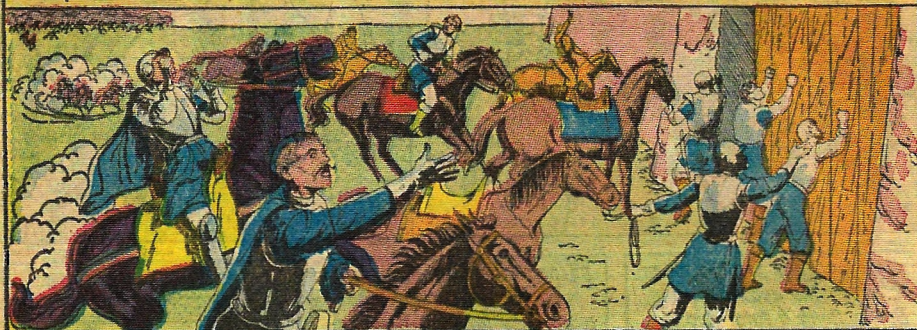
Thank you, comrades, for the honor.



Meanwhile, the enemy, feeling matters were going badly, retreated at a run across the field.



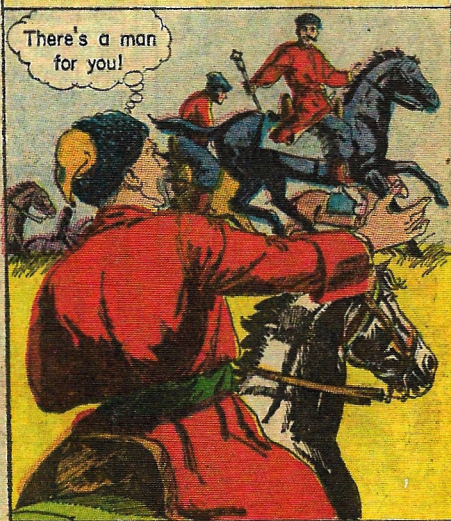
The Cossacks attacked with redoubled strength. The Poles shouted for the town gates to be opened.



The Poles flocked into Dubno like dusty sheep.

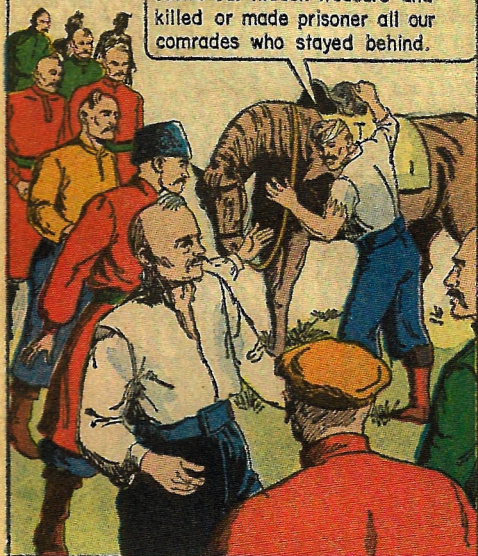


Taras Bulba beheld Ostap at the head of the Uman Cossacks and rejoiced.

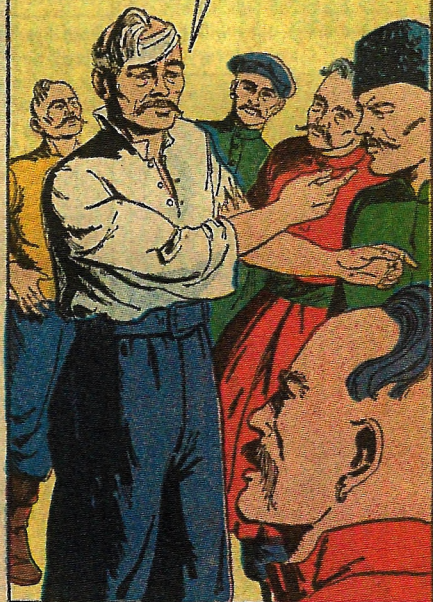


The sun had not risen midway in the heavens next day, when the Cossacks were called to council. Word had come from the Setch.

The Tartars have razed the Setch, found our hidden treasure and killed or made prisoner all our comrades who stayed behind.



I, alone, escaped, and have ridden two whole nights and days to find you.



Exhausted, the Cossack dropped on to the ground and instantly fell fast asleep.



The other Cossacks took counsel.

My advice, comrades, is to waste no time, but to march after the Tartars without delay. The Poles know that we have avenged our faith as best we could, and a starving town is of little use.



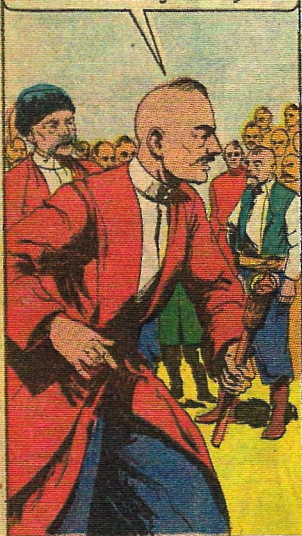
But Taras Bulba frowned.

No, your counsel is not good. You have forgotten that some of our comrades here are in Polish hands. What manner of Cossack is he who deserts his comrade in the hour of trouble, who leaves him to perish in foreign parts like a dog? I will stay!



All the Cossacks wavered.

There are comrades of ours in Tartar hands as well. Unless we save them, they will be sold into lifelong slavery.



The Cossacks pondered over this. Then the eldest man in the army stepped forward.

Both the Koshevoi and Colonel Taras have spoken well. So those who want to go after the Tartars, let them go after the Tartars; and those who want to stay here and fight the Poles, let them stay here and fight the Poles.

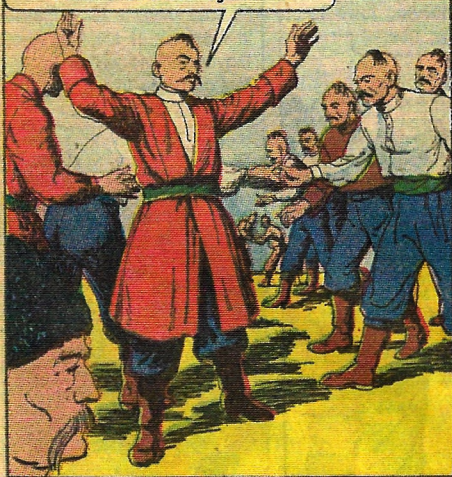


Let the Koshevoi do his duty and lead one half after the Tartars, and let the other half choose a lieutenant Koshevoi. No man is better fit to be the lieutenant Koshevoi than Taras Bulba.



All the Cossacks rejoiced at this wise counsel from the old man. They divided themselves into two parts -- those who were to stay, and those who were to go.

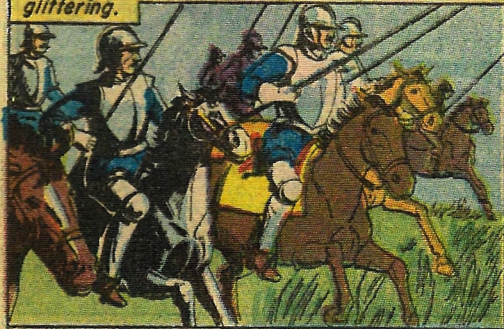
Well, bid one another farewell, for God alone knows whether you shall ever meet again.



And all the Cossacks, as many as there were, kissed one another. Then, half the Cossacks vanished into the darkness. Those left behind stood a long time and waved their arms, although they could no longer see anything.



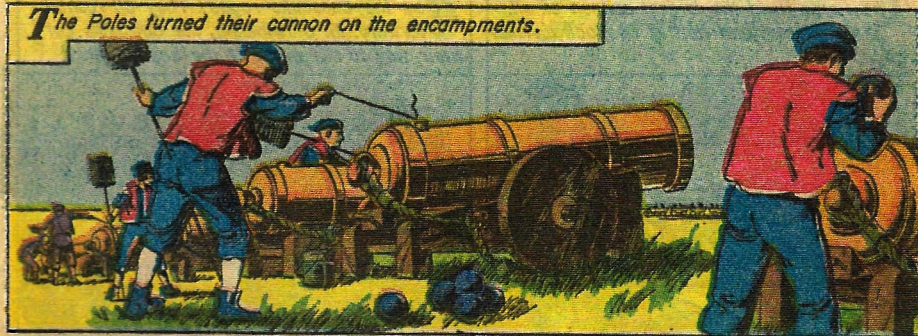
It was not long before the Poles heard that some of the Cossacks had marched away, and they prepared to give battle. The Poles sallied out of the town and bore down in a close mass on the Cossack encampments, their brass armor glittering.



As soon as the Cossacks saw that the Poles had come within gunshot, they kept firing with never an interval.



The Poles turned their cannon on the encampments.

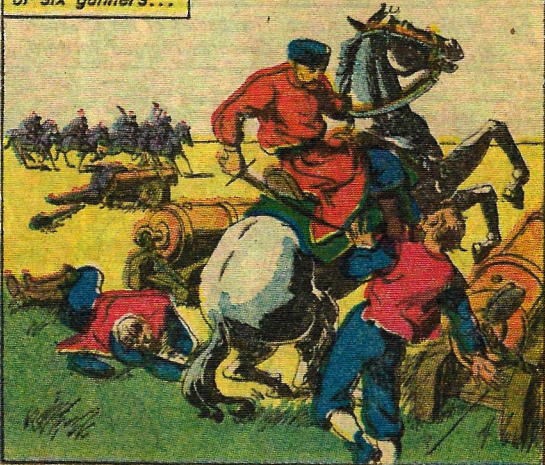


Taras saw that two divisions were in mortal danger.

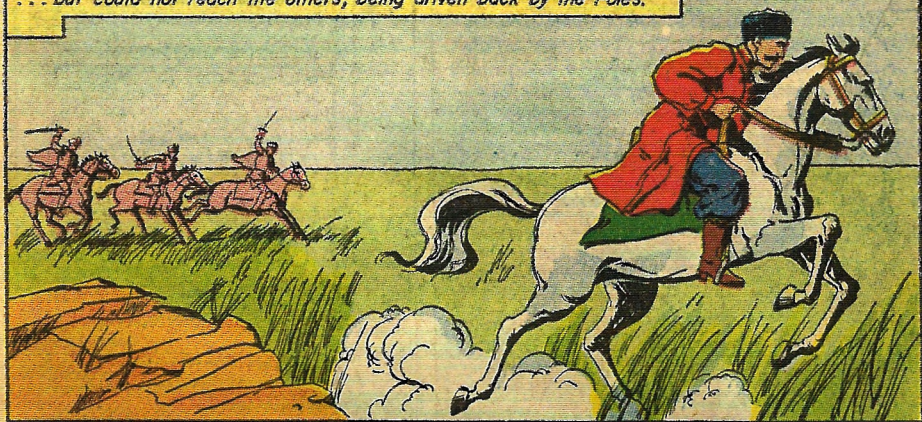
Away from the wagons at once, and mount your horses all!



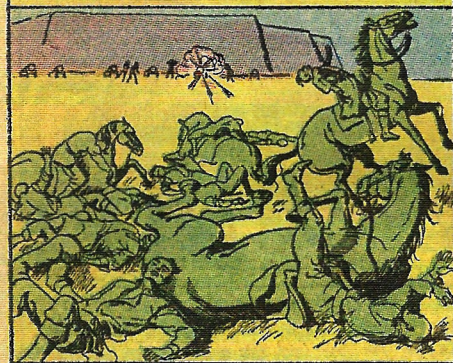
But the Cossacks would not have had time to do both these things had not Ostap galloped into the midst of the foe. He knocked the wicks from the hands of six gunners...



... but could not reach the others, being driven back by the Poles.



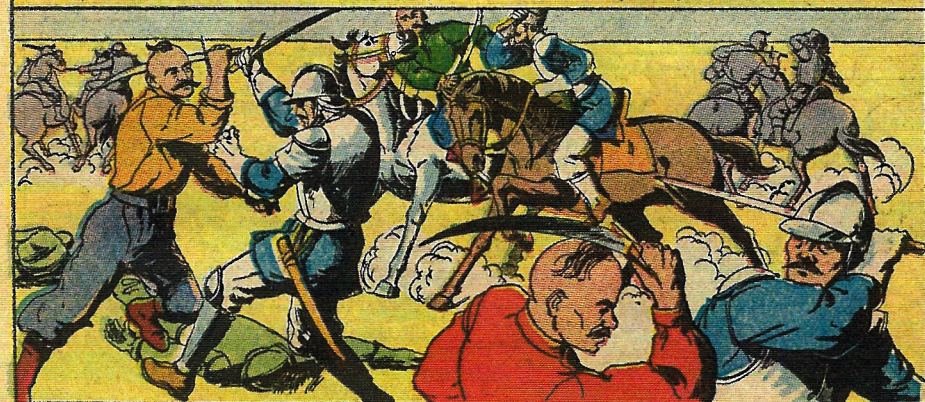
The Poles fired the largest cannon of all. It thundered, and half a Cossack division was no more.



How the Cossacks raged! They all rushed forward. In a twinkling, the Cossacks cut their way to the midst of the enemy ranks.



Blood flowed everywhere. The bodies of the Cossacks and their enemies were heaped together. Once more, the Cossacks charged forward, as though they had suffered no loss.



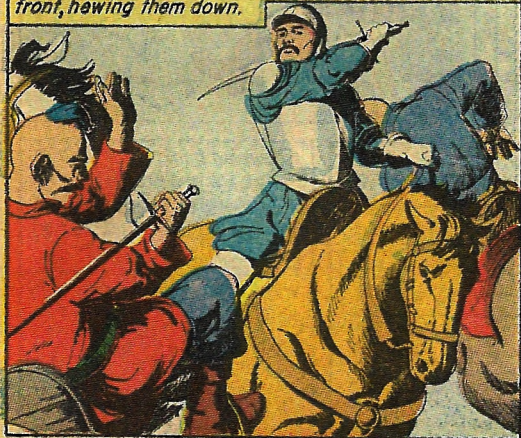
The town gates opened, and out dashed a regiment of hussars. Ahead galloped a knight, the bravest and handsomest of all.



Taras Bulba was struck dumb when he saw that it was Andrey.

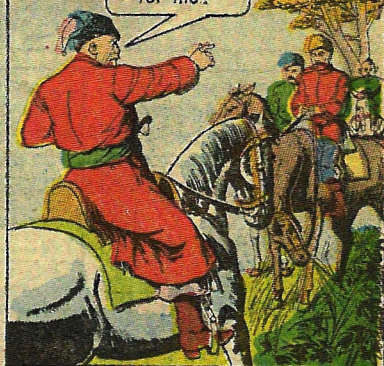


Andrey was entirely lost in the heat of battle, striking to the right and left, scattering those in front, hewing them down.

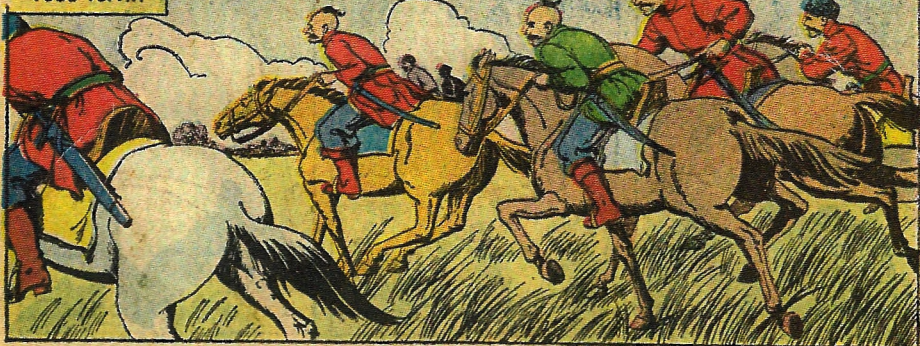


Andrey did not see who was before him. He saw nothing but the governor's daughter.

Eh, lads! Lure him into yonder wood for me!



In a flash, thirty of the swiftest Cossacks rode forth.



The Cossacks cut off the lead riders from those behind, meted out a few hearty blows and fled. Andrey set off at his utmost speed after them.



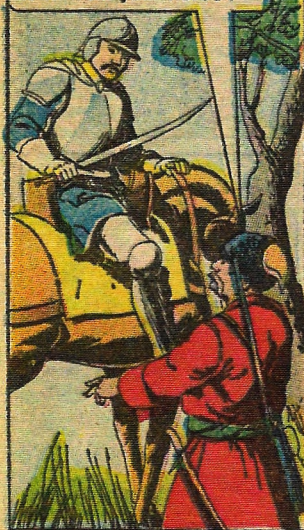
Suddenly, a strong hand seized his bridle. Andrey whirled round -- before him was Taras Bulba.

Well, what are we to do now?



Andrey did not know what to say. All he saw before him was his terrible father.

To betray your faith? To betray your comrades? Get down from your horse!



Obedient as a child, Andrey dismounted and stood before Bulba, more dead than alive.

Stand still, do not move! I begot you -- and I will kill you!



Stepping back, Taras Bulba took his gun from his shoulder and fired. Andrey fell to the ground without a word.

What a Cossack he might have been!



At this moment, Ostap rode up.

Batko*, what have you done?
Was it you who killed him?



*Father

Taras Bulba nodded. Then they turned to rejoin their men, but the Poles had surrounded the wood. Pikeman and swordsmen were everywhere between the trees.



The old man struck right and left. He saw eight Poles closing round Ostap.

Ostap! Don't give in!



But they had already overpowered Ostap. Bulba shouted to his son, hacking everyone who crossed his path into mincemeat. Then he himself was struck by something heavy. Down he crashed like a felled oak.



A comrade found Taras Bulba and carried him back to the Setch--a Setch that was new, for all his old comrades were gone. After six weeks, his wounds healed, but he had grown strangely sad and gloomy.



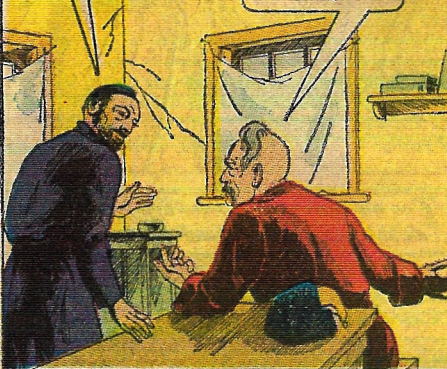
Within a week, armed and mounted, he was in Uman, where he had heard that Yankel lived.

Listen, Yankel. I saved your life. Now you must do me a service.

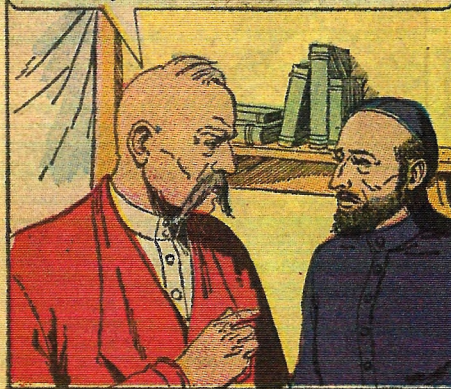


What service?

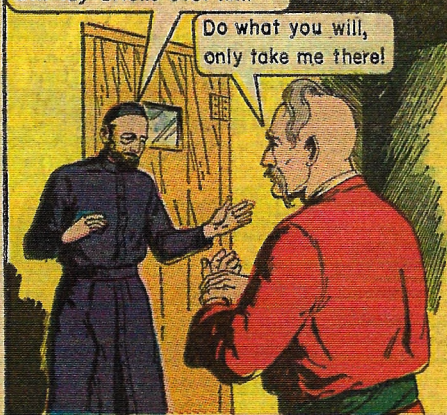
Take me to Warsaw. Come what may, I must see my son Ostap again and speak but one word to him.



I might have gone to Warsaw alone, but the accursed Poles might recognize me and seize me. I am no good at plotting. You know every trick. Take me there!



Hear me, my lord! Here is what we will do. Let my lord lie on the bottom of a wagon, and I will lay bricks over him.



Thus, by horse-drawn cart, they traveled from Uman to the gates of Warsaw without mishap. Yankel drove to a narrow street which afforded shelter to nearly all the Jews of Warsaw. There, he talked to two friends. Soon...

Ostap is in the town jail.



Get my Ostap out of prison, and I will give you all my buried gold, my house, my last garment.

It cannot be done. The Cossacks are to be put to death tomorrow, and three thousand soldiers are on guard.



Yankel went out. At the close of evening, he reappeared.

If you would see Ostap, sir, it must be done tomorrow, before sunrise. The guards are greedy and willing.



The next morning, Taras Bulba, disguised as a German count, went with Yankel to the jail.

It's only us, gentlemen. Go through.



They hurried on past more and more guards, until they reached a sentry standing by a heavy, nailed door.

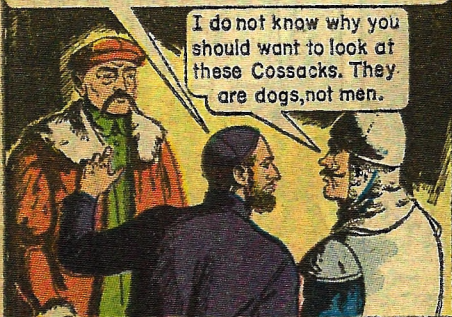
It is not the guard I gave the money to; another has taken his place.



Yankel went up to the guard.

Most illustrious sir, here is a prince who has come from a foreign land and wishes a look at the Cossacks. He has never seen one.

I do not know why you should want to look at these Cossacks. They are dogs, not men.



Forgetting his part, Bulba roared out.

You lie, you devil's son! You are a dog yourself!

Aha! You yourself are one of those I am guarding.



The soldier opened his mouth wide to shout. Yankel pushed a bag of money into his hand.

Show me the Cossacks. You've taken the money.

Be gone! Go to the devil! If you don't, I'll call out this minute.

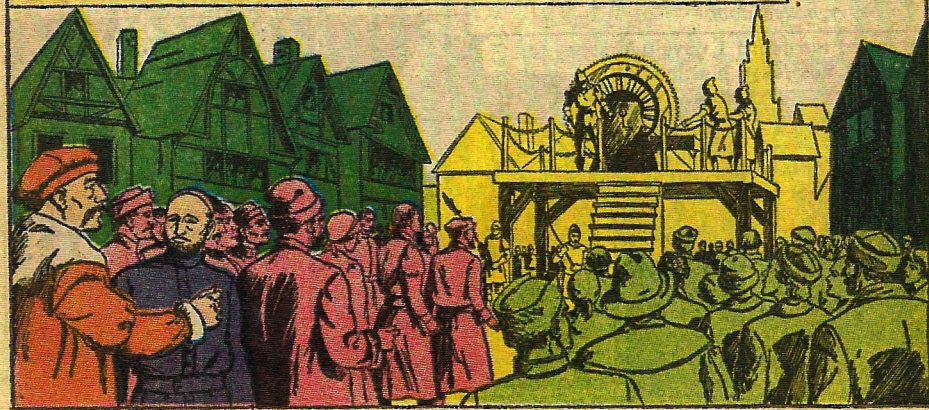


Slowly, with bent head, Bulba turned away from the door.

Come, let us go to the square. I want to see how they will torture him.



They had no difficulty in finding the square where the executions were to take place, for people were thronging there from all parts of town.

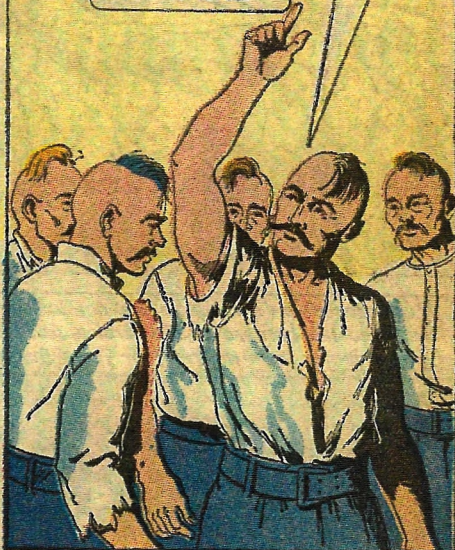


Soon the Cossacks entered with a quiet pride. In front of all came Ostap.



Ostap halted and raised his hand to his comrades.

God grant that the heretics, as many as stand here, may not hear a sound when Christians are tortured.



Then Ostap stepped up to the scaffold. He bore the tortures like a giant; not so much as a groan escaped him, even when they began to break the bones of his legs and arms.

Well done, son, well done!



When they dragged Ostap to the last tortures of death, his strength wavered. He cast his eyes around. He would have wished now to see a firm man whose word might bring him solace. His strength failed him, and he cried out in the agony of his soul...

Batko! Where are you? Do you hear me?

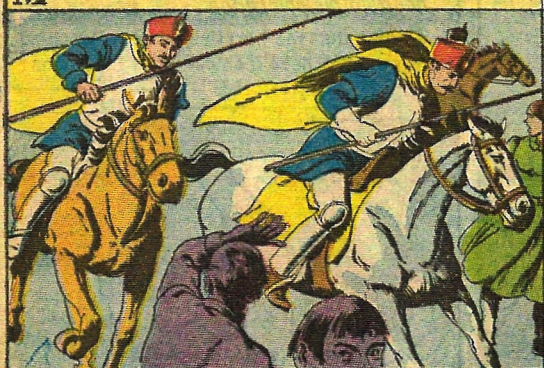


A voice rang through the silent crowd.

I hear you!



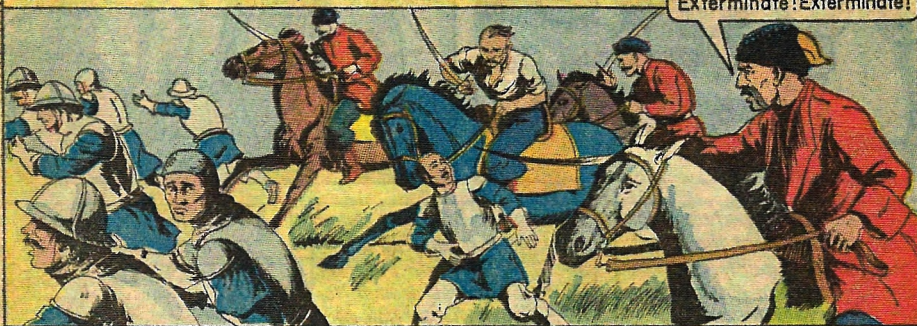
Mounted guards rushed to comb the throng.



Yankel turned pale as death. He looked round in terror for Taras Bulba, but Bulba was no longer behind him.



But Taras Bulba's traces were not lost. A hundred and twenty thousand Cossacks crossed the borders of the Ukraine. And among all these Cossacks, there was one regiment braver than the rest, for Taras Bulba commanded it.



When the Cossacks finally made a treaty with the Poles, Bulba alone would not consent to such a peace. He turned to his own men.

Do not trust the Poles. They will betray us, the dogs!

We'll follow you, Colonel!
We'll follow you!



Bulba rode deep into Poland with his regiment, burned eighteen towns and forty Catholic churches, sparing no one. Even the Cossacks thought his fierceness and cruelty excessive.

Spare nothing! This is for Ostap!



The Polish government saw that Taras Bulba's acts were more than ordinary robber raids. Five regiments were ordered to capture him. The Poles besieged Bulba in a ruined fortress on the bank of the Dniester River. The Cossacks fought for four days before their provisions gave out.



The Cossacks would have fought their way through had not Bulba halted suddenly.

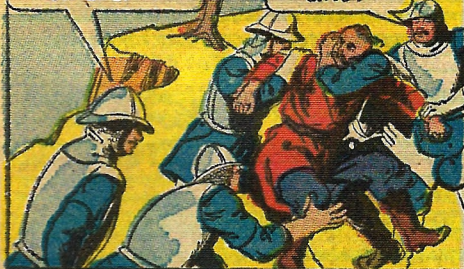
Wait! I've dropped my pipe. I will not let the infernal Poles have it!



He dismounted and began to search the grass for the pipe that had been his solace at home and in his campaigns. Just then a company of Polish soldiers rushed up and caught him by his mighty shoulders.

Now we've caught our bird!

Let us roast the dog alive!



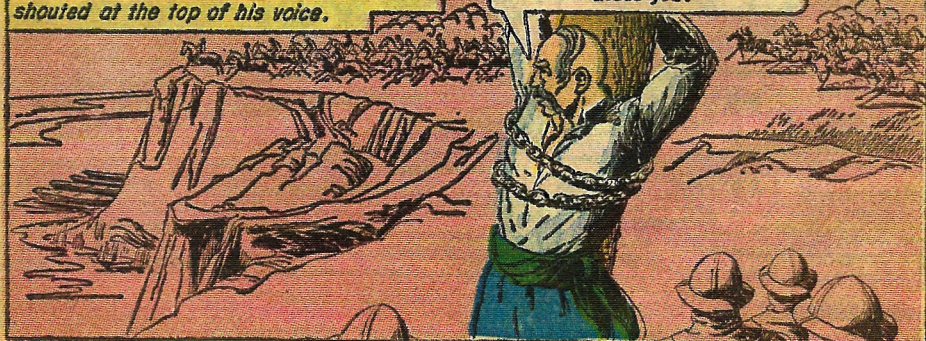
A bare tree trunk stood just at hand. They drove nails into his hands and chained him to the trunk, taking care to fasten him high up for all the Cossacks to see.

Pile faggots under him!



But Taras Bulba did not think of the fire or even glance at the faggots, for he was watching his men. Glancing at the Dniester, he saw the sterns of four boats. He shouted at the top of his voice.

To the bank, lads! Take the downhill path on the left. There are boats near the bank! Take them all, or they'll chase you!



All his words were caught by the Cossacks, but this advice cost Bulba a blow on the head, which made everything turn over in his eyes.

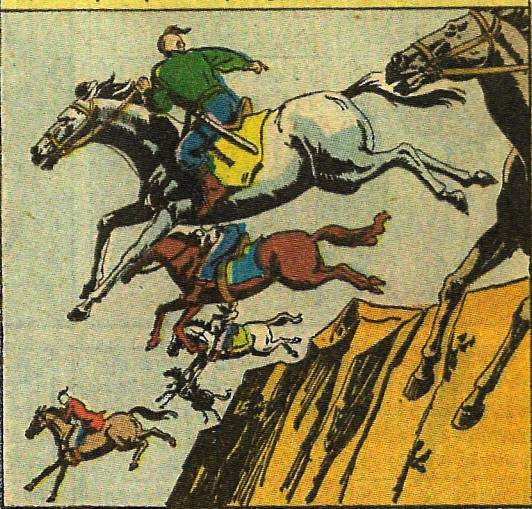


When Taras Bulba recovered from the blow, he saw the Cossacks had gained the boats and were rowing with all their might. His eyes sparkled with joy.

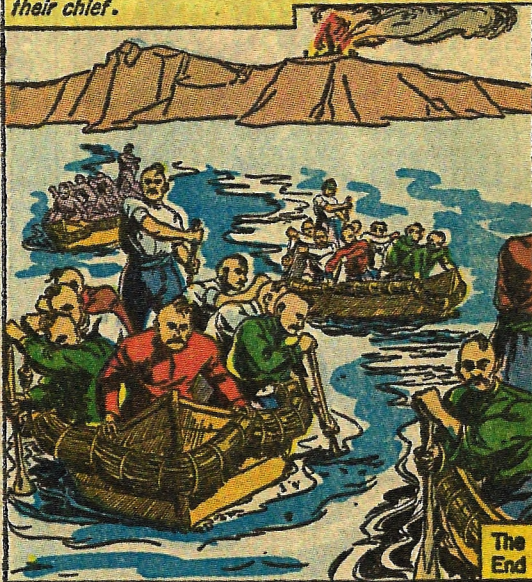
Farewell comrades! Think of me, and come again next spring for another glorious raid!



The Cossacks galloped down the cliff path at full speed, but their pursuers were already treading upon their heels. The Cossack horses, springing forward, stretched themselves in the air and flew over the precipice to plunge into the Dniester.



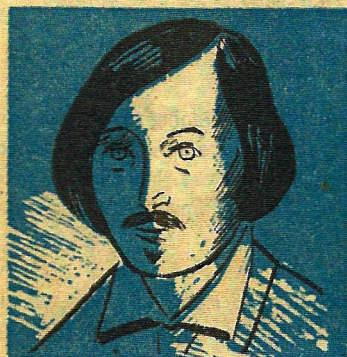
The flames rose from the faggots, gripping his feet and running up the tree. The Cossacks rowed on, swiftly and steadily. They rowed on and talked of their chief.



The End

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NIKOLAI GOGOL



Nikolai Vassilievich Gogol was born on April 1, 1809, the frail son of a Ukrainian landowner of Cossack descent. In 1825, Gogol's father died. Three years later, at the age of nineteen, Gogol left the Ukraine for St. Petersburg (now Leningrad). Here, he obtained a clerkship in a government office, which was the lot of many young men of his day who did not belong to the wealthy upper classes or the peasant class of serfs.

Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka, a collection of Gogol's short stories about Ukrainian life, was published in 1831 when Gogol was twenty-two. It received high praise from a leading critic. Through the help of friends, Gogol was offered a post in the history department of the University of St. Petersburg. Being shy, Gogol was terrified of lecturing before students. He was also unqualified to teach. At his first lecture, he read from a paper with such eloquence that no one realized that he was not saying anything important. At later lectures, he wrapped his cheek in bandages and pretended that he had a swollen jaw. At last, he resigned from the university.

That same year, 1835, Gogol published *Mirgorod*, a second collection of stories. Included in the book was a short novel, *Taras Bulba*, which dealt with fifteenth-century Cossacks.

A few months after the publication of *Mirgorod*, Gogol finished a play, *The Inspector General*. Some critics consider it to be the best comedy ever written in Russian literature. It tells of a young man who is mistaken for a government inspector by the corrupt officials of a small town. Many people who saw the play thought that it was a satire on graft and corruption in the Tsar's government. Punishment for criticizing the Tsar and the government included exile and death. Gogol was so upset at the political meanings read into his play that he left Russia for a period of travel throughout Europe.

In 1842, the first part of Gogol's most famous book, *Dead Souls*, appeared. At that time, serfdom existed on a large scale in Russia. A serf was a man who was bound to the land he farmed. He could be bought and sold together with the land. Russian landowners reckoned their wealth by the number of souls, or serfs, they owned. For each soul that was counted in the last government census, the landowner had to pay a tax, even if the serf died. Dead souls could only be reckoned dead in a new census. The main character of *Dead Souls*, Chichikov, travels about buying the names of serfs who have died but have not yet been recorded dead by the census. In this way, he hopes to acquire the status of a great landowner without actually being one.

Once again, Gogol's writing was interpreted as being critical of the Tsar and the government. Confused, Gogol took to traveling. He made a pilgrimage to Palestine. When he returned to Russia, he fell under the influence of a Russian Orthodox priest who argued that all his writings had been sinful. One day, Gogol burned the second part of *Dead Souls*, which he had been working on. He died on February 21, 1852, at the age of forty-two, as a result of not eating.