

Personalities

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John Steinbeck [] []

On his visit to Ukraine, Steinbeck showed an uncanny ability to pick out "the interesting people" from the groups presented to him. He also preferred to talk to these people without ~~xxx~~ interpreters, even when it meant that the conversation would be halting.

K told of one occasion when Steinbeck was at the Writers Association building. He said, "hello, hello, hello..." to everyone in line, and then he spotted Hutsalo(?). Immediately Steinbeck took him aside, and talked with him at length.

Steinbeck also had a way of ending conversations with the "official" writers. When he realized that he was being propagandized, he stood up, put his hands on his belt and said he had to go to the men's room. Here K explained that Steinbeck used a more vulgar expression, but K did not want to repeat it in mixed company. When telling the story, K enjoyed himself, and was glad that someone like Steinbeck knew how to deal with persons for whom K has little respect himself.

At Shevchenko Museum.

One incident, which occurred during S's visit was very moving, but the press did not report it, said K. It was at the Shevchenko museum in Kaniv. At the end of the building, there is a darkened room, with only the mold of Shevchenko's face taken at the time of his death -- the so-called Shevchenko's death mask. Steinbeck went in alone to that room, and stood there a few minutes. Tears were rolling down his cheeks.

K was not in Ukraine when Steinbeck was there, so this incident was told to him by "the boys". He was nevertheless very much moved by it. He related this story several times, each time pointing out that this was the best tribute paid by the great Steinbeck to the great Shevchenko.

On his return Steinbeck ~~xxx~~ sent mimeographed letters (one version) to all the writers of Ukraine, whose names appeared in the published directory of the Association of writers.

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