



“OUT OF THE FORMER DUCK’S NEST”, OR CATHERINE II’S PETERSBURG

At the beginning of Catherine II’s reign, St. Petersburg was a bustling, growing city that was developing quickly and becoming even more beautiful. The events of the palace coup on June 28 1762, leading to Catherine’s ascension to the throne cheered on by people in Nevsky Avenue, gave Petersburg a fresh start for further development. Its population was growing steadily so that by the end of the 18th century Petersburg surpassed Moscow itself in population – more than 200,000 people lived there. But it was not the abundant population that made Catherine’s Petersburg remarkable. The city’s fate was predestined by a number of important factors. To begin with, under Catherine, the city became one of the world’s political centres. International affairs that influenced the general situation in Europe were settled in Petersburg. Petersburg was not only the largest, most northern port city, but also the residence of a great ruler who gloriously reigned over her immense empire for more than three decades. Under her, Russia’s political, economic and military powers reached their prime and were striking for the contemporaries. Joseph II, the Emperor of Austria, wrote once that Catherine was able to fix arbitrarily the rouble’s exchange rate, and if she would take a fancy to introduce leather money, this would also be accepted, – so miraculously rich was Russia.

None of the European courts could compete in splendour with Petersburg. Its expenditures under Catherine were unthinkable for all other monarchies. Sometimes they reached up to 12 percent of the gross state expenditures! The imperial power was also impressively stamped on the city’s appearance: on its memorials of military glory, on buildings, in architectural complexes. One could judge this power also by the gorgeous celebrations and parades. It could be felt in the

capital's squares and streets and in the general lifestyle of Petersburg citizens. Catherine II remembered too well Peter the Great's words that Petersburg was not merely a city but the "facade" of an empire, and that everybody would judge Russia's power and glory by its appearance, and she considered herself to be the heir to Peter I's great deeds. It had been this idea that was expressed in the laconic inscription on the Bronze Horseman pedestal, the monument erected under her: "To Peter the First from Catherine the Second". This also explains why Catherine never grew tired of embellishing her "former duck's nest", "my prudish one, my capital" (as she used to joke in her letters) surprising both her predecessors and successors in it. It is a well-known fact that under Catherine a new architectural style, different from that of Elizaveta Petrovna's reign (1741–1761), came to dominate in Petersburg. The pretentious Baroque style of Elizaveta's age was replaced by strict and stately Neoclassicism. This was a powerful demand of fashion that chronologically coincided with the change of political figures on the throne. But there was also a private motif. Catherine had given her preferences to Neoclassicism, her aesthetic ideas having been formed under the strong influence of the Enlightenment — the main trend of the European intellectual life in the second half of the 18th century, with its typical demands of simplicity, elegance, clarity of mind and of lines. It should be noted that the shift in styles took place exactly when Saint-Hilaire started his grand project, and this change almost created an atmosphere of conflict. In the early 1760s, commissioned by I. I. Shuvalov, the favourite of the Empress Elizaveta Petrovna, the then famous architect F. B. Rastrelli designed a new Gostiny Dvor (Merchants' Yard) at the corner of Sadovaya Street and Nevsky Avenue in the Baroque style characteristic to him. Catherine II, who came to power in the summer of 1762, did not like Rastrelli's project for the reasons mentioned above. The sovereign was enthusiastically supported by the merchants, not on the grounds of aesthetics, as the reader may guess, but because it was they who were supposed to pay the pretty sum for all those Baroque toys! And so the design and construction of Gostiny Dvor was commissioned to J.-B. M. Vallin de la Mothe, at that time an obscure French architect who had become a member of the Academy of Arts in 1759. The great Rastrelli took offence and retired, having understood his time had passed, as architects have always been dependent to a great extent on the whims of administration.

Vallin de la Mothe worked in the Neoclassical style which conformed to the empress's taste and ideas of the Enlightenment adepts. This doesn't mean the buildings in Elizabeth's Baroque style were destroyed or reconstructed radically. On the contrary, the peculiarity of the age was in the ability of the architects to preserve what had been created before and combine new architecture with the old. Neoclassicism in Russia is believed to have undergone certain changes in its development. At first, it was strongly influenced by French Neoclassicism. This style was typical of Vallin de la Mothe, who actually became a leading architect in the first half of Catherine II's reign, when Saint-Hilaire's plan was created. He was commissioned important construction projects. In the early 1760s, Vallin de la Mothe not only started the construction of Gostiny Dvor, but also of the Small Hermitage, the Academy of Arts (in collaboration with A. F. Kokorinov), New Holland (in collaboration with S. I. Chevakinsky), St. Catherine's Church in Nevsky Avenue, I. G. Chernyshov's mansion and other buildings. These were completed mostly towards the late 1770s – early 1780s. In Saint-Hilaire's plan we see precisely these new construction sites: the work is in full swing on New Holland, the building of the Academy of Arts is being erected (one can see its almost completed circular yard though the facade looking onto the Neva is not yet completed). In 1768, somewhere beyond the margins of the plan, in Bolshoy Avenue of Vasilievsky Island, Yury Felten began construction on the Lutheran Church of St. Catherine. Later, from about the 1780s, the sublime and somewhat prim French architectural school gave way to elegant shapes dating back to the works of Andrea Palladio, the Italian architectural genius of the 16th century. In St. Petersburg in the 1780s numerous buildings by Giacomo Quarenghi came into fashion; the Academy of Sciences, the Hermitage Theatre, the Copy of Raphael's Loggias and the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoye Selo being

among them. Later Quarenghi erected the Riding School of the Mounted Guards and the Smolny Institute. Quarenghi was challenged by Charles Cameron, the architect of the famous gallery and other buildings in Tsarskoye Selo, as well as of the Pavlovsk Palace begun in 1780. N. A. Lvov and many others belonged to the same generation of architects. Of course, in the reign of Catherine II, fantastically rich in various talents, there was a lot of outstanding artists working in their own manner which cannot be classified according to this principle. For instance, at the time when Saint-Hilaire completed his work on the plan, Antonio Rinaldi started his work on his celebrated masterpiece, the Marble Palace (1768–1785). He succeeded in his attempt to combine the principles of both the Baroque and Neoclassicism styles in his works. Though the new Neoclassical trend can be distinctly seen in the architecture of Catherine’s Petersburg, it is sufficient to visualize the look of the above-mentioned buildings that still dominate the city’s appearance.

New architectural ideas implied scales and shapes different from those used before. That meant the emergence of architectural complexes united by the idea of harmony rather than by the former order of Peter I, fitting the already existing city’s building. Saint-Hilaire’s plan shows that the complex of Catherine’s and Alexander’s reigns did not appear out of nowhere. Peter’s, then Anna’s and further on Elizabeth’s Petersburg, became the basis for the later famous complexes precisely due to the above-mentioned principle of order, the demands for uniformity in building different parts of the city. These demands had been steadily carried out into life in the architectural policy until the early 1760s. From Saint-Hilaire’s plan, one can see how strict and clear the urban development area in the first half of the 18th century was, and we can understand that the conspicuous straightness and broadness of Petersburg streets formed the basis for the further perfection of the city’s architectural countenance by the new generations of architects. Just like separate crystals of ice make a symmetrical and beautiful pattern of a snowflake, our city was transformed from the existing quarters and buildings into architectural complexes. It is natural that the emergence of the ensembles was necessitated by both the influence of the new construction ideology for Petersburg and by life itself. The city’s growing population, its industries and commerce required the development of communications and the final dislodge of the suburb system inherited from Peter I, with its characteristic separation of the city’s districts by gaps of marshes and plots of barren land. Such spots are quite numerous in the Saint-Hilaire’s plan. By the beginning of Catherine’s reign, the concepts for the city’s development worked out by the Commission for Petersburg Construction had exhausted themselves by the late 1730s. From 1762 the new “Commission for Masonry Construction in St. Petersburg and Moscow” took responsibility for planning the capital, having become a government body for planning both capitals. A. V. Kvasov, who created a new building plan for the central part of St. Petersburg, I. A. Starov (the architect of the Taurida Palace and Holy Trinity Cathedral in the Alexander Nevsky Monastery), and other famous architects were members of the commission. In November 1763 the Commission announced a competition for a new master plan with the purpose of “bringing the city of St. Petersburg to such order and status and giving it splendour appropriate for the metropolitan city of the vastest nation.” The imperial idea of “the facade” embodied in Kvasov’s project was approved by Catherine II. The author of the project took all pains to ensure that the space between structures was filled as densely as possible, “filling the centre of the city with worthy constructions”. He proposed the creation of a chain of central squares that would later form a splendid continuum of Palace Square, Admiralty Square and Petrovskaya Square. He also kept in mind such a pragmatic and important thing for the city as the “constant binding of the streets” together by means of sidewalks, bridges and thoroughfares along the left bank of the Neva from the Galerny (Galleys) Yard to the Liteiny (Foundry) Yard. Even the name of the commission suggests that the city was rebuilt in stone. This was a main condition of the project, as it also implied the general construction of stone embankments for the Neva and the rivers in the central part of the city. Kvasov’s commission activities predetermined the development of the city for decades on. As under Peter

the Great, the city architects adopted all the designs of private buildings, but it was still necessary to stick to the general dimensions of the facades and the architectural order of buildings. Those who built houses on their own had to keep to the red line principle and height regulations for the terraced street building. The rest could be done at the owners' will, but there existed one more strict regulation obliging the owners of the houses between the Neva and the Fontanka: to build them not less than two stories high as well as to erect "continuous stone fences or iron grills on stone posts." Saint-Hilaire's plan marked only the beginning of this type of construction. It shows that the initiatives of Catherine's commission were based on a solid past, that Petersburg under Peter the Great's successors was developing like a "regular city", and construction principles adopted by the great founder of the city were strictly observed, whether "the red line" principle or the typology of the often twin-like living and service buildings were concerned.

At the same time, as before, great attention was paid to the frontal looks of Petersburg: the most beautiful, wealthy and distinguished houses and palaces were to line the banks of the Neva and the main streets, while nobody cared about what was behind them or up the Neva and the tributaries. The axonometric plan by Saint-Hilaire, his bird's-eye view of the city, shows that behind "the facade" made up of the beautiful stone houses looking onto the embankment, almost everywhere else are wooden houses, fenced plots of land with low buildings resembling one another, servants' huts, (every third out of Petersburg's population was a serf in those days), stables with a coach-house (of course, if there was a coach), a Russian bath-house and even a vegetable garden with neat and even beds of carrots, turnips, beets and cabbages – the basic vegetables that could get ripe in the thin soil.

As in the first half of the 18th century, in the 1760s authorities paid much attention to the condition of streets. The tenants were to pave side-walks and horse-roads in front of their houses, for the purpose of which they hired masons. Usually these were peasants from Yaroslavl, Tver and other provinces who came to town to earn a living. Almost all the central streets were paved with "wild stones" – cobble-stones and in some places – with stone slabs. On the outskirts it was different: grass or great puddles covered the unpaved streets. In rainy weather these streets of Petersburg were not much different from those of provincial towns: coaches and pedestrians were sinking into thick mud. In the autumn and in the spring even the central avenues were under water and mud: the gutters along the sidewalks ran isolated, as a sewage system had not yet been introduced. The first sewer works were carried out in 1770, when brick sewer-pipes about 1 metre in diameter were laid under the streets. Iron grates protected the wells opening down into the pipes. Through them the water from the streets went into sewer-pipes and ran into the rivers and canals. In 1766 work on straightening and deepening the Glukhaya rivulet began which eventually turned it into the Yekaterininsky Canal. In the times of Saint-Hilaire, sewage waters drained down into the rivers and canals through special gutters whose sides, neatly faced with wood, are seen in the plan. New granite embankments contributed to the charm of the city in Catherine's age. We can not yet see these in Saint-Hilaire's plans – the left bank of the Neva from the Gallies Yard to the Foundry (with a gap in front of the Admiralty Wharf to launch ships) was the first to be dressed in granite. The construction of the embankment began exactly in 1763 and by 1788 was over at the same time as three stone bridges – the Hermitage Bridge across the Zimnyaya Kanavka (Winter Canal), the Verkhnelebyazhya (Upper Swans) Bridge across the Lebyazhya Kanavka (Swans Canal) and the Prachechny (Laundry) Bridge across the Fontanka by the Summer Garden. This work was commissioned to Vallin de la Mothe and Yu. M. Felten. The completion date of the first section (1764) has been preserved till now on the embankment by the existing Hermitage Theatre. In 1779, work on facing the walls of the Peter-and-Paul Fortress with granite on the Neva side began. On the sheets of Saint-Hilaire's plan we can clearly see the old Petrine system of wooden embankments of grooved piles densely hammered into the banks (each pile having a groove on one side and a lug on the other to get into the neighbouring pile). Wooden embankments were Petersburg's chief nuisance: the piles either rotted

away in some five or six years, were washed out by the river waves, or rammed by blocks of ice when the rivers were getting ice-bound or because of floating ice. All winter long it was necessary to clear the embankments and piers of ice, otherwise in spring the piles would have been extracted like decayed teeth by the moving ice-floes. The view the Peter-and-Paul Fortress had started changing by the time the work of Saint-Hilaire's team was drawing to an end though it was not preserved among the materials being published. This was because lightning had stricken the bell-tower spire of the St. Peter and Paul Cathedral three times within a dramatic interval of ten years (in 1736, 1746 and 1756). The stormy night of April 30, 1756 brought forward a tragedy. The wooden spire of the bell-tower built by the Dutch-born van Bolios caught fire and crashed down upon the cathedral like a column of flames. The angel by D. Trezzini perished together with the spire. The bell-tower was reconstructed much later. The designs submitted by S. I. Chevakin, A. Rinaldi, Yu. Felten, A. Vist and other leading architects of the period were rejected by Catherine II. All of them required considerable reconstruction and a change in the initial design of the bell-tower and, consequently, were not approved of by the Empress. In 1766 she ordered that the reconstruction of the bell-tower should be started, "To make the one exactly like it had been, since all the other designs are less beautiful." Thanks to Catherine's sensible conservatism the German expert B. P. Bauer and a team of carpenters under A. Yeremeyev restored Trezzini's tower in its original form. Yeremeyev was a great artisan, but, as E. N. Elkin put it, "not a man to be trusted upon". He had been under arrest for having bailed two tselovalniks, and whenever he left the fortress he was accompanied by a soldier to prevent his accidental "disappearances". One can easily guess where a gifted carpenter, a friend of the tselovalniks, the proprietors of a drinking house, could "disappear" to. Still this combination of the German engineering genius and Russian mother wit produced an outstanding result: the construction of the wooden spire completed in 1772 was admired not only by the contemporaries; but seventy-five years after, it would still fascinate experts with its simple and clear design, and the unusually perfect and durable execution. In 1777 the Angel, like the whole of the cathedral, got for the first time its protection from lightning with a lightning-rod. The parks of Petersburg also underwent changes under Catherine. The Empress disliked the French parks with their pure geometry of paths and fountains that, as she put it, were just "tormenting water". Hence the French gardens were doomed. Following new fashion, the process of transforming them into English gardens began. What we see in the sheets by Saint-Hilaire is unique: the Summer Gardens (there are known to have been three) were to exist for only a few more years, in plans they show their geometrically perfect regularity, soon after the completion of Saint-Hilaire's commission they would disappear forever. The First Great Flood of 1777 brought great damage to the Petrine Summer Gardens and the grotto with the statue of Venus of Taurida as well as to the fountains. They were not to be restored; nor were the trees and bushes to be replanted according to the geometrical pattern. One of the sheets from Saint-Hilaire's collection is like a farewell from the Petrine Summer Gardens. On it we can see the part of the gardens bordering the Fontanka with the celebrated grotto which was later replaced by the Coffee House, by fountains, pavilions, and servants' chambers stretching along the riverside almost up to the very Summer Palace of Peter I. In conforming with the new aesthetic ideas, the Tsarina preferred the landscaped "English" park with its winding walks, little lakes, cosy corners, simplicity, artlessness and closeness to "nature". By the Empress's wish, the architects I. Bush and T. Ilyin started to create the so-called Old Garden and the English Garden in Tsarskoye Selo. The image of nature in the Enlightenment conception was far from reality and the landscaped park emerged like "nature drawn up", with the special plantings of trees and deliberate hedges. Great effort and enormous money were required to create secluded corners, "murmuring waters", "Gothic ruins", "mills" and "milk farms" that all of a sudden appeared before the visitors from behind the turns of the alleys. Neoclassicism came into fashion in the city parks as well. But in Saint-Hilaire's plan all these horticultural innovations of the age cannot yet be traced: they were

only at the beginning stage. French parks can be seen near many wealthy houses of Petersburg. On Vasilievsky Island, we can get a bird's-eye view of the impressive remains of the once beautifully decorated white marble statues in the garden of the first Petersburg Governor, A. D. Menshikov (they had been removed to Peterhof). In 1731 all his estate went to the Infantry School. The garden had obviously been well looked after, and bersos, sheltered galleries twined with trimmed greenery, survived till the age of Catherine. These continuously arched tunnels of greenery are matching pergolas – also sheltered galleries of greenery differing from bersos only in having clear spaces in their arches. These galleries stretch along a considerable part of the Twelve Collegia building. At gallery openings and at the points where they cross with those going along the Neva we can see cosy green pavilions, a kind of rotunda, – and another garden pavilion, with a turret at the top. All the galleries are neatly enclosed with thoroughly trimmed hedges of bushes. To the west of the bersos one can see various parterres – the open spaces of the garden occupied with geometrical patterns of ground tiling, brick or stone, or, perhaps, grass following the English tradition. Geometrically trimmed little cones of junipers or yew-trees emphasize the parterre's cut outs. A row of fir-trees, the most favoured plants in a French park (due to their natural symmetry) separates the body of the garden from the other buildings in the inner part of the island. The gardens of wealthy Petersburgians were arranged similarly. This can be seen in the work by Saint-Hilaire. An empire can not do without monuments, and Catherine's age produced plenty of them. The Peter I's wooden obelisk in Troitskaya (Trinity) Square commemorating the victory at Grencham in 1720 and the equally flimsy triumphal arch decorated with paintings and wooden sculptures in Nevsky Avenue were replaced by bronze and marble monuments created to imitate classical Roman and French models. For example, K. B. Rastrelli worked for more than thirty years (from 1716 through 1747) on the equestrian statue of Peter the First, copying the style of Marcus Aurelius's statue in Rome. But Rastrelli's work as well as another equestrian monument by the sculptor A. Martelli were not placed in squares, and by the beginning of Catherine II's reign these Baroque monuments had already become outdated. Rastrelli's Peter remained for more than half a century in a shed before Paul I took it out in 1800 and put it in front of the Mikhailovsky Castle under clear skies. Catherine II took care of perpetuating her reign in monuments. One memorial after another mushroomed in the Tsarskoselsky Park – the Morey Column (1771), the Cesme Column (1771–1778) and the Kagul Obelisk (1771). In St. Petersburg, in the Field of Mars, the obelisk "To Rumiantsev's Victories" (1799) was unveiled, and two years later, already under Paul I, the monument to Suvorov followed. Again, the famous "Bronze Horseman", that once and forever has become the symbol of imperial Petersburg, should be mentioned as the most important monument of Catherine's age. The design was created by the French sculptor Etienne Maurice Falconet, who came to Russia in 1766. The design was approved by Catherine, and in 1775–1778 the statue was cast and polished. Falconet, however, could not complete the work he had begun, – he left Russia in 1778. His cause was completed by Yu. M. Felten, who designed the famous grill of the Summer Gardens. The inauguration of the monument to Peter was in summer of 1782, with all arrangements to make it a triumph of the empire and her sovereign and to resemble a grand theatrical show. The solemnly arranged troops at attention in full dress and the numerous spectators who crowded the square looked at "a wild boulder of stone", which was nothing but a gigantic case, a setting made of painted canvas. When the sovereign arrived at the square, a rocket soared into the skies, and suddenly, as the "Sankt-Peterburgskiy Vedomosti" reported, "got lower and lower... by an unseen power, to the spectators' surprise, what had seemed to be a rock finally disappeared on all sides without any remainder, so that not the slightest trace remained of it (in plain words, – it fell down like a house of cards. – *E. A.*). It revealed before the surprised eyes of the spectators Peter on horseback, as if from the very heart of it he had suddenly ridden up the surface of the mighty boulder, his imperious right hand held out." At the same moment the heavens were split with the thunder of cannons at the Peter-and-Paul and the

Admiralty fortresses, as well as from the battleships on the Neva and the crackling of the running musketry from all the saluting regiments was heard. His Most Serene Highness, Field Marshal G. A. Potyomkin, commanded the parade. Other celebrations of Catherine II's age were no less grand. Like in the age of Elizabeth, balls and masquerades were held at court, these being visited by several thousands of guests at a time. The Empress chose the Winter Palace, completed by B. F. Rastrelli in 1762, as her main residence. The palace was an outstanding work of architecture. The Nevsky suite of rooms (the Throne Chamber including) stretched along the Neva for 160 metres. The Great enfilade of main halls, including the church, began at the main staircase. All the halls were magnificently decorated with fretwork and wall-paintings. Because of his dismissal, Rastrelli could not carry out all his plans for the palace interior in the Baroque and Rococo styles. Still, the palace halls became a wonderful setting for court celebrations. The famous adventurer Giacomo Casanova, who happened to be present at a ball in the Winter Palace in 1765, wrote in his memoirs "the whole setting of the ball was a show of fanciful luxury of the rooms and guests' attire, the general look was splendid." W. Coxe, an Englishman who visited a court ball in 1778, was of the same opinion: "The wealth and splendour of the Russian court are beyond the most flowery description. The traces of the ancient Asiatic magnificence here are blended with European subtlety..., the brilliance of the court attires and the abundance of precious stones surpass by far the splendour of other European nations." Some eight thousand people were gathered in the palace on that day, yet this crowd was not mixing with the noblest aristocrats who were dancing to the same tunes, but behind a low barrier. Only the chosen few from this crowd could attend the feasts or soirees at the Hermitage; there one could meet the Empress, speak to her, play forfeits, cards or billiards, or even find oneself by the sovereign while dancing in a ring. Catherine arranged her Hermitage – the shelter of solitude and quietness – not in a remote suburb, but close to the Winter Palace. The Hanging Garden with a birch alley, the Winter Garden with its exotic plants and birds, and what was the most important, the numerous works of art. It all created a Paradise world. The buildings of the Small Hermitage (by J.-B. M. Vallin de la Mothe, 1764–1767) and the Old Hermitage (by Yu. Felten, 1771–1784) housed the collections of paintings by outstanding artists, classical sculpture, busts by Fedot Shubin, collections of gems and coins. There was also the Diamond Chamber sparkling with all the jewels belonging to the Russian tsars. The library of Catherine II was also superb. Three kinds of Catherine's soirees – the three "Hermitage parties" – Grand, Medium and Small, were well known. If someone was invited to the Small Hermitage, the most intimate of them, it was regarded as a rare sign of favour and it should be made an ingenious use of. Prior to nominating an official to a high position, he was invited to "the Hermitage" and there, in a free conversation "without titles and ceremonies", the shrewd sovereign got acquainted with the man, learned what was on his mind, how he dealt with people, and only after that made her final decision about the appointment. The Empress worked out a curious etiquette for her guests to follow at "the Hermitage parties": "1. All titles should be left at the entrance, just like hats, and especially like swords. 2. Arrogance and haughty looks should also be left behind the doors. 3. One should be cheerful and carefree, but not to spoil, break or gnaw anything. 4. One may sit down, stand and walk at one's pleasure, without looking back at anyone... 5. One should not foul the nest, and what is let in one ear, should be let out the other before leaving." The punishment for failing to observe these rules was not drinking from "The Goblet of the Great Eagle" as under Peter the Great, but learning by heart verses from "Telemakhida" by V. K. Trediakovsky, a poem written in the astoundingly difficult and archaic Russian language. Metropolitan aristocracy also entertained themselves with card games at clubs, including the distinguished English Club which opened in Galernaya Street in 1770 and had only about five dozen members. Some waited to be admitted to the Club all their lives, though it was possible to lose one's fortune at many other places set up for the purpose. Music lovers joined musical societies; and their members could sponsor an orchestra and indulge themselves in listening to its performances at their

hearts' content. The parties in the houses of the nobility were as splendid as those at court. The wealthiest of the Grands, those who lived in the rich mansions depicted by Saint-Hilaire and his assistants, held "free access" to their table. Piquard, one of the travellers who visited Russia in the second half of the 18th century, witnessed that if a person received the host's invitation to dine with him once, he was expected to be present at his dinner for the rest of his life, and he could come to this table without any special invitation almost every day, "besides," the author of the memoirs wrote, "the more often we were present at these cordial dinner parties, the more welcome we were, as if it had been us who were doing a favour and not the other way round." As before, theatre was one of the chief pastimes among the residents of the city. At the Hermitage Theatre built by G. Quarenghi in 1783–85 on the site of the Petrine Winter Palace, French plays were performed for only the choicest spectators sparkling with diamonds. All other theatres were quite modest. The audience admired Ya. B. Kniazhnin's "Vadim", V. I. Lukin's "A Spendthrift Reformed by Love" and, of course, "The Brigadier General" and "The Young Hopeful" by the gifted D. I. Fonvizin. These were hailed with storms of applause, or, to be more precise, by showers of purses thrown upon the stage, as the tradition of the age was. Performances were staged at the Free Russian Theatre on the Tsarina's Lawn (the Field of Mars) which was opened in 1770. At the beginning of 1763 the Big (Stone) Theatre in the future Teatralnaya (Theatre) Square (the square of the Grand Theatre in the plan), opened its doors surprising everyone with its dimensions and interior. One contemporary wrote: "The theatre is built in a new fashion that has been completely unfamiliar to these parts. The stage is very high and spacious, and the auditorium for spectators encloses three-fourths of a circle." As the custom was, both operas, plays and ballets were staged in the theatre. In Petersburg, the comic opera "The Miller, Sorcerer, Impostor and Match-Maker" by A. O. Ablesimov, based upon folktales, was at the top of popularity.

Examining numerous buildings of the Infantry School (the Corps of Cadets) on Vasilievsky Island, one can only guess which of them housed the School theatre; historical documents give only the most general location of the theatre: "V. O. (this abbreviation stands for Vasilievsky Island – *I. B., S. S.*), Kadetskaya Line, 1, in the yard." Actually, it was there that the Russian drama theatre emerged. It was where Sumarokov's plays, the first dramas written in the Russian language, were staged and where the outstanding actor Fyodor Volkov performed. This yard is also famous in the history of Russian sport for having the first football match played on it at the end of the 19th century.

Under Catherine, music for theatrical performances in Petersburg's theatres was composed by the Italians B. Galuppi, T. Traetta and G. Paisiello. Their compositions were performed also at court, balls, masquerades and dinner parties. Giuseppe Sarti was famous for his chants, and in church choir music none could compete with Dmitry Bortniansky, head of the court choir (*capella*) which was also established during Saint-Hilaire's activities. Bortniansky, as well as another composer, M. S. Berezovsky, had come from the Ukraine and had been educated in Italy. The history of the Russian arts and the emergence of the national opera cannot be imagined without his name. At court and in the best houses of Petersburg the art of the virtuoso violinist E. I. Khandoshkin, the former serf, was admired, and when the sounds of the most popular polonaise "Come in Rattling, the Thunder of Victory" by O. A. Kozlovsky to the verse by Gavriil Derzhavin were heard from the minstrel's galleries of the patrician mansions, few people could remain uneffected, so solemn and lofty the tune was.

Casanova wrote that in summer of 1766 Catherine commissioned A. Rinaldi to build a wooden amphitheatre in Palace Square for a carousal. This was one of the seven carousals referred to in the history of the Russian Empire. Of course, the 18th century carousal was quite different from the "carousel" attraction (a merry-go-round. – *I. B., S. S.*) to which our readers have got accustomed. Instead, it was a great festival which replaced European jousting. It opened upon a vast circular arena (the Italian for circle being "carosello") in a spectacular theatrical show, with the procession

of heralds, trumpeters, and participants. A carousel consisted of several tours called quadrilles, – in 1766 there were four: Slavonic, Roman, Turkish and Indian. The participants – society ladies and gentlemen in ancient attire – were to demonstrate perfect skills in riding, chariot-driving, and to possess well-trained thoroughbred horses. Moving in around the arena, the chariots and horses performed incredibly difficult manoeuvres, and the riders, galloping at top speed, demonstrated various feats with pikes, rings and balls to the admiration of thousands of spectators on the platforms. Orchestras played during the whole show. On the main platform were seated the empress and the jury, who named the winners of the quadrilles. The sovereign in person honoured them with invaluable prizes. The three ladies, the Countesses N. Chernyshova, E. Buturlina and A. Lopukhina were recognized as the best lady-riders of the first carousel in 1766. Grigory Orlov was announced the winner at the second carousel. For common people, shows of a simpler kind were organized in Palace Square. On festive occasions, a barbecued ox stuffed with grilled poultry and meat was mounted on a towering platform to be lacerated by the crowd. Near by, jets of wine were springing from special fountains into reservoirs. Such gratuitous dishing-outs always resulted in monstrous rough-and-tumble fighting around the ox carcass, and especially for its head, as those who would deliver it to the palace were to obtain a prize of a hundred roubles. It is not difficult to imagine how people reacted to the wine fountains. In the second half of the 18th century Petersburg was turning into a city with a developed system of self-government. It began in 1768 with the introduction of the new post of Mayor, who was elected for a two year term by all of the house owners. Major-General Zinoviev was the first to become Mayor of Petersburg. At the same time representatives of Petersburg, just as in other towns, were elected to participate in the Ulozhennaya (Code) Commission of 1766 that was to work out the new Code of Laws – the Ulozhenie. Merchants managed to express their demands in a special mandate submitted to the representatives by townsmen. The representatives were to protect the merchants' commerce from the onset of foreign competitors and the offspring of peasantry who were quickly becoming active in a more profitable city market. City residents also demanded liberation from the burdensome taxation, and especially from the wasteful quartering – one should keep in mind that Petersburg remained the military capital of the empire, where the guards and army as well as naval crews were quartered. By the time the merchants' mandate was worked out, the needs and problems of the city as a single organism became evident. The citizens demanded the authorities to improve the public health system, combat dirt, crime, run-up prices and also to loan credit to those who were building houses on their own. Catherine was known to favour the creation of a middle class in society (in the full sense of the term), and she did much for the purpose by implementing the regional reform in 1775 and signing the Charter to the Cities (1785). Shortly before the regional reform, in 1774, a City Council was set up, composed of merchants and townsmen, and later the Regional Council, which was responsible for the whole St. Petersburg region. In 1775 the Department of Public Welfare was established with the purpose of looking after schools, hospitals, penitentiaries and alms-houses. The system of public welfare was funded by the city and donations from citizens, both well- and not so well-off, as well as by various institutions. In 1782 the city got its new administrative division. Since then it was consisted of ten "chasts" (boroughs, or districts. – *I. B., S. S.*) divided into forty-two quarters. The districts were: the 1st Admiralteisky (Admiralty Island), the 2nd Admiralteisky (the land between the Yekaterinensky Canal and the Moika), the 3rd Admiralteisky (between the Yekaterinensky Canal and the Fontanka), Vasilievsky, Petersburgsky (Petrogradsky Island), Vyborgsky, Liteiny, Moscovsky, Rozhdestvensky, and Karetnay (the latter two were along Nevsky Avenue). From there emerged chastny pristavs (from the word "chast", or district) – senior police officers who were in charge of a district – and quartalnii nadziratelys (supervisors over the quarters. – *I. B., S. S.*) who, in their turn, had under them over five hundred night watchmen who were on duty in special sentry boxes at the busy crossroads of the city. There one could read the names of the streets on special

posts. The police were a subdivision of the Uprava Blagochinia (the Department of Public Order. – *I. B., S. S.*) so was fire-fighting, sanitation and public safety in the city, and it was the Uprava's duty to see how the city functioned and looked. No building could be erected in the city unless sanctioned by the city's architect accountable to the Uprava. During Catherine's reign house numbers were introduced, and by 1791 the gates of 4,554 houses had already been supplied with number signs. In fact, there were many more houses, but not all of them were registered. The radical changes in the life of Petersburg like in the lives of other Russian towns was stipulated by the Charter to the Cities of 1785. Owing to it, elective bodies virtually started to govern the city. The Charter instituted six categories of the city's population that were listed in the book of names and thus created "the town's community". At a general meeting of "the town's community", those with necessary property qualification elected the members of the City Duma, the Mayor, members of the City Council, and starostas (bailiffs. – *I. B., S. S.*). Though only 12,500 out of the 200,000 of St. Petersburg's population had electoral rights, the institution of self-government was a remarkable event in the city's history. For the first time the city got its own budget made up of duties, liquor sales, freightage and taxes. By then St. Petersburg no longer required any special financial support as it had before, it was no longer necessary to take measures "to protect" it from the Arkhangelsk rivals as was needed under Peter. Cargoes were channelled (while nobody impelled to do so) through St. Petersburg, now the largest Russian port, from all over Russia, to trade here became a profitable business. As before, the commercial sea terminal in Kronshtadt and the port at the Spit of Vasilievsky Island and along the Smaller Neva were overcrowded with foreign merchantmen that came from 18 European countries. In 1760, 338 vessels called at the port, by 1797 there were already 1,267 most of them being English. Ships from the United States were also showing themselves here. Some skip-pers from Boston, Salem, Rockport and other towns made trading with Russia their chief business, they crossed the ocean dozens of times, they named their vessels "St. Petersburg", "The Neva", etc. They took a variety of Russian goods, mainly iron, canvas, leather, hawsers, hemp, fat and flax, to America. Also, millions of goose feathers were brought to America from Petersburg. This makes it possible to suggest, in a kind of joke, that the Declaration of Independence of the USA was signed on July 4 1776 with Russian goose feathers. Numerous piers for merchantmen along the Smaller Neva by the Merchants' Yard on Vasilievsky Island are seen in Saint-Hilaire's plan. Petersburg also became the largest centre for domestic trade – as before, importing mainly farm products and raw materials from near and remote provinces and from its suburbs. Through the Vishny Volochek system millions of poods (40 Russian poods are equal to 35 pounds avoirdupois. – *I. B., S. S.*) of various cargo were delivered to Petersburg. This system was also the main route for imported goods. These were sugar, silk, cloth, wine, tobacco, coffee, haberdashery, and articles of luxury, such as lemons, oysters and anchovies. It is obvious that anchovies and oysters, like a larger part of Russian imports, were consumed neither by peasants nor by poor townfolk. As before, the city's industries worked to the needs of the army and navy, they provided everything that was necessary for the court, palaces, nobility mansions and they also supplied the construction sites of Petersburg with building materials. According to the historian V. V. Pokshishevsky's estimation, about 40 percent of industries were market oriented, 28 percent of them served the needs of the court and nobility, 13 percent worked for the army, 19 percent for construction. As before, naval shipbuilding was concentrated at the Admiralty. By 1800, wharfs for building larger vessels had been moved to the site of the former Galerny (Galley) Yard, down the Neva. This area had been unoccupied since 1740. The galleys were built on Vasilievsky Island. Foundries, forges and turneries were concentrated within the Foundry Yard, as well as at Sestroretsky and Obukhovsky works. Canon, guns and anchors were manufactured there. There were many gunpowder works in Petersburg – this explosive substance was produced in such abundance that during Elizaveta Petrovna's funeral in 1762 more than a hundred cannons at the Peter-and-Paul and the Admiralty fortresses kept on saluting every minute

for five hours on end. In the 1780's, the large private metallurgical factory of the Englishman Bird was founded, later becoming famous for the production of machinery and steamships. Other factories were mostly small, but they satisfied the city's needs in canvas, galloons, hats, leather, soap, sugar, sealing-wax, wax, glass and other goods. These enterprises were scattered all over the city, and it is difficult to distinguish them in Saint-Hilaire's plan without any additional information, but a typical manufacturer was a long low building with sheds and barracks for workmen around it. During Catherine's reign, porcelain production was begun in Petersburg. Luxurious service sets produced at the state porcelain factory decorated dining tables at palaces. In 1769 the first private printing-house of Gartunov was opened, all in all there were 18 of them in St. Petersburg by the end of the century. Looking at Saint-Hilaire's plan, we almost "hear" through the thick of the centuries the pulse of commercial Petersburg, the Neva's laborious work at carrying vessels, boats and rafts. Near the Twelve Collegiae building one can see a timber-yard with its neat piles of logs and boards. Another timber-yard is down the river, beside the Infantry School. Three ships lie at anchor on the Neva. The two closest to us strongly resemble the traditional Dutch "galoches" (an old tub of a vessel. – *I.B., S.S.*) – reliable and capacious wind-jammers. They might have come for Russian timber as the Dutch had been doing from time immemorial, and now they are waiting for their turn at the timber pier. Many such timber-yards were by the Neva and sudden St. Petersburg floods dispersed timber and firewood along and over the territories adjoining the river, deepening the woes of timber merchants. These were occasions for one to act quickly – one could pick enough logs to build a house or to make a winter's store of firewood! The area by the Twelve Collegiae was busy then, just as it is now. The students of architecture from Saint-Hilaire's team thoroughly and lovingly drew every house, roof, fence, gutter and vegetable garden, but they did not draw people. That is why the sheets of the plan look desolate and are a reminder of the daguerreotypes of the first half of the 19th century: long exposure prevented fixing a crowd of people or coaches in motion. We know, however, that this section of Vasilievsky Island has always been busy from the early days of St. Petersburg, because of the numerous state offices and the hundreds of clerks located nearby. It was certainly a busy place. The plan shows one empty barge and two full of hay; they are tied to the pier. On the bank is a weighing-house with a gigantic weighing-machine to weigh cart-loads of hay – because there were problems with meadow-lands on Vasilievsky Island, hay quickly sold out. The streets were as disproportionately lit through out the city as they were paved: downtown and in "noble" areas, bustling streets had more street lamps, but the farther from the centre, the more rarely they were seen until they finally faded out on the outskirts. There, the almost absolute dark of the night was dispelled only by the dim lights coming out of the windows of the apartment buildings, and by fires – "foot warmers" for the city's watchmen. Each oil-lamp (there were more than 2 thousand of them in the 1770s and 3 400 by 1794) was hung on a special rod fixed upon a wooden lamp-post. Their maintenance was placed in the hands of a special team of lamp-lighters. The desolate figure of a Petersburgian lamp-lighter was familiar to the citizens who used to scold these very lamps: they gave a very wan light (contractors were skimping on oil), would often go out, or smear the pedestrians' clothes with oil. In Saint-Hilaire's plan (where nowadays the monument to Lomonosov is, in Mendeleyev Line, between the University and the Academy) we see a habitual for 18th-century Petersburg wide bridgelet of logs, with railing, across the tributary flowing from the North, from the site of the present-day Academy of Sciences Library. Another small bridge across the canal by the Infantry School is distinctively divided into the horse-road and footpath (on the right). The small bridge ("most" in Russian. – *I. B., S. S.*) by the Twelve Collegiae floats into another "most" (a planked footway) – this is how the pavement of logs and boards for coach traffic and pedestrians was called in the 18th century (from which the Russian expression "mostit' ulitsu" meaning "to pave the street" derives. – *I. B., S. S.*). Such wooden "mosts" (let us recollect the excavations of the ancient Novgorod streets and the hollow side-walks in the streets of some modern towns

in the Russian North) were plenty in St. Petersburg. Boggy and marshy land made the streets in low parts and especially by the banks of rivulets and streams dirty and almost impassable. We can find similar “mosts” of boards and logs (the mostovie) both on horse-roads and side-walks in many sheets of Saint-Hilaire’s plan: one of them leads from a low place to a dry, solid site, the others, like pathways, run to the buildings on the bank, merging with the embankments. It is noteworthy that in St. Petersburg the bridges were always built in an arch, their “humpbackedness” allowing smaller vessels to pass under them.

The number of bridges across the rivers and canals increased considerably in the second half of the 18th century, but the numerous ferry-boats remained the main means of crossing the waterways. The boats were usually concentrated in the busiest places, and anyone could be quickly ferried to the other side of the river for a kopeck. Those who had no money had to make their way to the bridges. In a fragment of the plan we see the first bridge across the Neva in St. Petersburg – the Isaakievsky pontoon bridge (the one of boats). Citizens also used Sampsonievsky (Grenadersky) and Tuchkov (then Nikolsky) bridges. Many of the bridges in Petersburg remained drawbridges and pontoon bridges. The latter were made by a chain of barges and pontoons, anchored and bound together. Logs and boards were planked over. For the winter season, pontoons were moved to the banks, and people crossed the rivers on the ice. Since 1779, however, the main bridge across the Neva (the Isaakeivsky) remained in its place all year round. Unlike the splendid stone-built downtown, the outskirts, namely the greater part of Petersburg, were still built of wood. In Catherine’s age, the boisterous metropolitan life was finally moved to the Admiralteysky and Moscovsky sides. There, as if competing with each other, high stone buildings were mushrooming, while on the outskirts was the quiet, almost provincial life. The Gorodovaya side, or Petersburg Island (now Petrogradskaya side) from where the city had started, faded away. The city’s historian I. G. Georgy gave the following description of St. Petersburg Island, once a pulsating centre of the young Petrine Petersburg, that under Catherine turned into a provincial town: “The streets in this part of the city are broad, straight, but mostly unpaved, and both in the spring and autumn they are very dirty and in various conditions, therefore many of them cross at sharp and obtuse angles. There are many gardens and vacant plots of land.” Most parts of Vasilievsky Island, once another prospective centre of Petersburg, was no less neglected. Saint-Hilaire’s plan shows that it was the woods that still remained its “architectural dominant”. The eastern corner of the island – the Spit, the blocks on the first lines, approximately from the Neva to Sredny Avenue – was well-developed, habitable and even busy. Georgy wrote: “The vast eastern part has three parallel thoroughfares stretching from East to West, of which the southernmost one, about 50 sazhen (150 m. – *I. B., S. S.*) wide, called Bolshaya Perspektiva, starts at the Infantry School and runs towards the Kronshtadt Bay. Within the city limits, the middle part of this street is paved, and on both sides of it are canals, and behind the canals by most houses there are wonderful gardens, which make the street look like a “myza” (a small country estate. – *I. B., S. S.*). Out of town (we draw the reader’s attention to this expression. – *E. A.*), on both sides of the thoroughfare, are damp woods of various trees, greatly devastated by the 1777 flood... The second thoroughfare, called Srednyaya Perspektiva, is divided into two streets, or “lines”, by a canal. It runs through the wood out of town to the Galleys port...” The same view opened before the traveller landing at the Vyborgsky side: “In this part there is only one main street along the bank, which is not yet paved throughout. One part of this side is occupied by the settlement of the Sophiisky Regiment, and the rest by the Hospital settlement; other houses, however, are small and look like country ones, and people here exercise themselves mostly in cattle-breeding and gardening.” Similar quiet, green streets were in the Moskovsky District, in Kolomna. There, on the city’s outskirts, where its southern borders for the first time approached the line of the yet non-existent the Obvodny Canal, poor clerks, artisans and working people dwelled in little cottages with vegetable patches, cattle-sheds, sheep-cotes and pigsties. These houses were very much the same

as the lodgings of common people in the time of Peter the Great. Changes in the lives of common people whose “present day was always the repetition of their day past,” as the French diplomat L. F. Segur wrote, were little. Every morning thousands of people from the outskirts went to numerous city construction sites, throngs of populace crowded the streets, trading squares, corn-chandler’s shops, warehouses and markets (there were 14 in the city!). They worked at the embankments and canal unloading barges and carts arriving in St. Petersburg. In those days the city, like Venice or Amsterdam, was supplied mainly by waterways: every year over five thousand barges and as many rafts filled the Neva, tightly packing the city’s canals. The ships brought foodstuff, hay, firewood and building materials to the city. Gigantic barges with specially fitted stew holds that allowed freshwater to run through them carried fish (sturgeon, sterlet) to St. Petersburg. These, however, could be fished also in front of the Peter-and-Paul fortress, with this catch, the summer season used to be officially opened. By land, too, thousands of carts came to the city, at least five thousand heads of cattle were driven to St. Petersburg from the Ukraine and southern Russia (Novorossiia) and in winter numerous trains of sledges (thousands of sledge-loads) with frozen meat and other foodstuff passed through the city gates. During the entire 18th century Petersburg was under construction and reconstruction. Now and then in the etchings of that age we can see working people paving side-walks with stone, building up the stone blocks for embankments or carrying bricks up the rickety scaffolding. In the spring the city was thronged with seasonal workers – carpenters from the province of Novgorod, stone-cutters from the province of Olonets and craftsmen from other provinces. The streets in Saint-Hilaire’s plan are deserted, but we do know they were full of life. The great city, with its variegated population and mixture of different people, faces and classes, produced a peculiar impression upon the observer. “St. Petersburg,” – Segur wrote, – “presents a dual sight for one’s mind: at the same time one faces enlightenment and barbarity, traces of the 10th and 18th centuries, Asia and Europe, the Scythians and Europeans, the most fashionably proud nobility and ignorant crowd. On the one hand, fashionable apparel, rich dresses, pompous feasts, splendid celebrations and shows like those which entertain the choicest society in Paris and London; merchants in Oriental clothes, izvoztchiks, servants and rustics in sheepskin coats, with long beards, wearing fur caps and mittens, and sometimes with axes stuck in their belts, or another. These clothes, woollen footgear and something like rough buskins on their feet are a reminder of the Scythians, Dacians, Rocsolanes and Goths... But when these men in barges or carts sing their sweet but monotonously sad songs, one at once remembers they are not the ancient free Scythians, but Moscovites having lost their lordliness under the yoke of the Tatars and Russian boyars. They, however, could not destroy the powers and inborn courage of this people.” Segur was right in pointing out the sources of the striking contrasts of St. Peterburg. He wrote that his sadness doubled at the thought of Petersburg: because of the dangerous closeness of the sea and of the thought “about the boundless despotism of its colossal but limitless crown, as, in spite of all the fascination with luxury and art, the power is unlimited here, there will always be only the master and serf, whatever beautiful names were given to them.” It was easy for some to reach such a conclusion by reading in a newspaper an advertisement like this one: “A 30-year old young devka (maiden. – *I. B., S. S.*) and a bay horse are for sale. You can look at them...” – with the address following. As N. I. Turgenev wrote, in the age of Catherine, “people were brought to St. Petersburg to be sold in quantities enough to fill a barrack at a time.” The international adventurer and libertine Casanova bought a young girl for a song, and at his question of when he could settle his purchase officially, his Russian companion told him: “At any moment, if you please, and in case you would like to have a full seraglio, you should only say a word, there is no lack of beautiful lasses here.”

Visitors from Western Europe were unaccustomed to seeing numerous households share the wealthy houses of their landlords and to watching the hideous scenes of how they were mistreated or even beaten in the nobility’s manners and customs. Catherine II, being a kind and humane woman,

could not prevent servants from being beaten even in her palace. Needless to say, that the houses of landlords with basements or stables were frequently used as genuine torture-chambers for serfs of both sexes. In other words, as the poet A. M. Gorodnitsky put it,

*It is not for the first century and not for the last year,
Amidst the marble shepherdesses and Graces,
The Russian tragedy is on,
European settings serving for its background.*

Like in the first half of the 18th century, fires presented a constant danger to the city with its wooden buildings and furnace heating. In 1763 there was a great fire on Vasilievsky Island. The Merchants' Yard burned down, and in 1771, several lines were damaged by fire. Fires also blazed in the Sennoi (Hay) Market in 1782 and houses along the Moika were destroyed by fire, also. Fire-fighting, as before, remained the duty of every resident. In each house they kept some tools for fighting fire – a pail, a hook, an axe, etc. As soon as the alarm was sounded, the citizens were to take their tools and run to where the fire was burning. The Brandmeister was in charge of a team of firefighters. This position was introduced in 1763. Under him was a body of firemen who arrived at the fire with fire-quenching pipes and barrels of water. Generally speaking, water was a serious problem in St. Petersburg. It was not the drinking-water that was abundant within the city boundaries (which explains the absence of water supply systems, with the exception of some palaces) that constituted the problem. It was the floods that had troubled the city during the whole period of its history and sometimes threatened its very existence. The First Great Flood of 1777 brought damages to the poorest part of the city and was the most dreadful. The disaster came suddenly on September 10. Only the day before scientists had marked a sharp drop in the atmospheric pressure, which was a sign of a coming change in weather. After midnight the west wind became stronger, and at five in the morning the Neva overflowed its banks and “flooded the lower parts of the city at once.” That morning water stood 310 cm above the normal level. Only twice in the city's history did water rise higher than that: during the Second Great Flood on November 7, 1824 (410 cm) and the Third Great Flood on September 23, 1924 (369 cm). In 1777 only the most elevated Liteyny District as well as Vyborgsky side remained unflooded. The rest of the city was under water, so that people were moving on boats along Nevsky Avenue and other streets. Wild winds from the sea were carrying sheets of iron and tiles torn off from roofs, breaking windowpanes and crushing window-casings in the Winter Palace where the Empress was then staying. Many boats, which had dropped anchor in the Neva before were torn off it by gale. They collided and sank. The storm threw many vessels onto embankments. Catherine II wrote to Melchiorus Grimm that three-masters were towering in the Dvortsovaya (Palace) Embankment, and the embankment itself had been damaged. On Vasilievsky Island a vessel from Lubeck had not only been carried out onto the bank, but thrown into the wood, quite a distance away. In general, in the vicinities of St. Petersburg (water spread to a distance of about 11 verstas [about 12 km. – *I. B., S. S.*] from the sea-shore) the storm mercilessly crushed century-old trees and devastated plenty of wood intended for timber. The Petrine Summer Garden, as it was mentioned above, was ruined: many mighty trees were felled and the buildings were damaged by water. The waves mangled the Smolenskoye Cemetery and washed away many graves. The residents of the sea-side part of the city suffered the worst. All our sources indicate that in a sea-side jail about 300 convicts who were usually chained to walls and floors perished. Water flooded and drew down into the Neva the huts of the poor on Vasilievsky Island, Kolomna and other places – these might be exactly the houses we see in Saint-Hilaire's plan. By midday the Neva had retreated into its banks and the city was presented with an awful sight: human and animal bodies, fences turn up, timber and firewood brought by water, small and big vessels, uprooted trees – all

these were towering in a great chaos amidst the ruined houses with roofs torn off and windows broken. All the cellars and warehouses were flooded, the goods spoiled, merchants incurred tremendous losses. Only fish were aplenty at any place: in cellars, basements, rooms, right in the streets. After that flood, which had shocked the contemporaries, authorities took precautions against possible future disasters: an alarm system to warn the citizens about the on-coming danger – another flood – was introduced. In Kolomna, on the Priazhka and at other places row-boats were kept ready to save and evacuate the residents from flooded territories. However, in the time that followed before the Second Great Flood of 1824, all these rotted away and the alarm system was left in neglect and forgotten. In 18th century Russia, the Enlightenment was perceived first and foremost as a campaign against superstitions and ignorance, as the education and perfection of people by means of science and kind treatment. Ivan Ivanovich Betskoy, one of the persons close to Catherine, occupies a special place in the history of the city where the Enlightenment found its stronghold. Due to his energy, the Russian educational system of that time was reformed on the basis of the Enlightenment philosophy. In the 1760s, Betskoy reformed the chief educational institution for the nobility – the Shlyakhetsky (Gentry's) Infantry School and founded new military schools. But the most famous undertaking by Betskoy was the foundation of the Empress's Society for Noble Maidens in 1764. It was housed in the Smolny Voskresensky (Resurrection) monastery built by B. F. Rastrelli. The Smolny girls from noble families got a very good education at this private school under the watchful supervision of French school ladies. Some of the girls were the favourites of the Empress and the court and became the most enviable brides and cultured hostesses of St. Petersburg salons. The charming faces of the first graduates of the Smolny Institute look at us from the portraits by D. G. Levitsky in the halls of the Russian Museum. For the girls of petty bourgeois descent, the institute at Novodevichy Convent founded in Moscow Road was established. At the age of 5 or 6 gifted children were taken to the Educational House at the Academy of Arts founded by Betskoy. Elder children studied at the Academy of Sciences gymnasium. Upon leaving it, one could enter the Academy's University where M. V. Lomonosov taught and later the academicians I. I. Lepyokhin and V. M. Severgin lectured (the university was housed in the former palace of Praskovia Fiodorovna). Sometimes the lines of Vasilievsky Island resembled Oxford or Cambridge – so many students and pupils from various educational institutions studied there. Not just cadets from the Shlakhetsky Infantry School and Naval Shlakhetsky Corps of Cadets (the latter had moved to the 3rd Line in 1733), but students of the Academy of Arts and the Academy of Sciences too. One could also meet there students from the College of Mines founded in 1774 in the 22nd Line, students from the Teachers' Seminary in the 6th Line and the pupils of Blagoveschenskaya (Annunciation) and Andreyevskaya (St. Andrew's) private boarding schools. This explains why it was on Vasilievsky Island, where the Petersburg intelligentsia and officials resided, that St. Petersburg University was opened in 1819 in the famous building of the Twelve Collegiae. The outstanding teacher F. I. Yankovich de Mirievo, a Serbian, was the father of primary schools and pedagogical training in St. Petersburg. In 1783 he became head of the Chief "People's" College, which prepared teachers for all of Russia. It was he who was responsible for the preparation of new text-books that were handed out free of charge. It was also possible to get education in the private "free" schools and boarding-schools. There were almost fifty of them in St. Petersburg in 1784. Fine physicians were trained in the Surgery School at the Infantry and Naval hospitals on Vyborgsky Side, at the Medical College by the Fontanka as well as at the Apothecary kitchen-garden school. A true-born Petersburgian loving his or her city can "travel" infinitely up and down Saint-Hilaire's plan. One involuntarily experiences trepidation and pleasure while looking at the old St. Petersburg corners that have been transfigured and now live their modern life yet are still recognizable. It is the same way that we distinguish some touching and forever remember childish lineaments in the faces of our children who have since grown-up. The Neva embankment along the southern side of Vasilievsky Island seems to have undergone the least

changes of all. Here is the building of the Academy – Tsarina Praskovia’s former palace (now it houses the Zoological Museum), a little further on is the Kunstammer without its familiar copper globe and then there is a blank space in the plan. This space is blank as if reserved for G. Quarenghi, who in 1783 would have laid the foundation of the famous building of the Academy there. Down by the Neva is the Twelve Collegiae building, the palace of Peter II and so on. Time has also preserved for us an original building on the Great Neva embankment (now Lieutenant Schmidt Embankment). There the Neva did not permit terraced houses in a continuous, uninterrupted line as on the Admiralty Embankment. That is why since the time of Peter the Great the houses there have followed the Neva’s bend. This unusual placement of buildings was called “stitched”; it resulted from Petersburg’s traditional rectangular form of the plots on which houses were built. It was repeated by houses standing “at the brow” of the plots. Saint-Hilaire’s plan shows this stitched building surviving till now at its best. A historian experiences trepidation at seeing in the plan the houses and palaces which were backgrounds for historical personages and events that changed the fate of the city and even the country, as well as the buildings that do not exist any more or have been considerably reconstructed. Here is the sheet with the picture of Elizaveta Petrovna’s Summer Palace by the Fontanka. On the night of October 25, 1741, having put on a light horseman’s cuirass, she left that very palace to go in a sledge to the Preobrazhensky regiment quarter to stir up the guard for the uprising. There, in that very palace, she prayed ardently for the success on the eve of her desperate undertaking and gave an oath to abolish capital punishment. And she stood well by her word. Later, in 1754, in that very building Ekaterina Alexeyevna, the wife of Peter Fiodorovich, the heir to the throne, gave birth to a son named Paul. Having become Emperor Paul I 42 years later, he ordered to pull down the palace to lay the foundation of the Mikhailovsky Castle at which he soon met his terrible death – on the same spot where he had been born! Such stories can be told about many axonometric drawings in Saint-Hilaire’s plan – the plan is like a time-machine carrying us back, as if by magic, to the infinitely far-off days of St. Petersburg that seem to have passed for ever.

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