



Literature



SMETANA AND THE BEETLES: A Fairy Tale for Adults

TWENTY LETTERS TO A FRIEND. By Svetlana Alliluyeva. New York: Harper & Row. 246 pp. \$5.95.

Reviewed by Albert E. Kahn

Drawings by David Levine

PREFATORY NOTE

Lest there be any confusion between the Smetana of this fairy tale and any living person, it should be pointed out that "Smetana" in Russian (and in Yiddish) means "sour cream."

It is also of interest that the two best known works of the celebrated composer, Smetana, are The Bartered Bride and My Country. A.E.K.

Once upon a time there was a Princess
Whose name was Smetana.
She lived in the realm of Marxdom.
Her father was a Wicked Man.
He kept her in a Castle named after him;
It was called the Gremlin.
The Castle was surrounded by a rusty
Iron Curtain
And a Moat full of Krokodiles and
Vodka.



Gremlin was a Dour Dictator.
He never played Golf.

He hated Dogs and Décolletage.
He frowned at Modern Art, Be-bop
and even Little Bo-Peep.
He never smiled, except at Smetana.
He had a bodyguard of Dour Dwarfs
Called the Cult of Personality Service,
Or COPS for short.

Gremlin was mean to his Subjects.
He was suspicious of Foes and Especially
Friends.
He fumed and feuded with a Far-Off
Place
Widely publicized as Freeland Inc.
But he was kind to Smetana.
He carried her around, even as a Big
Girl.



At night she sat on his Knee
And he read her Grim Fairy Tales and
Bedtime Dogmas.
Once he sang Happy Birthday to her
(in her native dialectic).
He gave her a Sailor Suit and wrote her
Friendly Letters
That began, "My Darling
Gremlinskaya . . ."
It was not a Healthy Relationship.

Gremlin wanted to keep his little
Castle-Keeper
And brooded when she grew up and
Up and UP.

One day Smetana met a Prince
Charminsky
Who was very Cosmopolitan.
He showed her the film "Snow White
and the Seven Dwarfs"
And other Hollywood Pixie-Flix.
Gremlin's COPS had bugged the
Projection Room.
He gave Smetana two slaps and the
Prince eleven years.

To get Smetana's mind on Other Things,
Gremlin gave her a Charge Account
At Gloom Department Store;
Made her a student at Gremlingrad U.;
Let her cook, play the Harp and darn
His Socks.
It proved a flop.
He found her marching with the
Gremlin Guard.
"Nyet! Nyet! NYET!" he stormed.
"A Princess has her rights!" she
answered back.
"You Old Bolsheviks dated in your
Day!"

There came a day when Gremlin Passed
Away.
His COPS and Krokadiles skipped town
And tried to cover up Their Tracks.



The Jig was Up.
The news made the front page in the
Times
And two lines in Pravda.

The Castle was For Rent.
New Tenants took the place,
fumigated it,
And opened up some Shutters.
People punched peep-holes in the rusty
Iron Curtain.
Smetana was told her lease was up.
She found a pad in a Gingerbread
Apartment House
Among Commoners and Volga Folk.
No one called her "Princess" any more.

Things began booming in Marxgrad
(Formerly Gremlingrad).
Sputnik and stocks on the Borscht
went up.
Hopes and Hi-Rises rose.
Taxes and billboards of Gremlin's
mug came down,
And a knock on the door meant only
Groceries.
Folks chewed the Fat and danced
the Frug.
There it was called the Thaw.
But what was sweet for Ivan was sour
for Smetana.

People lambasted her Poppachka.
She could not find a Satisfying Job
or her Identity.
She tried her hand at the Writing Game
And did a piece called *Life with Father
in the Gremlin*.
It was turned down cold and
That really burned her.
She decided to go see Coseegan and
to mesh with Bresh,
Two fellows who had Access to
Publishers.



They said, "Sorry, Smetana, but
Gremlin's Days are Gonna."

It's no snap for a retired Princess
To find Peace, Privacy and her Real
Self.

Such, alas, was Smetana's
Post-Gremlin Malady.
So she consulted a Mental Magician
With a degree from the Tajmahal.
He put her on his Magic Couch.
"Your problem is," he said, "you've
become State Property.



You need a Change. Visit my homeland
of sunny Midlindia.
There's a three-week Excursion Rate.
One thing you must be sure to do.
Consult the Beetles while you're there.
I've heard about their Wondrous Powers
and Therapeutic Works."
"And who are they, Kind Sir?"
asked she.
"Free Spirits," he said, "who make
Music, Merry and Mazuma.
They're practicing Eastern methods with
Maestro Shangri-La.
They'll help you find your True Ego.
Their Rhythms should release your
Inhibitions.
Instead of Nyet! Nyet! Nyet!
They prescribe Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!"

Smetana flew by Airflop to Midlindia,
Taking along her Folding Crown and
Treasured Manuscript.
The strange land seemed like Paradise
to her.
She loved the native cooking and took a
Native Cook's Tour.
Peasants played Moonlight on the
Ganges,
Multiplied magically in Model Huts,
And fed their kids on Flowers and
Rain-Water Pop.



But nowhere could Smetana find the
Beetles,
And this bugged her.
Vainly she searched in crooked streets
among bizarre bazaars.
And combed the Yellow Pages and Ads
for Lost and Found.
One day she met a Fakir teaching a
Cobra the Flute.
"That's charming music, Sir," she said.
"Are you perchance a Beetle?"
"So sari, Sahiba," said he. "But let me
Turn On.
Ah yes, I see a vision of Free Tourist
Information
At the Embassy of Freeland Inc.
Won't you join me in some Yoga?"
Next day Smetana visited the Embassy
of Freeland Inc.
"I seek the Beetles, Sir," she told the
guy at the Door.
"Would you be One of Them?"
"Only when in disguise," he winked.
"I'm Joe, the Clerk-In-Attendance.
Just call me CIA."
"And I'm Princess Smetana, Sir," she
said. "Gremlin's Only Heir."



He chuckled. "Tell that to the Marines, Sister."
 "By happenstance," said she, "I've my Memoirs in my Purse.
 The Family Album and Poppa's Letters, too."
 He took a hurried look. "Jumping Jehoshaphat!" he gasped.
 "Welcome, Princess! You've come to just the Place.
 We've all the Beetle data—wingspan, hair length, the works.
 Won't you step into our Parlor?"
 You can guess what happened then.
 Thus Princess Smetana vanished from the Scene.
 Gremlin's Kid was in the clutches of CIA!
 He flew her in his Private U-2 to Neutralia,
 Where he said the Beetles were skiing.



There he stashed her away in an Alpine Hideout.
 Marxdom was mystified and miffed;
 Their Miffing Persons Bureau sent out an Urgent Flash.
 Freeland Inc. swore they hadn't kidnapped her
 And offered Foreign Aid.
 Every Mob prepared its Alibi.
 Newsmen and Publishers, posing as Mountain Guides,
 Searched for her among the peaks with Contracts in their Rucksacks.
 Some Game of Jekyll and Hyde and Seek!
 Lights burned late those nights in the offices of Freeland Inc.
 Joe CIA, after all, was their Errand Boy;
 And he'd been involved in Scrapes like this before.

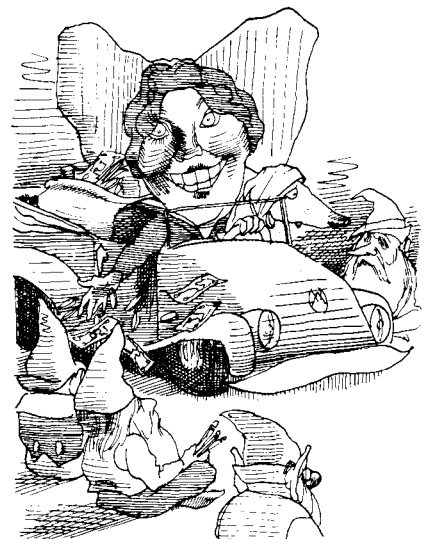
The Directors of Freeland Inc. phoned an ex-Diplomatic Wizard called Mr. X because that was not his name.
 He had a Nasty Cold-War Cold.
 "Princess Smetana's on the lam with CIA!" they cried.
 "Contact them! And call us collect."
 Mr. X consulted his Good Neighbor Policy
 And summoned his good neighbor, Mr. Z,
 An Aging Alchemist and Counselor-at-Law
 Who knew his Way Around.



The Wizard and the Alchemist jetted to Neutralia.
 When they saw Smetana yodeling,
 They flipped their Lids.
 "Some Princess!" said Mr. X.
 "A beaut," said Mr. Z.
 "Are you Beetles, Sir?" she asked.
 "CIA said I'd find them here."
 "Not quite, Your Highness," said Mr. X. "We represent Freeland Inc.
 But we offer all the features of the Beetles.
 Free Speech, Free Thought, Free Enterprise . . .
 They're Bosom Pals of ours. We hear their music all the time."
 "You bet," said Mr. Z.
 Mr. X described the land of Freeland Inc.
 There was, he gently said, no Gremlin there,
 Only a Fairy Grandfather in a White Ranch House,
 Who loved Beagles, Bugles and Bagels,
 Babies, Barbecues and Brotherhood.



Everyone there was Happy or Hippy or Both.
 Flower Children danced in the Streets,
 And there were fireworks even in the Ghettos.
 "You'll find Peace and Privacy," said Mr. X. "Your Own Identity."
 "And will I surely find the Beetles there?" Smetana asked.
 "That's part of the Contract," said Mr. Z.
 "I'm a Gypsy now," Smetana told her Visitors.
 "I'd like a Camping Car and Gypsy Dog.
 Do you have that breed in Freeland Inc.?"
 "Yes, ma'am!" said Mr. Z.
 Whatever else her Memoirs earned, she said,
 Could go to charity for Homeless Elves and Aged Dwarfs.
 "Hold on!" said Mr. Z.
 He gravely warned she'd need some



money in the West
 To gas the Car and feed the Dog.
 He opened up his Sample Kit,
 Took out an Entrance Course to Free
 Society,
 And counseled her on Contract Law and
 Bank Accounts.
 "Your Royalty must think of royalties,"
 he said.
 "It's a Matter of Principal, you see.
 Just follow the Red-White-and-Blue
 Rainbow.
 There's a Pot of Gold at the end."

Heading home, Mr. Z pondered his new
 client's Potentialities.
 "She'll make a Mint," he mused.
 "To guard it from the Evil Monster, Tax,
 We'll form a foreign Treasure Trust—
 Kopeks Unlimited.
 Some Public Relations firm can publicize
 her Private Life.
 And, by the buy, she'll need a Publisher.
 A firm of firm repute. Then Famous
 Publishers should do.
 They are my clients, too."



Thus Princess Smetana came to
 Freeland Inc.
 Consider the Historic Implications:
 She was the last of the Gremlin Line;
 There'd been this Rumble between his
 gang and Freeland Inc.'s;
 And now she'd come over to their
 Territory.
 They pulled out All the Stops,
 Gave her a Ticker Tape Parade and the
 Keys to Freedom City,
 And proclaimed a National Holiday.
 She took it like a True Princess.
 "Hi Folks!" she cried, as if just One
 of Them,
 Gaily waving her Crown and Memoirs.
 The crowd went Wild.
 "I hope my book will enrich your
 Western Literature . . ."

Her PR Man spoke up, "It has all the
 Values of Liberty . . .
 The price clothbound will be \$5.95, still
 less in paperback."
 It was sure to be a Sell-Out.



Next day Smetana held court with the
 Press,
 Flanked by her PR Men and Private
 Dicks.
 She stated why she'd come to Freeland
 Inc.
 "I'm Non-Political, of course; no
 comment on Napalm.
 But Marxdom's not for me.
 I like your Way of Life and Right to Riot.
 To sum it up, I've seen The Light."
 In Gremlin Castle, she explained, the
 Lights had never worked;
 So she had never noticed that people
 Disappeared.
 Now, after fifteen years, the truth had
 Dawned on her.
 "Especially," she said, "I've come to
 meet the Beetles."
 "But Madame, they're flying over
 Marxdom," a newsman said.
 "They may receive the new Free-Enter-
 Prize."
 "Alas!" she cried. "Cool it, Princess,"
 said CIA.
 "Our man in Marxdom will signal them
 you're Here."

Reporters are tough and know, you
 know, the Score.
 But Princess Smetana really Got to
 Them.
 Tears glinted in more than one
 Bloodshot Eye;
 It showed that blood will tell.
 They wrote, with unabashed Reverence



and unabridged Roget,
 About her Saucy Smile and Sweet
 Simplicity,
 Her Gracious Girlish Wholesome Pure
 Etcetera.
 "Her simple words," reported one,
 "have the Force
 Of the trumpets of Jericho."
 Now that was really a blast.
 "A Terribly Important Book," Famous
 Publishers told the Press.
 "It's History, Highclass Literature and
 Inside Stuff.
 We're sure you'll agree, since you're
 publishing it too."
 At Famous Headquarters, a Conference
 got Underway.
 "We estimate—with all the rights—
 it's worth ten grand a page.
 Roughly Three Million Bucks."
 "Gentlemen—a Toast! To the Princess's
 Health and Wealth!
 Long may she Reign!"
 "But can she Write?" a junior editor
 piped up.



What a Hell of a Question
To ask at Such a Time!

Smetana's Book came out.
So did some Facts of Life:
She was no go-go Gogol; her Diary,
no Zhivago-go.
And Critics can be Critical,
Even of Regal Revelations.
Smetana did more research on her True
Identity.

"I am no writer," she announced,
"and never hope to be.
Yesterday I thought I was, but that
was Yesterday.

Today I only seek the Beetles.
My Memoirs? Just some Pen-Pal
Notes."

A famous editor implored, "Go Easy
now, Princess!"

As if that weren't Grief Enough,
Pirates plundered her Royal Purple
Prose.

In Marxdom, she'd complained of
Censorship;

Her problem now was too much
Freedom of the Press.

Her publishers and Mr. Z rushed up
their Legal Guns

To save her Treasure from the
Buccaneers.



Smetana wearily sighed and went her
way.

She carried on her Beetle-Quest with
growing perturbation

Among Debutantes and Dilettantes
In country digs of the Upper Crust.

"I have to find the Beetles!" she
beseeched.

"Only their Charms will help me find
myself."

But all she found were Scones and Tea
and Sympathy.

And that wasn't any Picnic.

"I greatly fear," she said despondently,
"I've been given the Wrong Directions."



Meanwhile Smetana anxiously sought
the Beetles and Herself
With Blue Bloodhounds and Private
Eyes

In a plush-lush suburb called Limbo.
"Pray tell," she asked at every Golf
Course Green,

"Have the Beetles yet returned?"

"We've offered them Honorary
Memberships," the golfers said.

"They'll join us any day."

A
Brilliant
SPORT
in its celebration
AND A
of a life
PASTIME
we have ceased to dream of.

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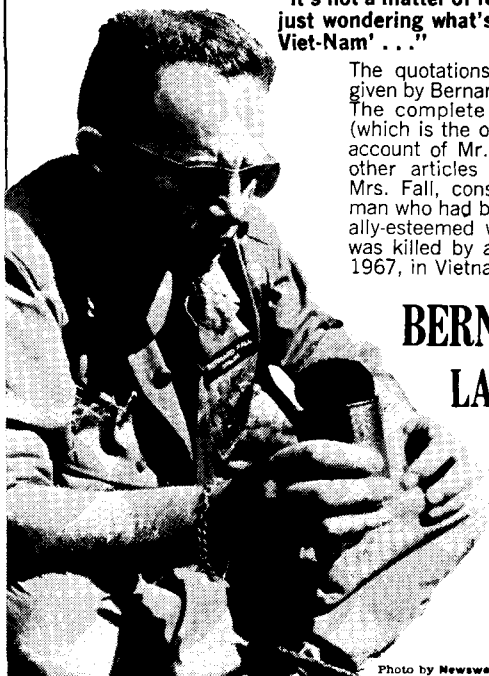


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By PRESTON HAROLD

Introduction by Gerald Heard

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One night Smetana slept alone under
a Patchwork of Stars
Among Flowers and Mosquitoes.
Suddenly, the Insect Hum took on the
beat of "Yeah! Yeah, Yeah!"
And—lo!—strange smiling Forms
appeared

With Electrical Antennae.

Smetana cried with joy, "Dear Beetles,
you have come at last!"

"You're on the moon beam, Lass,"
they sang. "That's who we are.

And yet that's not our name. Our
name is every name.

We're different, too, and all the same.
We live in every land and on the
farthest star.

You've had the wrong lead. Address us
care of Love, Luv."

"And Who am I?" begged she. They
sang, "You're you and we.

You had it tough. So did we all. We
too were not Born Free.

We sprung free in ourselves and in
necessity.

We crack the quacks and bust the bars
of bondage everywhere.

Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!"

"And how do I find Joy and Peace
of Mind?" asked she.

They sang, "Kick looking back and
blow the status quo!

The present is already past, the future
what will be.

It's far beyond ourselves that we
must go."

She cried, "Can I go with you there?"
They chorused, "Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!"

Just then Smetana's Bodyguard rushed
up,

Shouting, "Princess, where have you
been?"

The Beetles vanished in the Night.
Smetana cried out in dismay, "You've
driven my Beetles away!"

Ah Me! Alack-a-Day! You know what
they say

About the best-laid magic carpets of
Princesses, Mice and Men.

Smetana's Long-Sought Dream had
Fled.

Yet even so, This Maid was not
Dismayed.

She dried her tears next day on
Travelers' Checks;

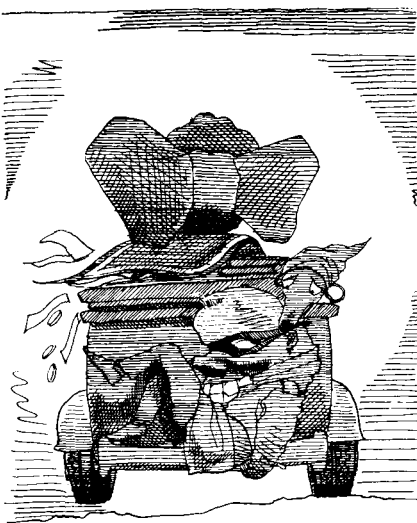
And when a Tipster whispered,
"Bet on the Beetles making book in a
Hollywood Musical,"

She packed her Crown and Contracts
in her Camping Car,

Loaded first editions of her Book
(in fifty languages),

Stocked up on Bones and Biscuits for
her Gypsy Dog,

And drove West toward the Setting Sun.
Her Faithful Retinue of Private Eyes
Brought up the Royal Rear.



And cunningly Hidden Away
Among her Fan Mail, Manuscripts
and Myrrh

Was that rascal CIA.

He'd really become attached to Her.

THE END

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and David Levine. Smetana and the
Beetles will be published by Random
House at the end of November.

Mr. Kahn is the author of *Sabotage!*
and *Days with Ulanova*, a study in text
and photographs of the Russian ballerina.

Mr. Levine is a noted caricaturist. His drawings regularly appear in *Esquire* and the *New York Review of Books*.

Reviews:



WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM? By Norman Mailer. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 208 pp. \$4.95.

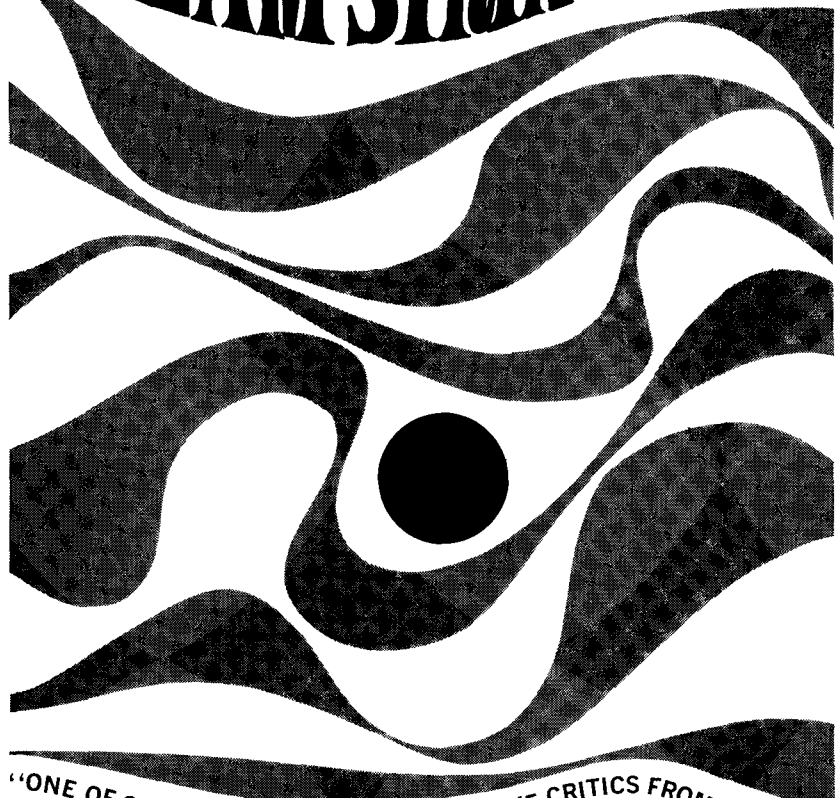
Reviewed by William M. Chace

AS AN EXAMPLE of the American novelist, he for whom there is purported to be no second act, Norman Mailer is now once again before us, defying the rules, stealing an encore or two, shadowboxing against the curtains. He can tell the applause is there, and so he busies himself, passionately and ingeniously, with the permutations into which he can still drive both his own ego and that tattered form, the novel.

And what an ego it has become. We return to it, the disconsolate lovers we have been since *The Naked and the Dead*, and remain fascinated by it. Like the President's, Mailer's ego is superhuman in its energies, huge in its domain and beyond exhaustion. And, like the President, Mailer is not only skeptical of his critics, but seems to be determined to outrun history and its power to understand him once and for all. But someday, he knows, he will be taught for what he is. And so, like the President, he has his moment in time and his innumerable designs upon it. Like the President, he has a heavy finger jammed against our chests, and is now dipping into Texas for some of his choicest material.

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