

## History Competition

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All the tasks are for schoolchildren of all ages: everyone can choose what he/she likes; it is sufficient to do well (not necessarily completely) two tasks out of the first eight or to point out correctly at least ten errors in tasks 9 or 10 (one has to make a list of erroneous statements and indicate the correct time, place and participants of these events — or why they could not have happened at all.

Tasks marked by the asterisk (\*) are harder; they will be marked by higher scores.

1. Jockey of Norfolk, be not too bold,  
For Dickon thy master is bought and sold.

In this fragment of the famous writer's masterpiece a certain unlucky king is the subject. Who did the selling, when and to whom? What were the consequences of this action?

2. In the time of N. S. Khrushchev a church on Gorenki estate grounds near Moscow was turned into a reading room. The Evangelists' icons there were replaced by the portraits of the Russian science and culture 'celebrities'. Try guessing the names of these people and writing about their achievements. Who of them was a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences? Who was not and why?

- 3\*. Two great battles between Asia and Europe took place in 1396 and 1399. Who fought whom and what countries were involved? What were the consequences of these battles? Which was the one the Russians participated in? Or maybe didn't actually participate but 'supported' one of the sides? Which one?

4. Several rulers of China had the title Gaozu. When did they rule and why did they have this title? What were they famous for? What were their personal names?

5. Unravel a short chain of common acquaintances beginning with Ramses II to the pharaoh whose sphinxes now stand guard over the Neva river. How were the links of this chain connected?

- 6\*. Nous sommes les autres Portugais ('We are the other Portuguese'). What famous 15<sup>th</sup> century personality used to repeat this saying? What political goal stood it for? How did it work out?

7. Compare the coup d'état of general Claude-Francois de Malet against Bonaparte with the conspiracy of colonel Graf Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg against Hitler. Which one was better prepared and had more chance of success? What changes in destinies of France and Germany might have taken place had these conspiracies been successful?

- 8\*. What part did 25 Arbat street play in the development of Russian science? Who lived at this address and when did certain important events take place there? Name people who took part in these events. What discoveries had they made?

9. The following text contains many errors. List as many errors as you can: explain which event mentioned in the text must have happened elsewhere, or in another time, or with other participants, or could not have happened at all?

## Trajan's Limit

Two hundred years after Sextus Pompeius's triumphal march through the Middle East the Roman army has finally entered the Parthian Babylon. Long was the journey of the legionaries that started when that loser Publius Crassus led his hoplites into the desert and perished without a trace by the ruins of Nineveh. Seven standards of Crassus's legions were seized by the prince Suren Sassanid and even Julius Caesar could not win them back from the Parthians. The Roman senators were afraid back then that Caesar, should he conquer the king of Parthia, could proclaim himself the king of Rome. Sad fools! They could not understand that Fate bears fruit any time.

The time of kings did not quite return to Rome yet during the rule of the first Caesar. But now the senators have gladly crowned Trajan with a king's crown for his victory over Decebalus, the king of Germans. Marcus Trajan was the first to establish the Roman Eagles to the north of the Danube in the country now called Romania. It was he who built a stone bridge over the Danube, king Darius five hundred years ago couldn't even dream of such success. Now the Roman king, from now on the king of kings is making his victorious entry into the capital of Iran. Such miracles haven't been seen since Alexander's time!

Plutarch, the court chronicler is now quite sure to whom he should compare Alexander the Great in his "Parallel Lives" of Romans and Greeks. Only Ulpius Trajan is worthy of such comparison: Trajan is the first to go from Spain to Persia, a feat that even Caesar himself failed to accomplish. But should the Romans now move on — to India? Alexander went that way but returned defeated and ill. He would have been better off staying in Iran and developing sea travel between the mouths of Euphrates and Nile. Great men make great mistakes, but one should not repeat them!

Having realized that, king Trajan sent Armenian interpreters to king Vologases who was retreating north. What peace treaty conditions would be acceptable to this artful fire worshipper? Or does he worship the sun god Mitra like Armenians did? Actually it does not matter: people of both religions have kept their oaths even if given to people of other religion. First Trajan's condition is plain: giving Rome back the captive standards of Crassus's army! Next Vologases does acknowledge his relative Tigran as Rome's liege and not meddle in Armenian affairs any more. Moreover, if Vologases wished to return to Babylon he would swear fealty to Trajan himself.

If the Parthian king is afraid his gods would be offended, let him stay in his native Ecbatana! Then Babylon will become a free trade city like Alexandria or Jerusalem. The more foreign merchants would pass through Vologases' capital

to Mavarrannahr, the more money would accumulate in the Parthian king's treasury. The same would go for the Roman treasury: in short a peace treaty would be useful for both parties.

It would also benefit the faraway country of Han that had been sending caravans of camels laden with gorgeous silks to the Roman sea for a long time. Trajan's scouts had already negotiated with secret messengers of Han country. They were sent to Mesopotamia by the Western Regions protector, general Hsi Yui Goon Ban Chao. No way of telling which of these is his name and which his title, but whatever. King Trajan grasped the essential: his faraway partner's-to-be position in that country was akin to his own previous one. Trajan had been general protector of Germany in the time of Emperor Vespasian. After this ruler's assassination the Roman throne had gone to Claudius, an old man. Claudius had immediately adopted Trajan in absentia to protect himself from caesar-murdering senators. What if similar fate awaited the brave frontier-man from the Silk Country?

Anyway, the Roman envoy will soon arrive to the legendary Yellow River and reconnoiter both the state and its people. And then another chronicler (why not young Tacitus?) may make not double but triple index of great men from every important country on Earth, including Trajan and Vologases, Scipio and Hannibal. That would be possible if present day kings do not bring their countries to ruin but make them even greater engaging in warfare with moderation, unlike Alexander who had inadvertently incurred the gods' envy. . .

So reasoned the great soldier Ulpius Trajan while he stayed at the Eastern limit of the Roman Empire 150 years after its foundation and a century before the disappearance of unlucky warrior Vitalianus in Parthian captivity. His successor Gallienus gave equal rights to Christians and old-fashioned pagan Romans. Soon after that vengeful Persians crushed Parthians that were taken off-guard, whereas the Silk Country was split into three separate kingdoms — and so the much sought-after dialog of two Empires across all of Eurasia didn't come to fruition.

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## Children of Prince Nevsky

On Maundy Thursday in the summer of 6800 a messenger from Vladimir came to prince Daniil bringing the long-awaited news: his least favourite brother Andrey was dead. By God's negligence this wrongdoer had unlawfully seized the Grand Prince's throne after the death the eldest son of prince Alexander, Fyodor Stratilat, who had crushed the Germans at Rakovor.

Princeling Andrei was then the first of brothers who reached the Golden Horde and convinced young Uzbeg Khan of his usefulness before other princes came. So the wicked treason of the summer 6760 happened all over again. Back the artful uncle Andrey usurped his father's throne instead of the eldest brother — Alexander Stratilat. Three years later Batu-Khan got sorely disappointed with his choice: indignant citizens of Vladimir rose against Andrey

Vyacheslavich, and Khan had to put down that rebellion with the forces of his brother Nevruy.

Why did young Uzbeg Batuyevich repeat his father's mistake and elevate the second Andrey over his elder brothers? No one in Rus' could understand it; only the old bishop Maximus the Greek made a prophecy that the too hasty prince would die childless like his namesake, the lawless uncle. And so it came to pass. And now it is time for Daniil of Moscow to hurry to Sarai Batu and get the seal of acceptance for the Vladimir throne from Mengu Khan. But will he get it?

Problem is that Mikhail of Tver, a nephew of saint Nevsky and a son of Yaroslav of Novgorod had been the chief rival of the Moscovites for years. The main argument to support his claim is simple: Tver was richer than Moscow as it stood right on the large Volga river that flowed directly to the Horde. Thus Kiev had once been the capital of Rus due to its location on the route to Khazaria. Now, after the destruction of Kiev and Vladimir, the richest city of Rus is Novgorod Seversky that guards the gateway to the Hanseatic sea and routes to Germans and Swedes. Mikhail's mother, princess of Novgorod, was born there! How to remind Mengu Khan of all these facts, to prevent his support of the contender backed by rich Novgorod rebels? How to bribe the greedy Khan, if the stock of silver in Moscow treasury is by far smaller than the one in Tver or Novgorod treasury?

Prince Daniil discussed this difficult and slippery problem with his sons: foolhardy Yury and quiet Ivan. The elder brandished his sword as usual — they must grab Mikhail's goods on his way to the Horde! As to the prince-enemy himself, he could be easily slain as an example to others!

Father bluntly rejected the preposterous idea of his firstborn. Moscovites will not stain their honour the way both princes Andreys did! Something more subtle and less bloody is in order. . .

Ivan, the younger prince spoke then. No need to kill or rob! All they required was to convince the Khan of Prince Mikhail's perfidy. One letter from Novgorod to Mikhail prince of Tver would suffice if it contained promise of financial support in the struggle for the Vladimir throne from both the Novgorod count and the bishop of the city. The Khan is pretty sure that rebellious Novgorod people had manufactured plans against the Horde as it were. A new letter would convince Mengu of Prince Mikhail's planned treason. And if such letter didn't exist — why not fabricate it and find a proper moment to put it before the Khan?! This scheme would cost Moscovites considerably less than bribing Khan Mengu's courtiers — and Prince Mikhail would hardly be able to clear himself from such an accusation.

This wily idea marked the beginning of the quiet and successful career of Ivan Danilovitch Kalita. As a result prince Mikhail of Tver was executed in the Horde on Khan Tokhta' orders. That was the end of the political selection among children and grandchildren of Alexander Nevsky. The memories of those old times may be seen even now in names of streets and squares of Moscow and Tver, Novgorod and St.Petersbourg.