

Volga boat men

Ey ukhnyem! Ey ukhnyem!
Yeshtsho razik, yeshtsho da ras!

All together! All together!
Once again, one more time!

Razovyom mý byeryozu,
razovyom mý kudryavu!
Aida da aida, aida da aida,
razovyom mý kudryavu!

Let's tow till the birchen cudgel bends,
let's bend the cudgel of the curly birch-tree!
Aida da aida, aida da aida,
let's bend the cudgel of the curly birch-tree!

Ey ukhnyem! Ey ukhnyem!
Yeshtsho razik, yeshtsho da ras!

All together! All together!
Once again, one more time!

Mý po byereshku idyom,
pyesnyu solnýshku payom!
Aida da aida, aida da aida,
pyesnyu solnýshku payom!

We are walking along the river banks,
singing our song for the dear sun!
Aida da aida, aida da aida,
we're singing our song for the dear sun!

Ey ukhnyem! Ey ukhnyem!
Yeshtsho razik, yeshtsho da ras!

All together! All together!
Once again, one more time!

Ekh, tý Volga, mat'-ryeka,
shiroka i gluboka!
Aida da aida, aida da aida,
shiroka i gluboka!

Oh, you Volga, Mother-Stream,
you are so wide and deep!
Aida da aida, aida da aida,
you are so wide and deep!

Ey ukhnyem! Ey ukhnyem!
Yeshtsho razik, yeshtsho da ras!

All together! All together!
Once again, one more time!

Words and Music: Russian folksong

Pronunciation:

a as in "bar", *e* as in "bed", *i* as in "bid", *o* as in "bore", *u* as in "blue"

y = as in "yellow" / *ý* = dull *i*, as in "bill"

s = always voiceless, as in "son" / *z* = voiced, as in "zone"

sh = voiceless, as in "mesh" / *zh* = voiced, like the *s* in "measure"

kh = mostly rough, like the *ch* in Scotch "loch", but smooth when "e" or "i" follows

a, e, i, o, u, y = the underlined vowel signifies the stressed syllable of a word.

Transcription and analogous translation: Kai Kracht

Comment:

"Volga boatmen", the English name of this song, is also the name of one of the most impressive paintings of the famous Russian painter Ilya Repin: It shows a group of about twenty boatmen, passing by with slow heavy steps. Everybody in Russia knows: They are bondmen, their landowner has hired them out to a rich merchant, and now they have to pull the merchant's heavy barge against the current of the Volga. For their landowner this is a good bargain, but the bondmen get nothing, of course. They are ragged and exhausted, they stem their bare feet into the grass on the shore, and by many ropes they pull the heave barge upstream.

All their power is needed, and the sturdy cudgels of birch-wood at the ends of ropes bend when the men stem their breasts against them: "Ey ukhnyem! Ey ukhnyem!" – "All together! All together!" ... The shout of "Ey ukhnyem!" soon turns into a tune. In it you can hear the doggedness of the men who struggle forward step by step and the force of their united strenuous effort: "Yeshtsho razik, yeshtsho da ras!" – "Once again, one more time!"

And then, when they can breathe a bit more freely, one of them invents a verse – about their united power, about the sun, about Mother Volga ... But also in the airier tune of the verses you feel the slow heavy steps which go through this whole song, always keeping time, keeping speed, without a break between chorus, verse, chorus, verse ... until the group has passed by and the "Ey ukhnyem!" chorus grows softer and softer and finally dies away in the distance.

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