

ANTHROPOLOGY

# Russian Scientist Restores Human Likeness to Skulls

## Faces of Bronze and Stone Age People, as Well as Famous Historical Characters, Made Real for Moderns

**N**OT ALL news from Russia is war news. In a Leningrad Laboratory, a sculptor-anthropologist has been taking skulls of famous Russians dead a thousand years and building faces on them with such success that an exhibit of 40 of his portraits was to be a scientific event of this year, according to a report received from Moscow.

Since before the first World War started, this scientist, M. Gerasimov, has been experimenting with a process of revealing features of the dead from gaunt evidence in skulls. One of his early portraits of a long dead character proved to be a recognizable likeness when matched to photographs that unexpectedly came to light. Encouraged, M. Gerasimov has since modeled faces on a number of skulls of famous Russians of the past, and also on more ancient prehistoric skulls of Russia's Bronze and Stone Age inhabitants.

Famous skulls entrusted to the anthropologist for his portrait experiments include that of Grand Duke Yaroslav the Wise, who ruled from Kiev in the eleventh century. Yaroslav built in Kiev the oldest Russian cathedral, an impressive green and white church with ten cupolas spangled with stars, and with mosaics which included a great figure of the Virgin 15 feet high.

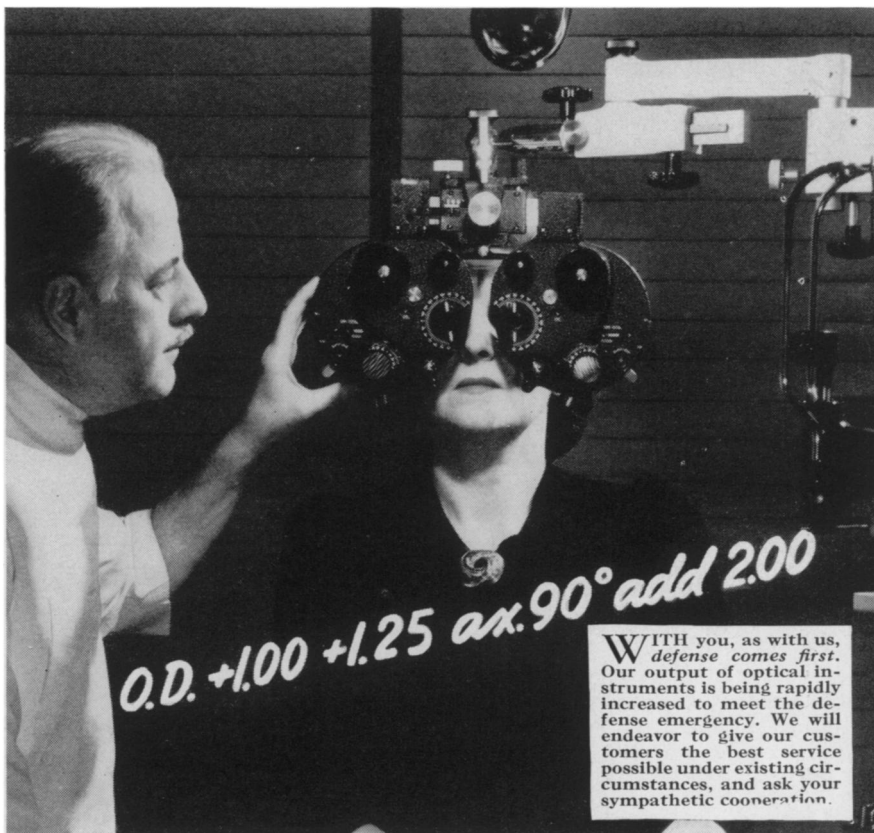
One of the anthropologist's latest portraits is that of the Azerbaidjan poet Nizami, who lived in the twelfth century and is famed for his romantic and semi-historical tales in the epic manner. Nizami's skull, kept in a special reposi-

tory in Baku, provided evidence for a portrait showing how the poet looked at

his death, in the 64th year of his life.

M. Gerasimov bases his portraits on his preliminary study of the anatomy of the soft tissue of the human face and X-ray pictures of the head. Using facts thus obtained, he measures a skull, makes sectional sketches and drawings to indicate contours, and then turning sculptor, applies modeling clay to the skull according to the data. The sculpture is cast in plaster of paris or porcelain, and the modeling clay is removed from the skull—which goes back to its bony state and its resting place.

*Science News Letter, December 6, 1941*



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