NUMBER 161

## THE PAPERSCAPE

A VIEW FROM THE FLAG TOWER OF THE
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION BUILDING
AN ATTEMPT AT INTROSPECTION; OR HOW SOME STACK OF PAPER TURNS INTO A RUSSIAN NOVEL
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Colloquium Paper<br>June 24, 1982

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What are the very first impulses which lead a writer to write; to start a new novel? Why is some Unidentified fictional Object turning up in the placid empty atmosphere? The first impulses could be either gigantic or totally insignificant, extending from desire to reconstruct the Universe to mere joy in the play of words.

Firt steps, first pages of a manuscript, first encounter of the third kind with something still unexisting, with the strange incomprehensible contour of your heroes -- that is really exciting...

In the early fall of 1980 looking into my small archive I succeeded in taking out of Moscow, I came across a thin file on the cover of which one could spot one of the most popular Russian words, жалобs (complaints). It was like coming across a fading footprint of a jock from old times. Enclosed were some copies of the official letters, references, (so called xapaктepистики), notifications, confirmations, (so called cmpasки), but most of all the copies of my own applications (either subdued or poignant and derisive in their style) to various Soviet official bodies -- Writers Union, Litfund, publishing houses, movie studios, the Department of Culture of the Central Committee of CPSU etc., -- protesting the violation of my literary as well as financial rights, the ban of books, of movies, of trips abroad; sometimes demanding something, sometimes begging for something.

I got the feeling that this stuff could be a basis for a new novel; a feeling of the presence of a certain still unmentioned man, more exactly a contour of a man, a Man of Paper in the Paper Land.

Literary links and associations: Man of Marble, Man of Iron, Okudzhava's Paper Soldier, Поручик Киже, who was created by a bureaucratic error and turned into a novel and later an opera.

Поручик Киже was created from the papers as a whole, he never existed in flesh at all; meanwhile everybody in the contemporary world has his paper Alter Ego in addition to his flesh, mind and soul.

According to a Buddhist textbook by Svamy Krishnadevananda there are three states of a human being -- physical body, astral body and soul -- that were created by God Almighty. Ironically, side by side this creation a sort of dull imitation exists, a paper state of Man, created by The Empire. Does it contain some tiny particles of cosmic energy or not?
well, since then I got a very vague perception of my hero. The first motion of Mayakovsky's тухлая вобла воображения, stinking dried fish of imagination, so to speak.

At that particular time I had just started another novel with the title Say Cheese, a story about photographers; therefore I had put aside these paper ideas till a more convenient time. I could easily lose a whole image of this would-be-novel if. . .

- . by the way, what sort of image had I?. . . nothing is distinct, everything is diffuse. . . gray breezy spring or autumn day wind, empty blocks of official buildings, long black overcoat, gusts of wind. . . once
again it was the emotional impulses, rather than the reasonable ones. . . the last thing I wanted to do was discover Soviet bureaucracy, blame it, appeal to it for something...
- . So the entire idea would have been lost if another idea had not been born, the idea of a Fellowship at the Kennan Institute. In short, I decided to apply to the Kennan Institute with the idea of . . . what? First of all, I've got to think up a title. Well, for the first time in my entire life I thought up a title of a book-to-be in English - The Paperscape ( Бумажныи пеизаж). I had not yet realized that this title betrayed a little my starting impulses, broadening the frame of the plot - Landscape, Seascape, Paperscape - a hero was becoming more and more an allegorical figure in the allegorical dimensions of literature.

However, who is he? In particular, what is his occupation? I overcame a first temptation to make him a writer, because f felt it wasn't my own story at all. I should distance this fellow from myself as far as possible. What if he were to be an actor? An actor, an unsuccesful one, who once upon a time realized that he got from life nothing of what he deserved. No, that's the wrong idea: an actor is a prominent person in Soviet society. Russian literature traditionally gives voice to the Little Man (mareqskии человек (, a new Akakij Akakievich; so he is an automobile engineer, he works in a lab, in the pistons lab, indeed his name is Velosipedov. . .

However, why is he to be an engineer, particularly an automobile engineer? Try to follow the tracks of imagination to answer this question.

You are walking down a certain Moscow street along with a shadow of your future hero. This street is situated in an area you inhabited for a very long period of time. Exactly on the corner of this street you have seen his long black overcoat and his long straw colored hair, blown back by gusts of wind. Exactly on this street people from numerous cooperative apartment buildings are hunting for taxi-cabs; writers, movie-makers, circus jugglers, ballet dancers. . Avenue Parvenue. You go further and see the huge heavily constructed pompous building of The Moscow Automobile and Highways Institute (MAIH). It seems we have found an answer and now we can presume why Mr. Velosipedov is an automobile engineer.

One thing is still unclear: Why is he supposed to be Mister Velosipedov rather than Ivanov Petrov Gimmelfarb? Velosipedov is a good name of course; it appeared in Russia two hundred years before the bicycle had been invented, but why put it down in your manuscript? That is still unclear. . .

## III

From the very first steps of his heroes, a writer faces a socalled "process of insubordination." The hero refuses to follow the author's intentions; he strives for independence, or at least for autonomy. He accepts the long black overcoat, the long thin straw-colored hair, but he refuses to be a family man, burdened by kids, quarrelsome mother-in-law, nervous wife, despotic grandfather with a great Stalinist background. Our character preferred to be a bachelor.

You don't understand why you definitely perceive that Mister Velosipedov is a bachelor indeed, until in downtown Washington you run into his girlfriend.

She is a girl not older than twenty and she looks undoubtedly like an object of Mister Velosipedov's desire and what is most amazing, she is riding a bike, i.e. velosiped!!! Berocumen itself!

What a great guess! That's why you gave him this name! You foresaw the appearance of this dashing rider with her strange engineless machine.

## Meжdу へермонтовысм п Мушкинымм.



 зеды зі, назется, пе пезеп?




 Быстровогов. Јелоси, с обпего разрепения - о́ыстрота;пед,к обдеиу сзеденин, нога, стлппе, то зарппиг.


 зека.







 з целом-то патересно







 Велосппедов!चу, что ато за обрадение? Еельзя ли просто Игорь?









 Hо mi .


















Okay, she (Fenka Ogarysheva) is twenty, Mister Velosipedov is thirty, ten years of age difference, and all our events have taken place about ten years ago, in 1972-73. You do not yet realize why you chose this particular period of time -- "the stinking fish of imagination" is still lazy -- however you foresee again that something will depend on that.

Well, next -- who is Fenka? A student, of course. Student of what? You are trying to recall the twenty year old girls you met recently. Alas, not too many and most of them from your son's gang, hence most of them are students of art. That is not a bad idea -- to make Fenka a young artist!

One of those girls you recalled wore an old fedora hat, which belonged to her boyfriend's grandfather, a former Soviet spy in London. That is great; thanks to an old fedora hat we have Fenka's people around and she herself turns out to be the daughter of a Soviet diplomat. She is taking care of their Moscow apartment, while her parents serve the State in distant Brazilia.

Typical thing: the children of prominent Soviet officials are mostly western oriented young people, they used to disaain their parents way of life as well as their totalitarian state of mind. No wonder that Fenka and her friends had been so enraged by Mister Velosipedov's first letter to Brezhnev, in which he asked for a very tiny slice of the Soviet pie. They were particularly upset by his participation in the so-called "open letter" in the Party newspaper, Truth, blaming Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn.

## 

















 ब تО एре






－Та что，末ллгянова пе читал？－стгосила она．












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－इiñ греп，－зз









crep نй






$\because$ слeris zesrjда.













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:0л5.

- تто что 玉e?!






 Kто по








Y: :7OFIT:
 $\because$ бела та:ัоза.

[^0]

- Kaк тн сказaл?飞ак?-заинтересоэанно переспросила она.


 . . Ӓа:




 тевs woerf стида.



- Длдя,


Step by step you begin to assess the virtues of your main character. He is: sincere, a fool, quick to take offence, honest naive, as gullible as probably Voltaire's Candide was, nothing special, a typical product of Soviet life, one of those hundreds of thousands of Moscow kids with their confused mentality, with their methaphysical respect for the Great Patron of the Empire, . for Big Brother or Big Mother, and with an anger without an object.

Erom time to time you even feel with consternation that this creature belongs to the chaotic Universe rather than to human society.

Gradually, you begin to realize that your first plot of the paper world and paper people is making way for something, probably more important.

Yes, Igor Velosipedov is preoccupied by the bureatucratic spree around. Dreaming his typical Russian Manilov's dreams, he envisions a world without papers, he is directing the exciting scenes of all-people rising up against nobody knows whom, but that becomes just a part of your general idea, as does the scrutinizing activity of the secret police, which creates its own image of velosipedov: a dangerous troublemaker with a suspicious background, an antisocialist element.

You find your hero and other characters inside a world without any substantial spiritual links, world where they (despite numerous severe restrictions and para-military discipline) are almost anarchic, where they actually are not ruling anything and

А когда Валера Банишевсклй поозел третшй гол в ворота югославского противника, а Коля Рудакоз, паш славний герой,отразил одиннадиатииетровый, па трибупах началось братание и хоровое исполнение
 Болельпики хохотали, подпригивали, абнималисв и даже делились "Солндепарои" - во, дали, музики!

Один клиент, рядов на десять више нас,оказмваетсл прошляпи историческлй пенальти - водкј делил, сосредоточался - іл вот теперу тр̆бовал повтора, иатои аппелировал з дространотзо, как будто кто-то его обиа-

 скай бомбардир, й теи более Коля Рудаков пе бодут корлиитьсл.

山улик, однако, продолжал базаритз,кричал,что обязательпо будет
 ческая запита иопно играла аа отбой, о особенно отличалоя грлзинскйй
 ся, зреня идет, и псторическая победа прдблиается,тут кто-то зоплщего клиента пихнлл зниз, чтоби пе дуиал, что от стекольшиа родллса,




 мов папитка.

- Это ваш клиент, -Объясил он.- А лично знаю его з лицо. Но ғпа после


себа в порадок.
 цо такая человедносту.

 нлиента, пикто не пхн才д его ногой.

- Во, то варищи, гляди, иудик до билсл своего, повтор пенальти снотрит, -
 - Какая могучая человеческал масса, - задуичия проговорпл Гјставчик, д ин со Спартацком его отлично понлли.
 человену трудно расстатьсл, ногда их трое, дазе если один испанского
 что :а Новом Aрбате.











 систеиу и другие перешитии сталиииза. Еам надо вмесяе бороться за высокти иораль кощмунистического обиества.К содалению нан де выдают патронов, практически несец случбу без боезапаса. $Ј$ меня



Камой де это был чудесний де:ь! Все,казалосз било создано для нацдональлой победझ і восстановления дрлаби.Кучерязне облака вад стадионои как бддто слетели с какойнибұды старинной гравары, л даке водразумевались с купипончини, с победенид горнвии /бедвый Еапा город,как мало пад тобой пролетает этиг зесепих

 го מмора.

Давай, бей! пперед, резче! Павай, давай, давай! - все ртіл зожряг были открыты в одном,общевадиональном поризе - давай!
 восхитительдве позстанческие кадэи!
 риися епе од:ой стороной своего дарования - стал изобрезатв


are not ruled by anything, except for police. They are almost infants. Like blind kittens they approach each other with the aid of nothing but smell. The chain of events has no ground in logic. The puppets' strings have got tangled.

And then at a certain moment you realize that your first goal is to find a line of composition in this existentialist world of absurdity.

First of all in writing a novel you have to enlist a crew of characters. I can compare this enlistment to wandering inside a huge apartment house in search of your friends' homes; numberless doors, but you lost the numbers you need or you never knew them. You, a meddlesome visitor, can't count only on your luck; skillfulness is also required. You will reach your goal, if the cast you eventually find can cooperate with you and with each other -- can play their own game rather than submit to you.

Over and over again, from their very first steps your characters surprise you. Actually you cannot predict how they act even 10 pages ahead. Sometimes you find yourself in the position of the spectator. On every other page the characters are able to change their habits, relative links, nationality, not to mention points of view and general outlook.

Take an example -- a militiaman -- Major. . . Major. . . what's his name? What's his name? ... His name is Major Orlando. How did that come about? A Moscow cop with a Spanish name? I can not explain why I chose this name, but I loved it. It sounded funny and compact - Major Orlando, a Soviet cop. I decided to take pains to justify this name and all of a sudden I realized that it didn't need any justification. As long as Major Orlando was brought into the Soviet Union among those Spanish children, who were deported during the Spanish Civil War by the Communists.

That was what happened to baby Gustavo Orlando (Moscow friends call him Gustavchick) in Barcelona in 1939. Alas, when he was found by his parents in 1974 (at the age of 36), it turned out that his parents were not comrades at all, just the other way around they were devoted members of the Phalangists Party, the faithful Spanish followers of the world's limited number of generalissimos.

Independently from each other, two spinsters appear on stage: Adelaida (a powerful first Secretary in the office of the Third Secretary of the District Party Committee in charge of Culture and Art) and Agripina (a typist whose field is preferably Samizdat dangerous manuscripts). It is hard to overcome a temptation to make them sisters; what's more -- twins, go further -- twins of one egg. No doubt, they succeeded to seduce you and became identical twins.

A young lazy-bones Valiusha gets a last name Sturin, which sounds similar to the royal family of Stuart. That happens because this young loafer was self-confident and slightly arrogant and preoccupied by his roots. He forced the author to recall an old story about one branch of the Stuart's genealogical tree, which disappeared in Pskov or Novgorod or elsewhere in Russia and has been transformed into Sturin and produced a lot of offspring among Soviet kolkhozniks, workers and intelligentsia.

In the first quarter of the novel, on Kuibyshev Street in downtown Moscow, close to the Central Committee of CPSU compound we spot $a$ hobo with a galosh on his one foot and a basketball shoe on the other. In additon he wears a jacket of the so-called "students' construction teams" with the sign "A flamboyant guitar." He looks a little bit out of place near the main fortress of Marxism-Leninism and that is the only reason why we paid attention to him. This guy is supposed to be just an episodical character; however after a hundred pages unexpectedly he springs up again and turns out to be a discharged film director, who like Velosipedov himself is obsessed by the idea of a great revolutionary movie.

## VIII

A ballet dancer Sasha Kalashnikov looks like he and Misha Baryshnikov could have been nursed by the same womar (milk brothers), but unlike this superstar he suffers from a mild rheumatism. Sasha is grateful for his illness, since he takes pains not to defect from the advanced Marxist society to the decadent West. The rheumatism slightly hampers his prodigious jumps and leaps, therefore he maintains the principles of socialist realism.

To my mind, a writer should avoid a direct description of so-called prototypes, he should as often as possible recall Picasso who first dared to depict two eyes above one cheek, and follow suit.

## Эб̆ир, дом Зезса

Саша Калашников ниногда не жаловалсл на легкй резматизи, несколь-


 бы даше принять характер чего-то вад-реального,то еств ногли би нарушить реалистические трапидии отечественной хореограф̆ии.

Вот сегодвя, паприме, суставу почемд-то совсем не нили, ву, ли забился Сапа,заскакал вне традинй, не-реалистическл, зависая иногда в зозддже с авнни преувеличевиеи д мелкпм переборои ног позволад себе еще пу епе набирать высоту,з то время как вроде бы дазно јпе пора опускатзся.
 ко лищз тихо стонала в опедомлении - семейнй советский балет еа
 модернизи.

- Ой, сбедлт, - с определенной тоско й дулал, ваблюдая Калашнико зскле





 секретарв партиивой органияаши оперно-балетного театра.


нлтуп пелину". Немало Јсилий оп поилагал ехедвевно, чтобы доказать даже и пе полнейшую благопадежностуда самый настоямий тивотворный
 и прыгучеств вытопила из-под контроля, весь театр смотрел подо зри-
 Гестролех.

дЕ 三едв ато де аичто иное,как просто вн-тал-кива-ние,-сокрушался

 иивал ІІ спрапивал:а а ты, Сапа, и в самои деле не "намылилсл" епе?

ца как же мождо без родинн-то!?Сапа горячо начинал осјадать всех балетвах беглецов - вот увидите, без родини ти талант засохнет, вот
 апть без атого, без велиного нащего праздивого, шогучего и свободғого,


 над исторпиеской Фонтанкой, пак те можно без этого?

Ее горячись, Саша, не перехимай, говорили ему пруздл, улдбалсь.
И Сапа прямо в отчаяние приходил - чем доказать, что псюренве лобли
 мупистйесного созпанид развил в себе артист до самой виспей степени, Пазе анекдотов О Засплии Ивано виче Чапаезе п ординарие Петьке पурал-
 ко, л все тщетно - не зерил ему варод.


грии-уборной после спептакдя, не способствјет это творчеству,ей-ей ее способствует.

Bमрјг послиㅍалосв:

- Сапенька, дорогой!

В грим-уборной без стука появилисв две миры на одно лицо,а за ниии двигаласs какал-то бледная тень, спирохетоподояннй нолодой чело зек.

Вот, додумал Каламииков,разве таи к звезде моей зеличини иогли бы так, без стука?Ұа ве менее трех тепохранителей ваверное ходят постолнно за Рудиком Еуриевии, не менее того.

Подумав в зтом направлении, номсорг Еольшого театра ковечео устыдидса своих иуслей и вскочил навстречу вощедшии с протянутой рукой - Здравствуйте, то варипи!

Как вдруг...

- Еу,Сама дорогой, заслужлл,заслухдл ти сегодея хорошего поцелуя, вказала одва из мимр, головная, и без всякой подготовки еестклии ску

- А а вот не осиелюсs так запоосто гения в щеку,-сказала вторая
 много приятнее, почти терпииая,едза ли ве призлекательнал.-Такой вы, Саша, гении, поистиве гении! аы сегоднл просто покорили веся зал,а лично ноя душа зитала в еебесах!
 оттуда ли?

В захзаливании, в кльте личпости Саша Калашшикоз не вуддаетсл.

Back to our main hero, Igor Velosipedov. In spite of the fact that he is considered the center of events, he hardly realizes what is going on around him. I am not sure that anybody does: the events follow one another without any sense of reasonable succession, without visible composition whatsoever.

Here is a list of events which are taking place regarding Igor velosipedov.

First letter to Brezhnev, asking for permission to visit The People's Republic of Bulgaria.

Arrest for attacking a newsstand with the newspaper Truth. Sentenced for 15 days in jail. Released by Major Orlando after a bribe of 25 rubles.

Appearance of mythical Khanuk, a chairperson of The Committee of Soviet Womanhood of Socialist Republic of Armenia.

Second letter to Brezhnev, demanding all human rights for all people, withdrawal troops from Czechoslovakia, restoration of Tartar Republic in Crimea and cancelling all previous requests.

An encounter with philosopher Yakov Protuberanz.
Confrontation with one Somalian diplomat.
Fist-fighting in the night-bar "Labirint".
A miraculous discovery of a big smoked fish, dropped by somebody in the heat of a Moscow night.

Hit on his head by a steam iron wrapped in an old issue of the newspaper Truth.

Running down this list of events one can assume that the main force which leads the entire novel is a logic of chaos.

X
Meanwhile we are coming to the conclusion of the novel. We are preoccupied by some possible ways to finish.

As a rule, a Russian novel is a little bit exhausting to the end; however the Russians are shrewd enough to turn this obvious weakness into a sort of peculiar style: the diffusion of Russian prose, absence of anything definite, half-notes, subtle tints, drizzling, sneezing, coughing, a Lady with a Little Dog, foggy prose... a foggy day in Moscow Town. . .

Then you find yourself caught off guard by a feeling that you've never written those "Russian novels" and this one should not be completely "Russian" and hence it requires something more energetic.

Ten years in prison have dropped out of our tale and now in 1982-83 we find Mister Velosipedov in "Jumbo Jet" approaching the JFK Airport in New York City.

Everybody is in New York, all our cast moved out of the Soviet Union to the United States, including even Party veteran Anna Svetlichnaya who once attacked Velosipedov with her iron wrapped in an old issue of the newspaper Truth. Not to mention Fenka Ogarysheva, who became a famous artist and beauty and lioness; she is 30 and in despair.

One of the Moscow idlers, Vanyusha, became an editor-in-chief of a Russian literary magazine. Major Orlando is a bodyguard.

Philosopher Protuberanz is a cab driver.
Colonel Shevtushenko is on welfare.
Etc, etc, etc. . .
No wonder Velosipedov is following all the others.
What's that? Is it reality, or a dream in the labor camp's barracks? There is no answer.

The final scene takes place on Union Square in Manhattar. Igor Velosipedov, pantless and masked, and his love, Fenka; a tire of her "Silver Shadow" is flat, one of her naked shoulders is yellow, the other one is green.

She sobs with a great sorrow for her first teacher, a Stalin flunkey, a Khrushchev flunkey, a Brezhnev flunkey, an old artist who once raped her when she was a sixteen year old girl, and who she learns has died in Moscow. She sobs fiercely for the Soviet Union itself, because its time is running out.

He tries to console her, puts his arm around her shoulders . . . no words. . . no thoughts. . . the patches of flame and darkness. . .

And finally we can assume that this light-minded frivolous story is sad, rather too sad.










 оказываепься - пе хзатает...















 релез через решетау 7 подошед $\boldsymbol{z}$ mein.

- Ведосинедов,-пробориотада опа,-п узпапа твои ноги.
 мие разрнвaemo?

- Kто учер, Феньza?
- On, Геморрой пропдлтьй, мой мастер Гвоздев, уродина, жаба, стапискиі поподия

 под поваиии и спомад м те там все.С тех пор всегпа...вот вижу его дом...

 всегда друг на друга патапиинадись...его дом, прасно-мраморпнй понодь, две




 Христос - это мода, отзепап он.Видишы, Вепосипедов, ваное sвмирает понодепие







 распухжей резолииит.

Опа вдруг вэреведа, что пезиваетса бедугой на всл Ивановскух,т.е. па

 ся у Мосвве.Ома выпа:

- Ои,Ведосидедов,зсе удетает....смотри,зсе втлгиваетса з воропву,зазорачи-



Ояа затпхда, ногда а стап дедовать ее в щеки и уши. Дадици ее пролезади



 ираза.

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    January -June,I982
Flag Tower of Smithsonian Euilding
#asnington D.C. U.S.A.
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Igor Velosipedov invents a bicycle.
-


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