

THE PASTERNAK AFFAIR

(2007)

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Introduction

This account of the Pasternak affair, in which I myself played a significant role, would have been written some time ago, had it not been for the fact that many of the documents needed in support of my own version of events were only made available by the Russian authorities in the most recent of times.

First and foremost, I am referring to resolutions passed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, letters sent to or received from the Union of Soviet Writers, several memoranda issued by the Committee for State Security (KGB), and reports produced by ministries and other institutions, including the Prosecutor General of the Soviet Union and the Judicial College for Foreign Affairs (Inyurkollegya). All these materials are currently located in the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), and the Archive of the Chairman of the Russian Federation (AP RF). Many of them, which have already been published in the volume entitled *Boris Pasternak i Vlast. Dokumenty 1956-1972* (Boris Pasternak and Power. Documents from 1956 to 1972), edited by V. Yu. Afiani and N. G. Tomilina (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001), have been of major help in formulating my own bibliography.

Secondly, I am referring to the collected letters edited by Boris's son, Yevgeny Pasternak, and his wife, Elena, which were published in numbers 107 and 108 of the quarterly review *Kontinent* under the title "Perepiska Pasternaka s Feltrinelli" (Correspondence between Pasternak and Feltrinelli), (Paris-Moscow: 2001). Notwithstanding the lack of certain key documents through no fault of the editors, the text also contains letters from Pasternak to other persons (myself included), as well as a certain amount of background information that has proved to be of considerable value.

Over the past several years, before I actually began the writing of this book in the fall of 2003, I made more than one trip to Moscow. On those occasions, besides establishing contact with individuals who were able to help me reconstruct a series of critical events, I attempted to explore, without too many restrictions, documentation that is now available in the former KGB archive (currently administered by the Federal Security Service, or FSB) concerning the Pasternak case and its ramifications in the USSR and abroad. Unfortunately, despite the fact that I was personally recommended to Nikolai Patrushev, the Director of the FSB, by Edward Lozansky, the President of the American University, I was not permitted to do the kind of extensive research that I felt was necessary.

Although I have had to forgo the idea of using this archive for the time being, I do hope that less stringent regulations will allow myself, and others, greater access at some point in the future. In my opinion, further research in this area would be well worth the effort. In fact, while I believe that my own book represents an accurate and comprehensive account of the Pasternak affair (which until now has been the object of a good deal of fiction that has been passed off as historical truth), I also have reason to believe that there may be other surprises in store. Above all, there are the circumstances surrounding the death of Feltrinelli (which I am absolutely convinced that the KGB bore no direct responsibility for, but which they had to have had inside information about), as well as the psychological manipulation that eventually led the original publisher of *Doctor Zhivago*, in the ultimate twist of fate, to finance subversive and terrorist organizations of the extreme left.

In addition to the sources already cited, I have utilized various books (in particular, a number of memoirs) and newspaper articles, as well certain commentaries and unpublished

letters, some of which, as part of my personal papers, are available for consultation upon request. Among the memoirs themselves, the most revealing are those of Pasternak's companion and collaborator, Olga Ivinskaya, which were published under the title *Captive of Time: My Years with Pasternak* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1978). Those of her daughter, Irina Emelyanova, entitled *Legendy Potapovskogo Pereulka* (Legends of Potapovsky Lane), (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 1997), while covering a briefer period of time, are also of special interest.

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This narrative, which is written more or less in chronological order, is divided into four parts. In the first of these, which coincides with my sojourn in the USSR (1956-57), I have interwoven the story of my relationship with Pasternak and Olga, as well as a factual account of the various positions assumed by the authorities toward the author himself, with an entire series of personal anecdotes and experiences. In so doing, I have tried to describe from my own perspective the changes that occurred in the political climate of the country from the height to the end of the so-called "thaw," which would also have a profound effect on the fate of *Doctor Zhivago*. But at this point, there is no need to elaborate further. Suffice it to say that while I have used a number of outside sources for this book, I have also provided new evidence about facts that were heretofore unknown in order to make sense out of certain documents that have emerged from the Russian archives. No one, for example, would be able to explain, without reading this account, why the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decided in 1961 to prohibit Pasternak's rightful heirs from laying claim to his foreign royalties (defined as "Judas' gold"), having made it clear that the issue was not open to further discussion, only to suddenly reverse their position just a few years later.

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My profoundest thanks to Valerio Riva, a dear friend, and extraordinary journalist, essayist and editor, who recently passed away. While working for Feltrinelli, he was among those who strongly supported the publication of *Doctor Zhivago*, despite the barrage of criticism leveled at the publisher himself both from Moscow, and from the ranking members of the Italian Communist Party (ICP). Over the past several years, Valerio spoke with me repeatedly about the contents of these pages. While encouraging me to persevere in my literary efforts, he also read whatever I had written, for as long as he had the ability to do so.

Although I regret the fact that it is not possible, in this context, to give proper credit to the many individuals who contributed to this account, I do want to express, once again, my sincerest gratitude to Irina (Irochka) Emelyanova, particularly with regard to my first attempt to gain access to the archive of the former KGB, when she graciously provided me with written authorization from Moscow; and to Edward Lozansky, an eminent man of culture, as well as a public figure in Moscow and Washington, D.C., where he is the editor of *Kontinent USA*, and the director of the community center known as “Russia House.” With the new generation of his compatriots foremost in his thoughts, he has encouraged me time and again to tell everything that I know about the Pasternak affair. I am also indebted to Judyth Schaubhut Smith, a literary translator whose works range from opera libretti to art history, for the English translation of this book; and to Olga Uvarova, a young university researcher, for her collaboration, as translator and consultant, in the preparation of the Russian edition.

S.d’A.

Part One

Doctor Zhivago Begins Making Its Way around the World

At around ten o'clock on a bright Sunday morning, I get off the electric train at the little railroad station in Peredelkino, which is twenty-five kilometers south of Moscow, and not far from the Vnukovo Airport. With me is Vladlen, a journalist for the Soviet radio, who has never missed a chance to practice his Italian with me, having more or less forbidden me to speak to him in his own language. On this occasion, however, his main interest is in meeting the great poet and prose writer of contemporary Russia, Boris Pasternak, who has made an appointment with me by telephone.

The Peredelkino writers' colony is set in a vast, rolling landscape, which is now immersed in the soft greens of spring vegetation. We proceed on foot, traveling along narrow dirt roads, and passing by a number of other isolated dachas, until we find the one that we are looking for after crossing through a small birch wood. Pasternak is in the fenced-in garden, wearing a jacket and pants of homespun cloth, perhaps intent on pruning a plant. When he notices us, he approaches with a broad smile, throws open the little garden gate, and extends his hand. His grip is nice and firm.

It is delightful to be outdoors on a day like this, and without another word, we sit down on two wooden benches placed at right angles to each other. Our host then asks me about the authenticity of my last name (d'Angelo, or "of the angel"), which he finds so extraordinary that he will marvel at it time and again in the future, even in letters to a number of individuals who have never met me. I explain that it is of Byzantine origin, and is actually very common. In fact, Italy is full of people with the same name. Which brings the conversation around to Italy itself. Pasternak

tells us that he made a trip there in the summer of 1912, when he was twenty-two years old, and a student at the University of Marburg. He would have liked to get as far as Rome, but had unfortunately run out of money. He had seen Venice and Florence, and had then had to go back to Germany. In any case, his travels (which I will find a brief reference to, in the form of a few masterful strokes of the pen, when I eventually read his *Autobiography*) left him with a great many personal impressions, all of them original and acute, as opposed to the usual stereotypes that surround the “Bel Paese.”

Vladlen and I would have been happy to sit there listening to him forever, had he not suddenly interrupted himself with an apology, and asked me what I wanted to talk to him about.

I begin by telling him that several months ago, I left my native city of Rome at the suggestion of the Italian Communist Party to work at Radio Moscow as a member of the team involved in Italian-language broadcasts. At the same time, I agreed to act as a part-time literary agent for the young Milanese publisher, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, the scion of one of the wealthiest families in Italy and a militant member of the ICP, letting him know about the most important works of contemporary literature in the USSR, and if necessary, getting in touch with their authors. As a matter of fact, just a week ago, I happened to translate a cultural news bulletin issued by radio headquarters for the use of all foreign-language broadcasters. One of the announcements, which I remember verbatim, having made note of it for Feltrinelli, says the following: “The publication of Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago* is imminent. Written in the form of a diary, it is a novel that spans three quarters of a century, ending with the Second World War.”

The author interrupts me with a gesture of his hand. “In the USSR,” he says, “the novel will not come out. It doesn’t conform to official cultural guidelines.”

I myself am convinced (and in so thinking, I am greatly mistaken) that this prediction is far too pessimistic. Therefore, after reiterating that the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* has already been announced by the Soviet radio, I go on to mention several works that have recently appeared in the USSR which would certainly not have been accepted in the past. I also remind him that there is now a more tolerant climate in the country, and a greater receptivity to new ideas – in a word, there is the “thaw” that everyone is talking about in the West as well. Were this not the case, how could I ever explain why Radio Moscow has decided to hire someone like me, having undoubtedly been informed in advance that I am not dogmatic.

I then conclude my argument by saying that I have come here to make a reasonable proposal: You will give me a copy of *Doctor Zhivago* to pass on to Feltrinelli, who will immediately begin its translation into Italian, so as to gain an advantage over other Western publishers. On his part, he will agree not to issue the Italian edition until after the Russian version has been published. Given his own political affiliations, he will also make every effort to deal on a friendly basis with the proper authorities in the Soviet Union.

All of a sudden I realize that the author, who is barely listening to me, is completely lost in his own thoughts. I therefore spell out my proposal once again, this time trying to be even more precise and persuasive.

There is no need for further explanations. “Let’s not worry about whether or not the Soviet edition will eventually come out,” Pasternak says. “I am willing to give you the novel so long as Feltrinelli promises to send a copy of it, shall we say within the next few months, to other publishers from important countries, first and foremost France and England. What do you think? Can you ask Milan?”

I assure Pasternak that fulfilling his request is not only possible, but inevitable, since the major publishers are always concerned with making money, and enhancing their own reputations, through the sale of the foreign rights to their most popular books. I also advise him not to delay our agreement while waiting for a confirmation that I consider to be an absolute certainty.

After reflecting on this line of reasoning for a moment, Pasternak stands up, excuses himself, and enters the house. He returns a short while later with a large package in tow, which he gives directly to me. “This is *Doctor Zhivago*,” he says. “May it make its way around the world.”

I weigh the package in my hands, as if it were too heavy to carry, while letting him know that thanks to a fortunate set of circumstances, within the next few days, I myself will be able to deliver it to Milan as the first stop on its world tour. We then chat for another ten minutes or so, during which time the author shares with us his ideas about several new projects that he is working on. Finally, when we have already exchanged good-byes and best wishes at the garden gate, our host gazes at Vladlen and me with an expression of benevolent irony. “You are hereby invited,” he declares, “to watch me face the firing squad.”

It is just before noon on May 20, 1956. The Pasternak affair has now officially begun.

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About a week later, I fly to East Berlin and from there, I cross over to West Berlin without incident, not only because the notorious wall has not yet been built, but also because in the last few years, I have spent considerable time in this city, exploring both of its sectors, during my business trips to Leipzig for the International Book Fair.

My first priority is to make sure that my passport is finally in order. At the moment, it does not display the extended visa for the USSR that I waited so long to secure from the Italian Foreign

Ministry, nor does it even indicate that I have already been to the Soviet Union (thereby avoiding certain complications when I repatriate). In fact, almost three months ago, after receiving a visa stamped on a separate piece of paper from the Soviet Embassy in East Berlin, I was able to leave for Moscow on a deluxe sleeper train, which was otherwise completely empty, and arrive at my destination relaxed and rested after traveling for more than forty hours.

I proceed to check into a hotel on the Joachimstahler Strasse, a cross street of the Kurfürstendamm near the Zoogarten elevated railroad station, where I drop off my suitcase (snubbed by both the Soviet and East German customs officials), with the package containing *Doctor Zhivago* floating around inside. I then go to the Italian Consulate, where the extended visa for the USSR (which had already been granted by Rome, as I was well aware of before coming to Berlin) is stamped in my passport without further ado. Finally, I make a call to Milan to ask for instructions.

Since Feltrinelli has decided to meet me here, I reserve a room for him at my hotel, and the following day, in mid-morning, I go to pick him up at the Tempelhof Airport. Back in the hotel, *Doctor Zhivago* passes from my suitcase to his. We then spend the next two days together, wandering around West Berlin and enjoying the beautiful weather, looking into a few of the shops, eating at outdoor restaurants, and chatting about this and that, especially my initial impressions of Soviet life. At one point, Feltrinelli asks me if there are any prostitutes in Moscow. When I tell him that I have noticed their presence around the larger hotels (where they are also used to spy on foreigners), he seems very surprised and disillusioned.

The second evening, we say good-bye to each other at a local night club. He leaves before I do, escorting a girl that he danced with briefly, who works as a clerk at Siemens. Since he is

returning to Milan early in the morning, he hopes to find time before embarking to buy a pair of binoculars for his yacht.

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I am once again in Moscow, a city that I have come to know fairly well. I am lodged on the tenth floor of a tall building overlooking the Kiev Railroad Station, just a few steps from the Moscow River, in a modest but nonetheless desirable apartment that will soon be host to my wife, Giulietta, and our children, Francesca, who is four and a half, and Giorgio, who is almost two.

Moscow is a great city that is living in straitened circumstances. When not empty, or nearly so, the shops generally offer inferior goods. The people, in large part poorly dressed, form long lines not only to make their purchases, but for many other reasons as well. Rare are the restaurants, cafes and movie houses, the Bolshoi Theater being the only star left, with but a few satellites of modest dimensions. Motorized traffic is composed of occasional private automobiles (at the disposal of the party higher-ups), a limited number of taxis, and overcrowded busses and rattletrap trucks.

When evening falls, the fact that all the windows of the buildings both in the center and on the outskirts of town are illuminated is a sad reminder that people are forced to share their living quarters, with one family housed in each room. There are many drunks as well – too many – more than in any of the other major cities of the world. Especially at night, the police go through the streets, sweeping up those who have reached the state of inebriation, and taking them to one of the detoxification centers, where for a handful of rubles, they are obliged to have their stomachs pumped, and are then given a shower and a cot to sleep on.

While exploring every aspect of this new reality, I am bound and determined to understand

fully the reasons for what I have discovered, refraining from making hasty judgments, and with the fervent hope that I will be able to find plausible justifications. I keep reminding myself that it has only been ten years since the Soviet Union emerged from a war that took the lives of twenty million of its citizens, and only three years since it saw the end of the Stalinist atrocities – the very same atrocities that the Communist Party heads in the West vehemently denied, passing them off as the lies of imperialist propaganda, until Khrushchev’s “secret report” finally denounced them in no uncertain terms, all the while attributing them to the “cult of personality,” and thereby avoiding any detailed explanations.

In any case, I often find myself wondering if, as of now and the current “thaw,” it will actually be possible to build the society of free and equal individuals that millions and millions of human beings, in every corner of the earth, continue to dream of. Whatever the outcome may be, I am gratified to be in the privileged position of a close observer at such a time in history.

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At the radio station – whose thirty foreign news bureaus and technical equipment occupy two buildings behind Pushkin Square, on the opposite side of the main thoroughfare that was once known as Tverskaya, and is now Gorky Street – I am employed from early afternoon to late evening, with the general exception of Sundays.

The Italian news office, whose work space includes one large room plus a much smaller one, consists of about twenty-five staff members, most of whom are Russian. Among the Italians themselves, there is the totally bilingual Enrico, with the physique of an ancient gladiator and a heart of gold. The son of a Communist member of the Italian Parliament, he spent his adolescence in Moscow as the result of a family situation. There is also another Sergio, who arrived from Italy

shortly before I did. Not Roman like myself, but “Romagnolo,” he shares the exuberant nature of his fellow citizens from Romagna.

Then there are several oldsters, who might well be defined as Italo-Soviets at this point, having immigrated twenty or more years ago to the USSR, where they continued to ply their trades, from carpenter to bricklayer, and where they were fortunate enough not to be swept away by the Stalinist purges like so many of their peers. For the most part already retired, they work on a reduced schedule with the different news editors, and do their best to make themselves useful.

My own responsibilities include translating and adapting materials prepared by the central broadcasting service for the use of the various foreign bureaus, writing commentaries and human interest stories, and lending my voice to recordings and transmissions. On occasion, I am also asked to report on specific events.

For my first assignment in this guise, I am sent to a local railroad station to interview a large group of young Communists who have volunteered to work in Norilsk, the center of a mining region that is especially rich in uranium, which surrounds the mouth of the Yenisei River above the Arctic Circle. Among their explanations for having made this choice there is a mixture of idealistic fervor, a spirit of adventure, and the simple need for a change of pace. Galya, who is half Russian and half gypsy, admits that one of her reasons for going along for the ride is to get away from a boyfriend that she cannot stand.

In their choice of news items and the tone of their commentaries, it is immediately apparent to me that the transmissions from Radio Moscow reflect the balance and moderation expected of a state broadcasting system. In any case, they devote a great deal more time to the description of domestic virtues, whether real or presumed, than to the vices of the countries to

which they are directed.

This is a far cry, for example, from the style of the clandestine Italian radio station in Prague, which is operated by fugitives from our justice system who spend their days railing against “Rome and its government of assassins” (the Segni regime), or that of the equally clandestine Italian broadcasting service that is located in a house on the Elsastrasse in East Berlin, where I happened to spend the night several times. In the case of the latter, however, their transmission signal is too weak to cross the Alps.

On the job we speak only sporadic Italian, despite the fact that quite a few of the non-Italians are relatively fluent. This helps me to immerse myself in Russian, which I practiced almost exclusively from books during the time that I worked at the publishing house of the ICP. While chatting with Zhenya, a free spirit who artfully arranges the theme songs and musical selections for our programs, I amuse myself at his expense by contending that Russian is mere child’s play for those familiar with another Indo-European language.

All you need to know, I explain condescendingly, is that in Russian (as I learned from a university course in glottology), a great many words of Greco-Latin origin camouflaged themselves by substituting the palatal consonants with the sibilant ones, so that “deka” (ten) became “desyat,” “kentum” (one hundred) “sto,” “kum” (with) “so,” and “kor” (heart) “serdtse.” In fact, the more you look for them, the more of them you find. These are just old tricks, I insist. English also distanced itself from German with a shift in sound (the second “Lautverschiebung”) by replacing the sibilant consonants with the dental ones, thereby transforming “zehn” into “ten,” “zu” (the multi-purpose particle) into “to,” “Zinn” into “tin,” “Zunge” into “tongue,” and so on, from one end of the dictionary to the other.

Zhenya, who is not in the least impressed by the extent of my knowledge, teaches me instead a number of Russian words and expressions that are forbidden in polite company, urging me to use them myself, even in casual conversations with my young female colleagues (who laugh at them), while reminding me that a foreigner can always plead ignorance.

The director, Ilya, the assistant director, Kolya, and two excellent news editors, Lolly and Vadim (who take turns occupying the smaller room), seem to be satisfied with what I am doing. In any case, they are all very pleasant to deal with, and I have no complaints whatsoever about the way I am being treated. It is in the larger room, however, that I immediately form solid bonds of friendship, cultivating them outside the workplace as well, especially at the informal get-togethers that my young co-workers – mostly at the suggestion of Lilya, the office secretary – organize wherever there is enough space to be found, including my own apartment.

One of the more exceptional characters among my colleagues is Slava, a gentleman of the old school who speaks perfect English, quips with the best of them, and drinks like a sponge without ever losing his aplomb. At a certain point he takes out of his pocket a copy of Saltykov-Shchedrin's *Sketches of Provincial Life*, a magnificent satire of the tsarist bureaucracy. "I always carry it around with me," he says. "Its value as a practical guide has remained intact."

Rumor has it that Slava comes from a diplomatic career, and that he worked at the Soviet Embassy in Washington before being repatriated due to problems with his superiors. I avoid questioning him on the subject, however – even when he gives me half a day of his time, and a good deal of practical advice, while helping me to buy pots and pans and other kitchen equipment.

A completely different type, but also an interesting character, is Sergio the Romagnolo, a well-meaning, wisecracking, foul-mouthed pain in the neck. Unfortunately, he does not speak

Russian, nor will he ever do so. When we happen to meet in the radio station's cafeteria or main corridors, which are host to every imaginable ethnic and linguistic variety, he expects me to translate his graphic opinions of the women from the other editorial offices, foremost among them being a shapely Rumanian. This I absolutely refuse to do. In fact, thinking that he should be punished for his sins, I play a little joke on him by sneaking a fake news item into a general bulletin that he is scheduled to read during a particular recording session. In the report, I announce with great ceremony the discovery of a new spinach pasta, as reported by a food cooperative from Kaluga. After reciting the first lines, Sergio suddenly stops, utters a curse, shouts that in Bologna they have been eating "green lasagna" for five centuries, and finally vents his anger with a barrage of insults directed at the son of a gun who has made a laughingstock out of him. The female sound technician, by now my accomplice, keeps the tape for the amusement of the entire Italian staff.

As for the Italo-Soviets, I become especially friendly with Alberto, whose indomitable spirit refuses to give in to the aches and pains of advancing age. Along with Sergio the Romagnolo, I spend a considerable amount of time at his home, getting to know his wife, Sofya, a woman of great intelligence and wisdom who was born into a family of gold merchants, and his daughter, Lora, a brilliant medical student, whom I will meet again several years later, first in Rome and then in New York, where she lives with her husband and children.

I also become close friends with Fulvio, a very cynical but affectionate soul, who will be able to realize his dream of seeing Italy again shortly before his death. We will meet each other for the last time in Rome in 1960.

The oldest of all the Italo-Soviets may or may not deserve to be remembered. Unlike the others, he had the chance to return to Italy for several years after the war. His name is Giovanni,

and he is proud of being self-educated, and of having taught Marxist philosophy at the Communist Party school in Frattocchie, which is located only a few kilometers from Rome. Among his co-workers, there are those who are willing to swear, correctly or not, that he always gave the same lesson, and that he concluded it with these words: “Although Democritus was a materialist, he was not a dialectic. As a matter of fact,” he would say, while pounding his fist on the table, “Democritus was a horse’s ass.”

One thing that is certain, however, is that as soon as I arrived in Moscow, Giovanni volunteered on his own to educate me fully about the realities of life in the USSR, and then suddenly stopped speaking to me, even pretending not to see me. For what reason? Enrico and Sergio the Romagnolo, who are greatly amused by this turn of events, are able to give me the answer. Giovanni has convinced himself that I am Jewish, and that I have deceived him by keeping this sad truth from him. In response, I tell them to inform him, if he really wants to know how things stand, that I am a “pure Aryan,” as a certain Adolf would have said, but that I am nonetheless an ardent Zionist. This is enough to avoid any possible reconciliation.

Unfortunately, however, I have to admit that Giovanni is not an isolated case. In the Soviet Union, despite the official repudiation of any kind of racial prejudice, anti-Semitism cuts through all levels of society, a situation that does not exist in a country like Italy, for example.

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Seeing no reason to keep silent about my recent encounter with Pasternak, and what has happened since then, I waste no time in sharing this information with the co-workers I have already mentioned (except for Giovanni), as well as my closest male colleagues from the larger room, Yura, Valya, Borya, and their female counterparts, Rita and Lida. Shortly thereafter,

during one of the casual, relaxed conversations that often take place following joint work sessions, Vladlen and I also advise the director, assistant director, and other occupants of the smaller room about what has just occurred. No one seems to have any negative reactions to the news.

In the meantime, events surrounding the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* are proceeding according to schedule. In June, I learn that Feltrinelli, who has already begun to correspond with Pasternak, has also obtained the author's signature on a contract drafted in Milan almost immediately after it was sent to him. This is the same document that will eventually prove to be ineffective in terms of avoiding certain disputes with foreign publishers of the novel, and which will be replaced, many years later, by the author's legal heirs.

In any case, this is not my responsibility, and no one is asking me to become involved. However, I do make an attempt to see Pasternak again during the second half of the month, when I return to Peredelkino (by appointment with another member of the colony), and arrive unannounced at his dacha. Since he is not at home, I assume that he is probably in Moscow.

Waiting to greet me at the writers' colony is the fifty-five-year-old Turkish poet and playwright, Nazim Hikmet. Communicative, extroverted, and immediately open to new friendships, he has already used the familiar form of address with me on the telephone, even though the informal second person pronoun is not employed here as often as it is among fellow Communists in Italy. Instead, it is generally limited to those of similar age and rank.

The story of his life, as told to me by others, is indeed extraordinary. Born into an aristocratic family, he began writing at a very early age, dedicating himself to a vocation that he would never abandon, but which would not keep him from leading a full and active life. In fact, he continued to write throughout his career, while attending the Turkish Naval Academy (which he

was expelled from for having participated in a mutiny on the cadet training ship), fighting for independence and the Turkish Republic, becoming a devout Communist, and then serving a seventeen-year term in his country's prisons before moving to the Soviet Union. Even now, despite serious heart trouble, his spirit is as indomitable as ever, as can be seen from his sly, penetrating glance.

“Welcome to the insane asylum,” he exclaims while leading me into the living room, where he shows me an enormous table loaded with hundreds, if not thousands, of precious ornaments from all over the world. “This is for you,” he says as he gives me a miniature rooster, made by an ingenious Chinese artisan with nothing more than a handful of feathers and a piece of wire. I am delighted to have it.

As soon as we sit down across from each other, he shoots a question at me: “What don't you like about this country?” “The number of alcoholics,” I venture to say. “But I'm talking about politics,” he protests. “What results do you think Khrushchev's report will eventually produce? What do you yourself expect?” I tell him that I do not really know, and that I would rather have his own opinion as someone who has lived in the USSR for five years. He gets angry, accuses me of holding back, and delivers a sermon on the need for Communists to be honest with each other, at which point I myself explode. In the end, we agree to disagree, and make our peace.

We then move on to the subject of his literary works. Between those that have been published and those that have not, they could fill an entire wall of shelves. Hikmet tells me about two of his plays that have recently been published in Moscow, and gives me copies of them as well. I will read them, finding them both very original, and also mention them to Feltrinelli.

Just as I am about to leave, an attractive young woman enters the living room. She is the

cardiologist whose job it is to care for him, and who has by now taken up residence with him for reasons that are not strictly professional. The day after, while gossiping with Slava, I tell him about seeing her, whereupon, completely poker-faced, he makes the following observation: “Well, even Hikmet understands that in this country, health care doesn’t come without a price tag.”

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Yulya Schucht, the widow of Antonio Gramsci, and her sister, Tatyana, are living together in Moscow. According to my colleague Enrico they would certainly enjoy meeting a young Communist who has recently arrived from Italy. I am immediately intrigued by the prospect of paying them a personal visit, having in mind the numerous letters that the founder of the ICP wrote to them (especially to Yulya) during his long years in a Fascist prison. From the time that I first read this correspondence, I have been fascinated by the courage and dignity that they express as an integral part of an exemplary life.

Our eventual encounter, however, is extremely uncomfortable. The two sisters, who seem closed, and somewhat emotionless, are almost monosyllabic. In an attempt to break the ice, I mention something about my first impressions of this country, and then describe my new job and my friendships with my co-workers. Since nothing I say seems to make the slightest crack in the ice, I bid them a hasty farewell.

The truth of the matter, which neither Enrico nor I can know at the moment, is that they blame Palmiro Togliatti, the secretary of the ICP, for having resorted to subterfuge whenever possible in order to keep Gramsci from being released from prison and resuming an active role in politics. Only after returning to Italy, when several former higher-ups of the ICP confirm this serious accusation, will I realize what my visit actually meant to Yulya and her sister. Despite the

fact that I was obviously unaware of what had gone on behind the scenes, they saw me as a living cell in an organism that is still called, in an irony of fate, “the party of Gramsci and Togliatti.”

XXX

At the beginning of July I leave for Kalinin (formerly Tver), which is situated on the banks of the upper Volga, one hundred fifty kilometers north of Moscow, along the main highway that connects the capital with Leningrad. Together with me, in a jeep loaded with recording equipment, are two sound technicians who are also doing some of the driving.

My latest assignment involves a “kolkoz” (collective farm) located at a relatively short distance from Kalinin, which we reach by mid-afternoon. After seeing the sights for the rest of the day, we plan to spend the night there as well. It does not take long for me to realize, however, that while it boasts its share of ancient traditions and noble ruins, the town is incredibly provincial. As opposed to what usually happens in Moscow, a good many of the people here stare at me as if I were from another planet simply because I am wearing a perfectly normal outfit composed of a brown, single-breasted Italian sports jacket with matching slacks of the usual width, rather than the blue, double-breasted suit, with pants that are almost half a meter wide, worn by the Russian intelligentsia. That evening, when I am walking through the gardens across from the eighteenth-century Putevoi Palace, once a favorite retreat and place of meditation of Catherine the Great, I actually hear someone shouting the word “stilyaga” at me. In other words, I look like a ridiculous dandy.

The following morning it is my turn to drive, for about an hour, along a narrow white road that cuts through woods and fields, until we arrive at our destination, where everything has been

planned in advance. After being greeted by the president and the other heads of the kolkoz, I visit irrigation plants and stockpiles of farm equipment, asking questions and taking notes, while the two technicians, whom I lose sight for long periods of time, are busy recording moos, grunts and other agrarian noises. Between one location and another, including a break for the noon meal, the day goes by quickly, and before dusk, which occurs very late because of the latitude, I arrive at the House of Culture.

For the moment, the main room has been set up as a dance hall, complete with a gramophone, despite the fact that no male dancers are to be seen. There are just a dozen or so local matrons coupled together on the dance floor, and a very cute young city girl, who is watching from the sidelines. I approach her and invite her to trip the light fantastic with me, and while we are dancing, I learn that she is a student from Kalinin, and that she is vacationing for several days at the kolkoz as the guest of her uncle, the president.

As we continue to dance our way around the floor, I discover that the girl has not only a sentimental side to her nature, but a philosophical one as well. How sad it is, she suddenly observes, that the two of us, she Russian and I Italian, are destined never to see each other again because of geographical distances. What can I possibly say that is equally profound? The most I can tell her is that such is life.

Then, however, the ladies of the kolkoz commence to advance on us in a solid block, protesting violently that I have shown disrespect for them by dancing exclusively with the girl from town. After denying the evidence, I solemnly vow to partner each and every one of them in turn. Meanwhile, to show them how much they command my respect, I perform an approximative Russian dance, bending my knees and kicking for all I am worth. Following a round of applause

and an obvious triumph, I whirl around the dance hall with these intrepid ladies in my arms.

In the end, I am completely out of breath by the time someone calls me to dinner – a huge spread of food and alcoholic drinks that I will deal with to the best of my ability under pressure from my gracious hosts, the heads of the kolkoz, who would otherwise be greatly offended. By way of encouragement, the president explains that they are serving me a watered-down version of their local vodka – a mere 40 degrees, in fact – much less than the more than 50 degrees latitude north where we are presently located.

Although I myself believe that the rule of comparison between alcohol and latitude, which I have already heard enunciated by Slava, is absolute nonsense, I have to admit that a 60-degree vodka (obviously highly inflammable) really does exist, and that it is even for sale at the Yeliseyevsky Magazin, the most famous “gastronom” in Moscow.

In any case, I toss and turn all night, hopelessly trying to chase away a non-imaginary cat that has decided to sleep on my stomach. In the morning, I do manage to chase away a gentlewoman who appears at my bedside to offer me yet another shot of vodka, which is considered the best remedy for dissipating the effects of a hangover. I have no intention of drinking it, however. They will have to kill me first.

I manage to return to Moscow in time for the arrival of my wife and children, as well as the first foreign tourists in Soviet history, a phenomenon that is yet another effect of the thaw. Several days later, I am given the assignment of joining the Italian tour group, who have already departed for Leningrad. At the same time, I am granted a most welcome leave of absence that will allow me to spend an entire week becoming personally acquainted with the old St. Petersburg, which until now I have only read about in books.

Giulietta, who will be working as an announcer for the radio as soon as our children are comfortable staying with their nanny, Nastya, is also counting on a trip to Leningrad in the near future, having earned her stripes as an avid tourist while accompanying me on adventurous motorcycle trips to Europe, North Africa and the Middle East (Baghdad included) from the earliest days of our marriage. She will be traveling to the “Venice of the North” with another Italian couple, thanks to the husband, a correspondent for *Avanti!*, who has agreed to take her along with them. I, on the other hand, will be in the company of my young colleague, Igor, a very zealous lone wolf, who may soon be in line for a promotion from the large room to the small one.

While meandering through the canals and fountains in one of the magnificent parks of Petrodvorets – the imperial summer residence known as the “Versailles of Russia,” which overlooks the pale blue water of the Gulf of Finland – I come upon my fellow Italian tourists. At first glance, there seem to be about fifty of them, from various walks of life. In fact, other than the militants or Communist sympathizers who have taken advantage of the golden opportunity to make a pilgrimage to the Soviet Union, and who see everything through rose-colored glasses, there are a number of open-minded, or politically neutral individuals, who simply want to enjoy a vacation that is out of the ordinary, and who are not very enthusiastic about stating their opinions in front of a microphone.

Last but not least – and in a class all by himself – there is a pharmaceutical salesman who is determined not to be distracted by the natural and man-made beauty surrounding him. Instead, he is nourishing the hope (completely vain, in my opinion) of establishing the right contact in order to import a particular prescription drug used to cure multiple sclerosis that is only available in the USSR.

In the end, I have not gathered much useful material. Those comments that I am able to elicit are for the most part trivial, repetitive, or utterly ridiculous. To quote but one example, an elderly secondary school teacher, remembering the days spent in Moscow, and the bronze statues that she saw in the subway station at Revolution Square (extremely muscular figures of factory workers and peasants in exaggerated poses), states with absolute certainty: “In the Soviet Union, the underground railway stations are the most marvelous of art galleries.” Enough is enough. I erase that portion of the tape.

XXX

During this time, Olga Ivinskaya, the woman who has been part of Pasternak’s life for a decade, and whom I have yet to meet, approaches a number of exponents of official culture in an attempt to ward off the dangers that she feels are threatening *Doctor Zhivago* and its author. These initiatives, first mentioned to me by Pasternak himself, are described in her memoirs, which she will finally succeed in publishing many years later in the United States (*Captive of Time*, Doubleday, 1978). Despite certain unavoidable inaccuracies, this highly personal account represents an invaluable source of information from both a historical and human perspective.

Olga initially confides to Nikolai Bannikov, an editor at Goslitizdat, the State Publishing House for Literature, with whom she has a good relationship, that Pasternak has given his novel to a foreign publisher. Bannikov makes no effort to hide his own concerns from her, fearing that this situation may block the scheduled publication of another work by Pasternak, a volume of poetry that includes an introduction with autobiographical notes. He is also worried about the pervasive influence of a formidable woman named Vytashevskaya, the ex-commandant of a concentration camp, whom Goslitizdat has recently been obliged to put in a position of considerable power.

Olga then pays a visit to Vytashevskaya, whose cordiality takes her completely by surprise. While practically purring at her, in fact, she promises to help her in any way that she can, thanks to her friendship with “someone very highly placed.” This “someone,” who is soon destined to descend from the heights to the relative depths, is none other than Vyacheslav Molotov. Once informed of the circumstances, however, he immediately refers the matter to Dmitri Polikarpov, the head of the Culture Section of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

Polikarpov arranges to see Olga in his office, at which point he wastes no time in telling her, in a rather offhanded manner, that she should contact me directly, and ask me to return the manuscript of *Doctor Zhivago*. While she is still present, he also calls Anatoli Kotov, the Director of Goslitizdat, telling him that he should meet with Pasternak, and draw up a contract for the publication of the novel – after the necessary cuts and revisions have been made, of course.

Pasternak then finds himself face to face with Kotov, who compliments him on *Doctor Zhivago*, defining it as a “magnificent work,” and promising that it will be published as soon as another editor in the publishing house, Anatoli Starostin, has had a chance to go over it carefully. Although he knows that Starostin admires him as a writer, Pasternak is also painfully aware of the fact that even an ardent supporter is not allowed to do what he wants in such an environment. As a result, he decides to make no definite commitment, given the ambiguity of the situation, at the same time avoiding a flat refusal that would be prejudicial to his case. What is most important right now, Olga reminds him, is not to get involved in a total standoff, and to let the Italian edition move ahead without a lot of undue publicity.(1)

XXX

In mid-August, Ambrogio Donini, a university professor, and Paolo Robotti, a retired blue-collar worker, both of whom are well-known leaders of the ICP, are guests at the exclusive Barvikha Sanatorium, which is situated in a beautiful garden on the outskirts of the Soviet capital. Having had a long working relationship with them in Italy, I decide that my wife and I should pay them a visit. Their consorts are with them as well. Donini's wife, Olga, who is Russian, is the daughter of a former tsarist admiral. Robotti's wife, Elena, a native of Turin, is also the sister of Rita Montagnana, the ex-wife of Togliatti.

Since both patients are hard-line Communists of the old school, I try to amuse them with a series of personal anecdotes that have no politico-ideological implications, such as the time that an enthusiastic little crowd surrounded me on the Okhotni Riad (a main thoroughfare located near the Kremlin), mistaking me for a popular soccer player, and the evening when a drunkard stopped me in front of my building to exclaim over my "cute little nose," which he said looked just like Stalin's.

Another episode, which occurred some days earlier when the temperature was hovering around 33 degrees Centigrade, involved my swimming across the Moscow River, at most one and half meters deep, wearing flippers, a mask and a snorkel, much to the amazement and disgust of a group of fellow bathers.

I also mention the situation involving *Doctor Zhivago*, which neither of my listeners has heard about before now, while continuing to delude myself that I have not committed a serious transgression. Robotti, who is visibly upset by the news, points out that the law here prohibits the

exporting of any unpublished work without special permission. In all probability, this is indeed the case.

In an effort to vindicate myself, I bring up the subject of a young engineer named Belyankin, who worked for the Soviet Trade Commission in Rome. All three of us are well acquainted with him. I personally met with him on a regular basis during the three years that I was the manager of the Libreria Rinascita, the ICP bookstore located on Via delle Botteghe Oscure, prior to being transferred to Moscow. At that time, my main concern was not having to pay invoices directly to the Soviet entity that supplied us with large quantities of Russian books, which we sold in the shop, for the most part to institutes of Slavic studies. In fact, I used the excuse that the subterfuges I had to resort to in order to get around the boycott of Italian customs (generally with the assistance of the leading Communist Eugenio Reale, a major promoter of lucrative trade between East and West for the ICP) precluded my obtaining the necessary documentation for sending foreign currency to the USSR.

Belyankin, who was more than cooperative, would invariably cancel the invoices with a big stamp. Just for the fun of it, he would then start talking about things that had absolutely nothing to do with international trade. On one occasion, he even described a summer vacation that he and several of his friends had taken on the Pechora River, where they traveled by raft as far as the Arctic Ocean. Thanks to the millions of mosquitos that infest the tundra of the Far North, they were forced to light a fire in order to create a protective cloud of smoke whenever they had to answer the call of nature, and expose a minuscule part of their bodies.

In any case, you will not believe what happened to me the day before yesterday, I caution Donini and Robotti. While I was getting on the subway, I happened to notice a captain in uniform

who was waving enthusiastically in my direction. When I realized that it was Belyankin in person, I went up to him with my hand out, and spoke to him in Italian, as I had always done, telling him that I was delighted to see him again. The captain, however, answered me in Russian, saying that he was sorry, but that he had mistaken me for someone else.

“There’s nothing unusual about the situation,” Donini insists, cutting me off at the pass. “It’s clear that Belyankin has been recalled to active duty for a brief refresher course. This is the standard procedure in many countries, even Switzerland, regarding young officers who are on leave.”

XXX

On August 24th – several days after my visit with Donini and Robotti – General Ivan Serov, Chairman of the Committee for State Security (KGB), head of the omnipotent secret police and supreme commander of all espionage and counterespionage operations in the USSR, sends a memorandum to the highest echelon of the CPSU – the Secretariat, Presidium, and Central Committee – informing them that Pasternak has given the manuscript of his novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, to the Italian publisher, Feltrinelli. In the same memorandum, he mentions specifically that it was Sergio d’Angelo, an Italian journalist and member of the ICP in the employ of Radio Moscow, who obtained the manuscript and delivered it to Feltrinelli during a trip that he made to Berlin at the end of May. (2)

Exactly one week later, on August 31st, the Culture Section of the CPSU Central

Committee issues a multi-page memorandum signed by its head, Polikarpov, and L. Chemoutsan, which reaches the party's top brass in the form of an attachment to a note from the Foreign Minister, Dmitri Shepilov. The memorandum begins by stating that Pasternak has sent a copy of his novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, to the magazines *Znamya* and *Novy Mir*, and has also released it to the Italian publisher, Feltrinelli, "granting him permission to sell the publication rights to both France and England." After criticizing *Doctor Zhivago* at great length, it concludes as follows: "The novel by B. Pasternak is a perfidious calumny against our revolution, and against our entire way of life. It is obvious that this work, which is not only ideologically unsound, but also anti-Soviet, can never be allowed to be published. In light of the fact that B. Pasternak has given his novel to a foreign publishing house, the Culture Section of the CPSU Central Committee will take the necessary steps, through its friendly relationships with other Communist parties, to prevent this defamatory book from being published abroad."(3)

XXX

Obviously unaware of these communications from on high, I am summoned at the beginning of September by the director general of foreign news bureaus for Radio Moscow, who is seated at an immense desk covered with a variety of cumbersome desktop items in marble and bronze. Almost as if he only vaguely remembered the subject at hand, my exalted employer asks me if by any chance I happen to have an unpublished novel by Pasternak in my possession. After making sure that he is talking about *Doctor Zhivago*, I tell him that I did have it with me for a few days, and then – since it was about to be published in the USSR, as was announced on the radio, which he will undoubtedly recall – I gave it to a friend of mine in the publishing business, who was interested in printing it in Italy as well. It seems to me that the director general is

laughing, as they say, up his sleeve. In any case, he certainly does not bang his fist on the enormous desk. On the contrary, he bids me a polite farewell.

At this point, however, I have begun to harbor a certain suspicion that will soon prove to be more than justified. The announcement concerning *Doctor Zhivago* was not the result of a decision made by the proper authority, with the official blessings of the powers that be, but rather an arbitrary action on the part of some small politico-literary group (whether inside or outside the radio I do not know), with the intent of staking out a claim of their own when faced with the very real possibility that the thaw would not last for long.

But what exactly is meant by the term “thaw?” Perhaps it might best be defined as a series of measures taken in the wake of Stalin’s death, which one wing of the Soviet power structure considers indispensable in order to provide a stimulus (first and foremost, in the productive sector) to a country that by now is completely drained, thus saving the existing system from total collapse. This reformist wing is headed by Khrushchev and Malenkov, who assume the respective roles of First Secretary and Prime Minister, while touting the return of “collective leadership” to the political arena, as opposed to the “supreme leadership” of the defunct dictator.

In synthesis, the measures adopted by the reformist wing – which the conservative wing, headed by Molotov and Kaganovich, will condemn as destabilizing – concern both domestic and foreign policy issues. On the domestic front, they involve the release of millions of prisoners from the lagers, the establishment of less repressive police tactics in the exercise of power, and a moderate increase in the production of consumer goods as a primary means of improving the living conditions of the masses.

With regard to foreign policy, they support an attenuation of the Cold War, the relaxation

of Soviet control over the satellite countries, and the acknowledgment of “national roads to socialism” (in other words, a less rigid adherence to the Soviet model) for all Communist parties, whether or not they are currently in power.

Thanks to the reform process, which culminates in the “secret report,” the world of culture also begins to show new signs of life. Writers are now permitted, for instance, to speak out against various government abuses – with the obvious caveat that such criticism not be leveled at the upper echelons of the party hierarchy. As a consequence, not only works by eminent novelists and poets who either died in concentration camp, or who were banished for long periods of time, but also several new literary efforts, have finally seen the light of day.

Had these same texts been submitted to a publishing house only a few years earlier, they would have caused serious problems for their authors. To cite but one example of the extent to which things have changed, Vladimir Dudintsev’s novel, *Not by Bread Alone*, which points its finger at the many malfeasances of the Soviet bureaucracy, has recently been published in installments by the influential magazine, *Novy Mir*.

Toward the end of June, however, a tragic episode takes place in the USSR’s “own back yard,” when fifty thousand Polish workers, who are demonstrating in the streets of Poznan against oppression and hunger, are slaughtered wholesale by police officers firing at point-blank range. In the immediate aftermath, dissension increases among the ranks of the Soviet leadership, with the conservative wing defining the event as the direct result of political reforms that are far too risky, and the reformist wing being forced to concede that it must change its course of action.

On every front, the first symptoms of a new “freeze” are beginning to make themselves felt.

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One morning, when I am halfway across the bridge that leads back to my apartment house, I reach for my little movie camera. I then take a series of shots of the building where I live, the opposite square, the Kiev Railroad Station, and by pure accident, an army colonel, who comes marching up to me. He plants himself in front of me, and asks me, "Just what do you think you're doing?" "Nothing special," I say. "I'm a foreigner, and I was only trying to film a few images to remember Moscow by." "You're not allowed to do that," the officer insists. "In this country, it is strictly forbidden to photograph bridges, railroad stations and soldiers in uniform. You have therefore committed three violations of the law, one right after the other." However, he does not proceed to rant and rave, nor does he threaten to report me. He is even considerate enough not to demand that I destroy the film. Satisfied with having given me fair warning, he puts his hand to his cap, and goes off on his way.

I may have learned something at this point, but certainly not everything. Several days later, I walk over to the kolkoz market that is closest to home. This is where the peasants from the collective farms can sell their goods directly to the public, with no price restrictions involved. Thanks to the acre or so of land given to them by the government, which they can cultivate for their own purposes when not working for the kolkoz itself, they account for at least half of the entire national production of meat and milk. Since the merchandise sold at their markets costs four times as much as in the state stores, it is obviously not within everyone's reach. On the other hand, it is always available, and always fresh.

After wandering around the stands, and purchasing the various items that Giulietta had written on a scrap of paper for me, I innocently reach for my movie camera, and get ready to film

a nice panoramic shot, when someone blocks my view. Two police officers (or “militiamen”) then order me to follow them to a small building, which is either the main office of the market, or else the local barracks.

In the meantime, an enthusiastic crowd has gathered, excited at having witnessed the capture of a spy (from the West, of course, as is more than obvious from the width of my pants). In a little room on the building’s ground floor, where I am confronted by a third police officer with more braids than the other two, I repeat what I had said to the army colonel: “I’m a foreigner, and I was just taking a few pictures as personal souvenirs.” “Hold it right there!” he shouts. “In this country no one is allowed, foreigner or not, to photograph the markets!” “I’m sorry, I didn’t know that,” I tell him. “I work for Radio Moscow – let me show you my ID card.” In the end, I get off with a stern lecture on understanding and obeying the laws of the land.

A few months later, in Samarkand, however, I will find myself in a similar predicament, which will prove to be even more amusing.

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On another morning, during a visit to Peredelkino, I have the chance to see Pasternak again, if only for a brief moment. In good spirits, and as expansive as ever, he is most interested in hearing about my life as a new immigrant. After assuring him that everything is just fine, I hasten to add that I recently had a rather friendly encounter with one of the director generals of the radio, who simply wanted to know if I had a copy of *Doctor Zhivago* in my possession. Since that was the sum total of our conversation, I could only assume that the highest politico-literary authorities, who were probably the ones behind this minor investigation, had not yet been informed about the novel’s being sent abroad.

The author chooses not to comment on what I have told him. Instead, he confirms that he has already exchanged several letters with Feltrinelli, and has also signed a contract with him, which he considers “the least important” of his concerns. He then mentions his meeting with Anatoli Kotov, the Director of Goslitizdat, who assured him that they would publish *Doctor Zhivago* – but only after it had literally been picked apart. Such a compromise is completely absurd, he adds, and no further discussion is warranted.

But why did they make such a proposal in the first place? He himself is absolutely convinced that the higher-ups at Goslitizdat do not in the least believe that they can actually persuade him to allow them to bowdlerize his work (even if he has decided to assume a neutral position in order to avoid a direct confrontation). They are merely biding their time in the hopes that Feltrinelli will finally cave in to obvious pressures, and abandon the idea of publishing the novel.

The series of events that follow will prove that this supposition is entirely correct. For the moment, however, all I can do is to state my own opinion, which is that Goslitizdat’s reasoning has no basis whatsoever in reality. The fact of the matter is that Feltrinelli, who is bound and determined to launch his publishing house on a grand scale, is looking for a major literary coup. Should he still have any doubts about what this coup will actually be, his colleagues are there to make sure that he understands that it is none other than *Doctor Zhivago*. I also remind him that despite his undying loyalty to the Communist Party, Feltrinelli would never subject himself to such a blatant form of censorship. On the contrary, he would proudly claim his right to stand up for the cause of artistic freedom.

Pasternak shrugs his shoulders in resignation. “I hope that’s the case,” is his only response.

The author makes no mention (nor will he ever do so) of having received a lengthy critique of his novel in the form of a letter dated September, 1956, signed by the editorial staff of *Novy Mir*, composed of B. Agapov, B. Lavrenev, K. Fedin, K. Simonov and A. Krivitsky, who inform him, without proposing any revisions to the text, that in their judgment, *Doctor Zhivago* is ideologically unsound, and therefore not fit for publication. But had he actually been sent this correspondence?

When it is printed for the first time in the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, on October 25, 1958 – the day after Pasternak is awarded the Nobel Prize – it will catch me completely off guard, despite its negative conclusions. In fact, its calm, almost cordial tone is entirely different from the insulting language used in all the other official evaluations of his work. For this reason, I begin to wonder if it has not just been written, and backdated by several years, in order to persuade Western public opinion that *Doctor Zhivago* had been the object of fair and impartial criticism on the part of the literary world before it became the center of a political scandal. Olga will share these same same suspicions with me.(4) In the end, we will never know the true story.

XXX

Having taken my leave of Pasternak, I walk a bit farther down the road until I arrive at another dacha. This is where my friend Evald Ilyenkov generally spends the weekend with his father, who is a writer, together with his wife Olya, and Lena, her little daughter from a previous marriage. On certain Sundays, Giulietta and I and our own children, Francesca and Giorgio, stay at their home the entire day, so that the youngsters can enjoy each other's company as well. Today, however, is not the usual Sunday. I am simply taking advantage of my short visit to Peredelkino to chat for a moment with the older Ilyenkov, and leave him a surprise package for

Evald.

Evald himself, whom I met through a fellow journalist, is a student of philosophy, and the author of a number of books that have been well received both in Russia and abroad, including Italy. Although somewhat timid in nature, he is a brilliant conversationalist, and wickedly ironic and anti-conformist. Unfortunately, he is not in good health, having contracted tuberculosis when he was drafted for military service, where he was stationed one summer in the deserts of central Asia, at 50 degrees C. above zero, and the following winter in the Siberian taiga, at 50 degrees below. Or perhaps it was vice versa – first the winter, and then the summer. I have since forgotten the actual sequence of events.

Evald's only other major complaint involves the fact that there is no way for him to listen to Richard Wagner at the opera, on the radio, or through recordings, since the composer was blacklisted in the USSR as a Nazi before the word itself was ever invented. A classical music buff and Wagner aficionado, he has asked me time and again if by any chance I could lend him some of my own recordings so that he could tape them for himself. The surprise that is waiting for him at Peredelkino consists of excerpts from *Tannhäuser* and *Die Valkyrie*, which I have had sent from Rome especially for him.

Several Sundays later, I return to Peredelkino with the whole family in tow. As soon as we reach the Ilyenkovs, I mention something that just happened to us while we were walking along the narrow path that leads directly to their dacha. A plain-clothes police officer, whom I asked to show his identification, wanted to know where we were headed, and then insisted that we make a wide detour of the area. When I demanded to know why, he indicated that he was not authorized to explain the circumstances.

At that point, the only thing I could imagine, I tell Evald jokingly, was that when they heard Wagner's music pouring out of the windows of the Ilyenkovs' house, the police had promptly broken down the door, and arrested everyone there, including the old man, the woman and the little girl. The truth of the matter, which we will learn by the end of the day, is that Khrushchev was paying a visit to an important author who lives in the immediate vicinity.

Evald, who wastes no time in putting on the Wagner recordings, tells me at the first interval that he would like to keep them, because if he taped them instead, they would lose the original sound quality. I can always buy more copies for myself. I just have to tell him how many rubles he needs to give me. After pretending to be somewhat puzzled by his request, I finally concede that they are his to enjoy as a personal gift from me. I could not have made him any happier.

In the meantime, our youngsters are playing in the garden, laughing their heads off and having a ball. However, I do not expect that they will actually behave themselves for very long. The reason behind this assumption is Evald's wife, Olga, who owes her volatile temperament to her Turkish father, and who distinguished herself in combat during the war as a volunteer in the Caucasian Division of the Red Army. Her daughter, Lena, having inherited her mother's natural exuberance, is a far cry from the well-mannered Russian children.

As for Francesca, she is no less of a little devil. At the nursery school, she has picked up enough Russian to be able to get the entire class to misbehave, which the teacher herself has informed me about in total exasperation. She has also learned how to talk back to her unflappable nanny, Nastya, who retaliates by urging her to tell her the most intimate details concerning our family, including the numerous relatives that we left behind in Italy.

Inevitably, there comes the moment when the two mischief-makers start to fight over something, and end up kicking and punching each other. Giorgio, who is an extremely precocious talker for his age, watches them from the sidelines, his only comment being “Diobbono” (“Good God”) in pure Tuscan dialect, thanks to the influence of his maternal grandfather.

We adults then run to the rescue like members of the UN peacekeeping force in an attempt to restore law and order. Once the kids have finally settled down, we listen to more of Wagner’s music until lunch is ready to be served.

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On October 24th, D. Shevlyagin, Vice Chairman of the CC Section for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties, issues a memorandum to the top echelon of the CPSU, informing them that in September, he told comrades Pietro Secchia and Paolo Robotti, both of whom were patients at the Barvikha Sanitorium, that Sergio d’Angelo, an Italian journalist assigned to Radio Moscow, had sent a copy of a manuscript obtained from Pasternak to the publisher Feltrinelli in Italy. He then adds that the above-mentioned comrades have promised to remedy the situation, inasmuch as Secchia, in particular, is on friendly terms with Feltrinelli. He concludes by stating that he has just received a note from Robotti, via the Embassy, indicating that the problem has been resolved, and that the manuscript will be returned within a very short period of time.(5)

This communication raises two rather interesting questions. First of all, why would Shevlyagin have given Robotti the same information in September that he could have received from Robotti himself one month earlier at the Barvikha Sanitorium, after I had filled both Robotti and Donini in on the details regarding the exportation of *Doctor Zhivago*? Secondly, although Robotti may well have been pretending to know nothing about anything so as not to deprive

Shevlyagin of the pleasure of revealing such important news, which is perfectly understandable, why would he have acted in a manner that was totally out of character in assuring Shevlyagin that the manuscript would definitely be returned, literally counting his chickens before they were hatched?

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By now I am acquainted with the Italian correspondents working in Moscow, representing the “bourgeois press” (as non-Communists and non-Communist sympathizers are defined in this country), as well as the “non-bourgeois press.” For the moment, those belonging to the first category are Vero Roberti from *Il Corriere della Sera*, Cesare Zappulli from *Il Messaggero*, and Sergio Borelli from *Il Giorno*, all of whom have recently arrived in the wake of the thaw, and all of whom are consummate professionals.

Their criticisms of the Soviet system, especially those expressed behind closed doors, inevitably reflect different nuances. The most intolerant and intransigent of the three is by definition Roberti, to the extent that other two insist that his major gripe is not being able to import the water to wash himself with, along with the canned goods and drinks that the international press corps living in the USSR is allowed to have sent from Sweden.

In reality, both Roberti and Borelli are mostly annoyed by the fact that every so often, Zappulli, a resourceful Neapolitan who is well aware of being Totò’s double,(6) somehow manages to include in his articles certain information that the Soviet press publishes the morning after he has filed his stories. Who could possibly be his “Deep Throat?” No one seems to have a clue, until one fine day, when he blithely reveals the mystery to me, while swearing me to total secrecy.

Unlike the other two, who are forced to do their jobs with the aid of interpreters that are only available during daytime hours, Zappulli actually speaks Russian (besides understanding intuitively every other language, I think, from Urdu to Guarani). At around ten o'clock in the evening, he usually goes to have a glance at the early editions of the most important Soviet newspapers (*Pravda*, *Izvestya*, and *Trud*), which arrive at that hour at the kiosk near the central telegraph office. If he discovers an interesting news item, he has no problem transmitting it immediately to his own paper, given the time difference between Moscow and Italy.

Borelli, who is both young in spirit and extremely personable, is scrupulous about the content of his own news stories, not only in terms of information that has been verified by the proper sources, but also with regard to his measured commentary. For the same reason that he would never presume to misrepresent the facts, however, he cannot write about everything he would like to. His situation is completely understandable, inasmuch as *Il Giorno*, which first came out in April of this year, is the official newspaper of ENI,(7) and therefore of Enrico Mattei, the most enterprising and "open-minded" of our public managers, who is importing almost a third of Italy's total consumption of crude oil from the USSR, obviously based on his conviction that "petroleum non olet" ["petroleum doesn't stink"].(8) Perhaps this explains why Borelli will be only too happy to repatriate as soon as he possibly can.

The "non-bourgeois" members of the Italian press corps are the Communist Giuseppe Boffa from *l'Unità* and, for a brief period of time, the Socialist Leo Paladini from *Avanti!*

As far as Boffa is concerned, I only see him on special occasions, like the arrival in Moscow of important leaders of the ICP, since he is unfailingly "very taken," a French affectation left over from his former post in Paris. On the other hand, Boffa is far too officious

and serious for my tastes, unwilling to admit the slightest doubt, resistant to any evidence that flies in the face of his personal beliefs, and probably “politically correct” even when he is roaming around the house in his pyjamas. Simply put, he is very different from so many other Communists who, while basically loyal to the party line, and perhaps intent upon furthering their careers in any way that they can, will sometimes let themselves go, on a human level, when in the company of good friends.

To cite but a few sterling examples, there is Sergio the Romagnolo, a former resistance fighter, faithful to the ICP until the end of his days, who was having dinner with me one evening in the radio cafeteria a short time after the Soviet repression of the Hungarian Revolution, and who discouraged me from eating a kind of sausage called “sosiska,” because it had to have been made with the flesh of the Hungarian people.

Then there is the staunch Communist, Maurizio Ferrara (already a celebrity as a young man for his *Conversations with Togliatti*, who would gain further prominence as the father of Giuliano).(9) While passing through Moscow before being named as Boffa’s successor, he asks me at one point to translate a newspaper headline regarding Khrushchev’s current economic challenges, whereupon he exclaims, “These people are bigger braggarts than the Fascists themselves!”

Leo Paladini, the correspondent for *Avanti!*, more or less fell into the profession of journalism as a result of his extensive travels and varied occupations right after the war, when he even worked as a gravedigger in a military cemetery. “What a shame,” Zappulli would comment on his behalf, “that a man who is so versed in history and politics, with such a passion for research, and such an analytical mind, didn’t eventually become a university professor.”

Paladini's failure to do so, however, makes him no less an excellent journalist. His dispatches from the USSR are a virtual gold mine of unusual news items and well-documented facts. Witness, for example, his extensive report on the purchasing power of the average Russian family, based on a survey of current salaries, and a detailed examination of the prices charged in the shops. However, since this kind of approach reveals too many of the skeletons in the closet of Soviet propaganda, the powers that be in the skyscraper that houses MID, or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose responsibilities include the monitoring of all foreign correspondents, waste no time in assigning to Paladini the unofficial category of "semi-bourgeois" journalist.

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Giulietta and I often spend our evenings with Leo and Carmela Paladini, who have no children of their own. Half Tuscan and half New Yorker, he is a good-natured sort who is prone to sudden, fleeting fits of anger, while she, half Veneto and half Tuscan, is all bubbly and talkative. Our purpose in getting together is not just to enjoy each other's conversation, however. In fact, the two women have taken to showing off their respective culinary skills (my wife even learns to make borscht and grenki), which results in imaginative little meals created with the best produce from the kolkoz market, and washed down with a red wine from Georgia called Mukuzani, which while neither Barolo nor Chianti, is still quite drinkable.

During this period, on the other hand, we will have to make do without the company of our children, who will be returning separately to Italy. Thanks to a short leave of absence from the radio, Giulietta herself will repatriate Giorgio, who suffers from asthma, and who is getting progressively worse in the climate of Moscow. Francesca, who is bursting with health, but whose grandparents are clamoring for her to be sent home (they are terrified at the idea of their

grandchildren having to survive a Russian winter), will be chaperoned by Anna, the Bolognese fiancée of Sergio il Romagnolo. Having come to Russia for a few days, she is more than happy to have a little interpreter with her on the return flight. At least, that is, for the part of the trip with Aeroflot. As we will come to learn several days later, Francesca is forced to throw in the sponge at the airport in Zurich, after having run into a duty-free toy shop, and trying in vain to speak with the shop girls. “Here,” she says, looking rather downcast as she goes back to Anna, “they don’t understand Russian anymore.”

One Sunday, we go out to the Ilyenkovs with the Paladini instead of the children. The two couples hit it off immediately, and Leo is delighted when Olya starts calling him “Levka” (“Little Leo”), according to the Russian custom of always using pet names for friends and relatives (in my case, I am either “Serezha” or “Serezhenka,” which correspond to “Little Sergio” and “Very Little Sergio”). In fact, he even likes the sound of Levka, which is a new experience for him.

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Only in 1956, at the height of the thaw, did the USSR actually open its doors to correspondents from the bourgeois press. Before this, there were but rare exceptions, the most lasting and famous of all, perhaps, being that of Edmund (Ed) Stevens, who has lived and worked in Moscow since the 1930's as a journalist for the *Christian Science Monitor* of Boston.

Ed Stevens is a man of the world, literally and figuratively, having traveled it far and wide. Among other things, he speaks Italian well, and is a close friend of Indro Montanelli, with whom he will collaborate in the years to come by contributing a series of excellent articles to his newspaper, *Il Giornale*. His wife, who is Russian but who enjoys dual citizenship thanks to her

marriage, has also become, to a certain extent, a woman of the world. The two of them live in a big old one-family house, built out of enormous tree trunks, on the southern edge of the historic center of Moscow. The name of their street is Ulytsa Zatsepa, or “Street of the Hook.” It is here that I am invited to dinner, together with seven or eight Russians and Americans, one evening when it is already freezing outside, but nice and warm inside, with a little help from Moskovskaya vodka, and of course, some Tennessee bourbon.

The first topics of conversation are records and shirts, these being among the items that the Stevenses purchased when on a recent trip to the United States. The records themselves are technically more advanced than the Soviet 78 rpms, which also have a tendency to break very easily. As for the shirts, they are made of nylon, and do not need to be ironed – which is all well and good, so long as you can stand not perspiring, and being plagued by static electricity.

From then on, the conversation gets more interesting, including a number of anecdotes on Soviet life, as observed by Ed over his long tenure in Russia. Finally, the subject of Stalin’s purges comes up, whereupon one of the Russian guests observes that in his “secret report,” Khrushchev specified that in 1937-38, more than two-thirds of the members of the CC of the CPSU were executed by firing squad, representing the cream of the old revolutionary guard, while he cavalierly neglected to mention the determining role that he himself played in the purge of the CC of the Ukrainian Communist Party, when out of an original group of over one hundred individuals, only three had actually survived by the time he became the First Secretary. No one voices any objections to these comments, since apart from the numbers, it is widely known in this country that the author of the “secret report” has a closetful of skeletons of his own.(10)

What the other guests really want to know is how the Stalinist purges, which were

initially aimed at the top echelon of the power structure, were able to spread to every level of Soviet society, with millions of arrests, incidents of torture, deportations and capital executions.

According to Ed, this depended in large part on the fact that the first waves of terror always led to an uncontrollable flood of accusations on the part of the general public, either out of pure psychosis (the “enemies of the people” are everywhere), or as a precaution (it is better to denounce someone else before being denounced yourself), or due to cynical self-interest (getting rid of a person that you were forced to share your apartment with, for example).

This brings to mind an episode from the past that I myself find incredibly disconcerting. During his speech to the Party Congress in March of 1939, Andrei Zhdanov reported, much to the sinister amusement of his audience, that several ordinary citizens and political activists had obtained the following document from various medical facilities: “Because of his mental condition, Comrade X cannot be used by class enemies for their own purposes.”(11) In other words, they had allowed themselves to be qualified as complete idiots. Is it possible, I ask, that such a thing could have happened?

“We’re in the land of Gogol,” replies Ed. “Here even the most terrible tragedies are bound to have their farcical side.”

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As the editorial offices of Radio Moscow are widely interconnecting, many of their employees, whether Russian or another nationality, often run into each other, at which time they might chat together, and perhaps form lasting friendships, to the point where it is not unusual to hear about love affairs, and even marriages that are more or less stable. In such an open

environment, it is obviously not very difficult to hear about various political indiscretions, some of which are extremely interesting. All you have to know is how to identify the most steady and reliable sources.

Apart from my Italian colleagues, my first “informant” is a fellow named Joe, a Russian who grew up in Brooklyn, and who works for the American broadcasting station. He also has an amazing repertoire of fantastic jokes, including those that make fun of the “verkhushka,” as the top Soviet officials are called. Little by little, however, I manage to find quite a few others as well.

There are also times when those of us working for the radio get a good deal of inside information that is neither broadcast nor reported in the papers, since it is often in the interest of the top brass to leak an explosive story, while operating on the premise that “you didn’t hear it from me.”

Such was the case of the “secret report” that Khrushchev read to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, late in February, with the firm intention of spreading it to the four corners of the earth. Otherwise, it would not have served any purpose. After a long and obviously contentious debate, a compromise was reached among the powers that be that would have immediate consequences. In fact, the typescript of the “secret report” ended up soon enough in the hands of the American State Department, which published it as a scoop, with little or no concern about whether it would ever be confirmed by the Soviets.

Even earlier, however, its contents were related verbally to the party assemblies of the major Soviet institutions, first and foremost being Radio Moscow, where leaks are guaranteed to occur. Along with my co-workers, I learned about Khrushchev’s revelations ahead of the poor

fishermen of Kamchatka, who only got the news after it had passed from mouth to mouth, and way ahead of the ordinary citizens of the Western world, who had to wait for the “apocryphal” edition from the Department of State.

Far more prevalent, however, are the rumors circulating at the radio station that are not spread from on high, one of which will make the rounds some two months after the “secret report.” In the meantime, however, the days go by without further incident, until the date of May 7th, when we celebrate the sixty-first anniversary of Aleksandr Popov’s invention of the radio (in this country, at least, he is credited with having beaten Marconi to the punch).

During the national festivities, our local union invites all volunteers to participate in a march through the countryside west of the city, and I march right along with the rest of them. Fairly soon after this company outing, however, I will read a sensational piece of news as reported by *Pravda*.

Aleksandr Fadeyev, who had become a major celebrity after having published any number of successful books, and who had been the head of the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR for almost twenty years, had committed suicide on May 13th by shooting himself through the heart. According to *Pravda*, his alcoholism was the reason behind such an act. At the radio, however, there are those who think that what drove him to such desperation was hardly his drinking problem. In fact, the entire life story of this man, who was the last (for the moment) of scores of writers who committed suicide, including Vladimir Mayakovsky and Marina Zvetayeva, will be discussed at great length.

A native of Tver, Fadeyev moved with his family to the Far East, where one evening in 1918, when he was still a high school student, he shot his pistol first at a portrait of the tsar, and

then at his own image in the mirror, symbolizing his repudiation of the past. That same night, as he would recount in his novel, *The Rout*, he joined a group of Red partisans that were fighting against the White armies of Kolchak.

Starting in 1922, after a period of studies in Moscow, he would hold a number of important party positions in the Caucasus. In his role as organizer of the literary community, he would also inherit the job of Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR upon Gorky's death.

Given the enormous power and privilege that he now enjoyed, he had access to the "kremliovka," a telephone that was directly connected to the Kremlin, both in his office and at his dacha in Peredelkino. Unfortunately, once the great purge of 1937-38 began, and Stalin used that telephone to order him to sanction the arrest of countless fellow writers (twenty-four from Peredelkino alone), he chose not take a stand against such policies. After World War II, when he had the chance to work as a correspondent on the front lines – an experience that he would describe in his novel, *The Young Guard* – he would once again take over the reins of the Writers' Union just as another purge was about to begin, whereupon he would resume carrying out the orders received via the "kremliovka."

Following Stalin's death, however, he started having increasing pangs of guilt, and drowning these feelings in excessive drinking, especially in light of the enormous numbers of political victims who were being released from prison and then rehabilitated. There had also been the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back, when a writer who had survived a concentration camp, and who had been reduced to a mere skeleton, had spat in his face in the presence of others, and then had hanged himself.

By now a shattered man, Fadeyev would seek comfort in Pasternak. “You, my dear Boris, are the only one of us who doesn’t tell lies,” he had said to him on the telephone one evening when he was dining at the famous Aragvi Restaurant. He would often go to see the author at his home in Peredelkino as well. On one of these occasions, he had vented his frustration in such violent terms that the day after, Pasternak sent him a hand-delivered note, cautioning him that “Yesterday you weren’t here with us, and you didn’t tell us anything.”

At the radio, we did not yet know that the false account of events related by *Pravda*, which even failed to mention that Fadeyev had stopped drinking entirely in the last three months of his life, would eventually be made to look ridiculous by one of the writer’s own suicide notes. Before shooting himself, in fact, Fadeyev had written to his wife, Stepanova, an actress with the Moscow Art Theater, and also to the party’s Central Committee. What did the second note say? Mikhail Shokolov, who tried to find out its contents from Kliment Voroshilov, was given the following response: “If you had any idea of what he wrote, you wouldn’t ask.”

Aleksandr Tvardovsky questioned Khrushchev directly about it, only to be told that “Certain party secrets are reserved for just two or three people.” In the end, however, the truth would come out. Fadeyev’s actual words were as follows: “By shooting myself, I have taken aim at the politics of Stalin, the esthetics of Zhdanov, and the genetics of Lysenko.”(12) In other words, he had targeted not only bloody despotism, but also repression of artistic freedom, and charlatanism cloaked in the mantle of science.

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In the second half of the year, the official broadcasts and the rumors flying around the corridors are often at odds with each other in terms of the cataclysmic events that will inevitably

signal the end of the thaw.

Just as the Poznan Revolt is all but forgotten, something far worse occurs, when the Hungarian Revolution breaks out on October 23rd, leading to two weeks of hell, and endless repercussions. Moscow's official stance with regard to what happened in Poland was to blame the uprising on mistakes made by the party higher-ups in Warsaw. In the case of Hungary, however, its final version of the facts will attribute the revolt to a Fascist plot (supported, needless to say, by world imperialism), in an attempt to justify as a case of force majeure the massive invasion of Soviet tanks and troops, which resulted in thousands losing their lives, thousands of others being deported to the USSR, and another two hundred thousand fleeing the country.

Many of us know that the real explanations lie elsewhere. With the exception of a very brief parenthesis, only in theory have Poland and Hungary (not to mention the other countries of Eastern Europe) been able to choose their own "national roads to socialism" in light of the Soviet thaw, above all by reducing their exorbitant investments in heavy industry, and increasing the availability of consumer goods. Only in theory have they been able to get out of the air-tight agreements made with the USSR, starting with the end of the war, which have allowed the Soviets to seize a substantial portion of their natural resources (including Polish coal and Hungarian bauxite), and to reimburse them, when they actually do so, at a fraction of what they actually cost.

To sum it all up, Khrushchev does not practice abroad what he preaches at home, preferring to let things stay as they are in order not to risk too much in the game that he is forced to play with his own political adversaries. What better proof than the fact that he hastened to

Warsaw to prevent the moderate Gomulka, who favored greater autonomy for his country, from being elected as head of the Polish party, but did not take the trouble to remove the successors to the Stalinist “Rakosi-Gero clique” in Hungary, which he supported along with the Ulbricht-Grotewohl clique in East Germany, and the Zapotny-Novotny clique in Czechoslovakia?

Thanks to the Suez Crisis, which erupts on October 29th, and the smoke screen of Soviet propaganda intended to downplay the dramatic events that have just taken place in Hungary, the world’s attention will be turned to yet another major event, as the Israelis invade the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula, and push toward the Suez Canal, which the Egyptian President, “El Rais” Nasser, has wrested from British control, and then obstructed by means of sunken ships, which will make it unnavigable for more than twenty years. In the wake of the invasion, both the British and the French, who have sided with the Israelis, proceed to bomb Port Said on November 3rd. Khrushchev, in turn, while continuing to deploy his defensive strategies against his party adversaries, will exploit the Suez Crisis in order to accuse the West of collusion, and reactivate the Cold War.

Vadim, who is one of our top news editors, is unfortunately a rabid anti-Semite as well, and has chosen to ignore the fact that the Soviet Union was the first important country in the world to grant diplomatic recognition to the State of Israel (hoping in vain to make the Israelis one of their political pawns in the Middle East). In his own mind, he has actually convinced himself that the Israeli people have never existed. While holed up in the small room, he writes that it is the Jews who are attacking Egypt, the Jews who are occupying the Gaza Strip, the Jews who are advancing on the Suez Canal...

Apart from Vadim and his various delusions, there are the powers that be in Moscow,

who are not playing their cards straight in keeping silent about the fact that the Americans, who have been opposed from the beginning to the invasion of Egypt, are exerting considerable pressure within the United Nations in support of an armistice that will be concluded within the space of ten days. Furthermore, because it knows that its cards are not in order, Moscow will prevent its citizens from having access to the relevant UN resolutions, thereby violating a specific accord that it had previously signed along with the other members of the organization, at the same time turning a deaf ear to any direct appeals from the Glass Palace.

When all is said and done, you can cut the nervous tension with a knife. There are even those who predict that there will soon be a major shakeup at the Kremlin.

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Given the current circumstances, the parade on November 7th in commemoration of the thirty-ninth anniversary of the October Revolution is a decidedly somber affair. In Red Square, there are no flowers, or sweet young girls, or gymnasts to be seen, nor are there the usual folk dances. Instead, there are tanks, tracked transport vehicles, missiles, and cannons rolling by, as well as crack regiments marching in goose-step before the eyes of the immobile and all but cylindrical figures lined up in the VIP reviewing stand near Lenin's Tomb. It is starting to snow. On the opposite side of the square from the Mausoleum, in a stand reserved for special guests, I observe the spectacle for about an hour, which is enough for my taste, and then I walk back to my apartment.

Along with Giulietta, who preferred to stay at home, where it is warm and cozy, rather than watch the show of military might, I have already planned an afternoon visit to the Paladins. When we get there, however, we are surprised to see that the windows of their apartment, located

on one of the lower floors of the Stalinist-era skyscraper on Insurrection Square, have been completely blocked, as have those of their neighbors, by blown-up photographs of the top Soviet brass. From the dining room, for example, we can all stare at the back and shoulders of Kaganovich himself.

Leo, however, is not about to put up with this nonsense, which has been going on for days. So as not to be completely denied his front view of the Garden Ring, the innermost of the ring-roads of Moscow, he has poked a hole right through Kaganovich's heart with the aid of a screwdriver. At this point, I cannot help but tease him a little. Is this some kind of witchcraft? Or maybe a Voodoo ritual? On the contrary, the hole is in the perfect spot to allow us to look down at the corner of Kachalov Street, where we can admire one of the monuments from Soviet history, otherwise known as the "urban villa" where Lavrenty Beria lived for some dozen years.

While not the most famous of monuments, it certainly has a story of its own to tell. When Beria made this villa his private home in 1941, soon after arriving in Moscow from Tbilisi – thereby relinquishing his right to live, like the other members of the Communist hierarchy, in an apartment in the Kremlin – he was very clear about his reasons for doing so. In fact, as the primary person responsible for state security, he thought it his duty to put some distance between himself and the citadel of power, which he considered a strategic target at high risk of being attacked, so that if necessary, he could rush over there at the head of his storm troopers in order to assure the safety of its esteemed inhabitants.

His, I suppose you could say, was a noble sacrifice indeed. However, since the Kremlin was never actually attacked, the villa on the Garden Ring served quite a different purpose. It was there, in fact, that young women and teenage girls were forcibly taken by Beria's henchmen, after

he had leered excitedly at them through the tinted windows of his black limousine when traveling between his home and office. For those he had singled out, there was no escaping their ultimate fate. Either they submitted willingly to his advances, or they were raped. When they were about to be let go, they were also warned by the thugs to keep their mouths shut about what had just happened, or they and their entire family would be shipped off to Siberia. How many of them were there? Beria himself gave us the answer post mortem by keeping a scrupulous account of the names of his victims in a little notebook that he had on his bedside table. In the end, there were more than five hundred.(13)

Both Carmela and Giulietta immediately voice the opinion that the government was justified in executing such a monster. I myself remind them, however, that they shot him for purely political reasons. If he had only been accused of victimizing the young girls of Moscow, they would have blithely acquitted him, considering that everyone has his own weaknesses. Whatever the case may be, Leo interjects, it is not at all certain that he actually ended up in front of a firing squad. On one occasion, during a reception at the Kremlin, Khrushchev is reported to have snickered as he indicated the armchair where the President of the Socialist International was seated. It was right there in that chair, he revealed, that Beria had his brains bashed in.

If this is what actually happened, there still remains the mystery of what kind of weapon was used. A revolver? A dagger? A blunt instrument? Or perhaps someone strangled Beria with his bare hands.

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At the entrance to our recording studio, I bump into a short, dark young man, whom I have never seen before. We strike up a conversation, and he tells me in excellent Russian that he

comes from Georgia, that he is a scholarship student at Lomonosov University here in Moscow, and that he is at the radio station to be interviewed about his good fortune. All this is perfectly believable, until he hesitates when I ask him the name of his interviewer. Then it comes to me in a flash. Breaking into my native tongue, I tell him in no uncertain terms, “You’re not fooling me one bit. You’re really Sicilian.”

The would-be Caucasian, who now confesses that he hails from Palermo, also admits with an impish grin that he belongs to a group of boys and girls, from all parts of Italy, who are currently studying at the University of Moscow. Since their passports are not in order, they are extremely careful about explaining their situation to strangers – until they turn out to be friends they can trust, he adds diplomatically, which seems to be the case with me.

During my first months in Moscow, I visited Lomonosov University, along with Lenin’s Tomb, the Academy of Sciences, the Bolshoi Theater, and the Krasnaya Presnya textile factory, either for work-related purposes or for my own edification. At the university itself, I dutifully toured a number of classrooms, dormitories and cafeterias, in the company of several young guides who made sure to fill me in on all the necessary details. I was even persuaded to give a short speech from the podium of a lecture hall. At no time, however, did I make contact with any Italian students who were willing to declare themselves as such.

In any case, my brief chat with the Sicilian boy has given me an idea. Why not use our own students for a lively broadcast, which would be meant to entertain the Italian audience at home, and which we could transmit on New Year’s Eve? I myself would write the script, based on the theme of students from Italy who are partying in Moscow while awaiting the arrival of 1957, kidding around in their various local dialects and accents, teasing each other about this and

that, and seeing who can come up with the best impressions, as university students often do.

While writing the script, I would also leave plenty of space for any improvisations on the part of those who are the most spontaneous.

I then proceed to talk to the director, who agrees to go ahead with the plan. As for the students themselves, they are all very enthusiastic about their various roles as amateur actors and actresses. Needless to say, they are also delighted to earn a few extra rubles to supplement the modest stipends that they receive from the university, in addition to free room and board.

Once we actually decide to get down to work, Anna Maria, Ezio, Bruno and Mimma (which may or may not be their real names, of course) come over to the station, along with others of their classmates, for several evenings in a row. (As an interesting aside, Mimma herself, who grew up in Genoa, is mentioned in Carlo Levi's book about his travels in the USSR, which include a number of somewhat debatable remarks regarding the time that he spent in the autonomous republic of Abkhazya. During his brief visit to Lomonosov University, the author's sly glance would immediately identify "a Genovese girl with the most beautiful eyes" among the group of Italian students.)

Thanks to a series of rehearsals, and Zhenya's extensive musical knowledge, which includes Neapolitan songs and more, we are able to produce a New Year's Eve program that should make our listeners in Italy very happy. In the meantime, however, the one thing that is certain is that we ourselves are having a grand old time.

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At the Kremlin they are having far less of a good time. The top leaders of the conservative wing, who blame the Hungarian Revolution above all on the predication of

“national roads to socialism,” join forces with the group headed by Malenkov, who had already voiced his opposition the year before to certain economic measures imposed by the party (especially the cultivation of “virgin lands”), and who had been obliged to let Bulganin be named as Prime Minister. In their opinion, the time has come for the members of the Presidium to unite in voting Khrushchev out of office. At this point, the numbers are undoubtedly against him.

However, Khrushchev manages to move the debate to a battle zone that is more favorable to himself by demanding that the matter be put immediately to the Central Committee, which he had succeeded in packing with many of his loyal supporters in the wake of Stalin’s death. In so doing, he is able to save his political future, even if by a hard-won majority vote, after five days (December 20-24) of accusations and violent objections.

With the expectation that a new confrontation will not be long in coming despite what has just occurred, Khrushchev begins his strategic retreat. On December 30th, during an interview with *Rude Pravo*, the official newspaper of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, he renounces the “national roads to socialism” in these precise words: “Giving priority to national characteristics or particular ways of achieving Socialism in this or that country is detrimental both to the cause of Socialist edification within the country concerned, and to the entire community of Socialist states.”

As if that were not enough, at the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Eve, in front members of the diplomatic corps who are gathered in St. George’s Hall at the Great Kremlin Palace – only a few steps away from where he delivered his “secret report” – Khrushchev raises his glass in a toast to Stalin.

While these actions will not lead to a return to total Stalinism, with all its perversions

and atrocities, the thaw itself is by now a mere memory.

XXX

On January 16, 1957, B. Ponomarev, Secretary of the CC Section for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties, and B. Ryurikov, Deputy Secretary of the CC Culture Section, co-sign a memorandum addressed to the top party brass. After reminding them that in August [?] Pasternak sent the manuscript of his book to Feltrinelli by means of d'Angelo, the memo concludes as follows:

“After a meeting, Pasternak partially accepted the criticism of his book and recognized the need to revise it. Therefore, it would be appropriate to send a letter or telegram to the Italian publisher in his name requesting that the manuscript be returned.

Regarding the contents of the communication from Pasternak to Feltrinelli and the way to send it to the recipient, we will be able to consult with comrade Longo [Deputy Secretary of the ICP], who is arriving in Moscow on January 17th. We will also emphasize to Longo that it is necessary to take immediate steps through Italian friends to get back Pasternak's manuscript, and have it returned to the USSR.”(14)

These suggestions, which are counter-signed by Mikhail Suslov, the supreme ideologue of the Presidium, will then be approved by the CPSU in the form of an official resolution. As a direct result of this decision, Longo, who is visiting the Soviet capital at the head of an Italian Communist delegation, will immediately concern himself with the hunt for *Doctor Zhivago* by calling a special meeting with his most influential travel companions, Emilio Sereni and Mario Alicata, both of whom are luminaries of the cultural wing of the party.

This event will lay the groundwork for mobilizing the highest echelon of the ICP,

beginning with Togliatti, in an effort to try and persuade Feltrinelli to return the novel.

XXX

I have never really suffered from the cold in Moscow. Granted, it snows here for six months out of the year, more or less from the second half of October until the first half of April, and for several weeks, in the heart of winter, the temperature plunges dramatically. However, the apartments and workplaces are all well heated. They are also well ventilated, thanks to the age-old invention known as the “fortochka,” a tiny little opening set in the highest part of the windows. Furthermore, during the coldest days of the year, there is not that terrible wind that blows through so many other cities of the world, such as New York and Toronto, which makes it difficult to enjoy even the shortest walk outside.

I am still wearing the same clothes that I wore in Rome, apart from a lining for my overcoat, and an “ushanka,” a cap made out of real, or more often, fake fur, which the vast majority of Russians use, with the exception of the top party leaders, who travel by private car, and who prefer to wear fedoras in the style of Al Capone. The ushanka covers your ears (“ushi”) when its flaps, which are usually worn on the top, are pulled down and held tight by a strap tied under the chin. While there is no law that says you have to tie the strap, those who do not run the risk of freezing their ear lobes off, and always bear a startling resemblance to a Cocker Spaniel.

After every major storm, out come the special snow removal vehicles to clear the roadways. These are equipped with a large elliptical blade, placed in a vertical position, which holds a long series of horizontally pivoting containers, whose shape is somewhat like that of the dustpan used in Italy for sweeping the floors. One by one, the containers plow sections of the street, and then lift up their loads of snow, and dump them into the truck. As far as clearing many

of the sidewalks, walkways and courtyards is concerned, these tasks are left to the men and women who otherwise work as street cleaners, and who use shovels for the occasion.

While everything possible is done to make it easy for individuals to get around the city during or after a storm, this does not prevent pedestrians from sooner or later taking a spill in the snow. If it is soft enough, the only inconvenience is soaking wet, or even frozen feet, for those not wearing adequate protection. On the other hand, if it is icy, you have to be particularly careful where you walk so as not to land on your tail bone.

All the blue-collar workers have solved the problem of protecting their feet by wearing inexpensive “valenki,” the traditional felt boots, which are always warm and dry, and which might actually be suitable in the Verkhoyansk region of northeastern Siberia, known as the “cold pole” of the earth, thanks to its record-low temperatures of - 80 degrees C. The same problem has not been solved, however, by the white-collar workers, who would not be caught dead wearing the “valenki,” and who walk around in their regular shoes, the only exceptions being those few privileged individuals who can afford to buy leather boots.

Like every one of my male colleagues (the women are allowed to wear little rubber boots), I use my regular shoes (which I brought with me from Italy), while refusing to go around in galoshes. To be perfectly honest, however, I did buy a pair for myself when I first arrived in Moscow, but I threw them out for vanity’s sake after one of my female co-workers graciously informed me that here, they are nicknamed “bye-bye, youth.” In any case, I do not waste much time worrying about my feet. When I am outside, I simply watch where I step.

XXX

I start suffering from the cold in Kzyl-Orda, or rather, at its airport. Or better yet, on a frozen plain where the only thing I can make out by the light of the moon, within the circle of the horizon, is an isolated little shack. My co-worker, Dima, and I arrive here at around seven o'clock in the evening on a tiny little airplane that holds about fifteen passengers, plus a chair to help them get on and off. We are at the last stopover on a trip of 2,500 kilometers, begun on a medium-sized aircraft, between Moscow and Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.

Our exact location, which is east of the Aral Sea in the republic of Kazakhstan, might as well be on the polar icecap. Despite a current temperature of -30 degrees C., we march bravely in the direction of the shack, with nothing on our feet but our regular shoes. When we get there, we buy sandwiches and vodka, in an effort to give ourselves enough calories to subsist on until some twenty minutes later, when we have to embark yet again on our little flying machine.

Once the plane takes off, we can look forward to arriving at our final destination in only a couple of hours. Fifteen minutes into the flight, however, the heating system breaks down, and after another quarter of an hour, we are just about frozen to death. All I can do to help myself is to pull up the collar of my coat, pull down the flaps of my "ushanka," and huddle in my seat to create a little human warmth. At a certain point, after deciding that I should at least try and move my limbs, I make a quick trip to the bathroom, where I see a huge block of ice shaped like a provolone lying in the sink. I go back to my seat, where I find Dima, who is curled up in a ball right next to me, and who is not exhibiting any visible signs of life.

In Tashkent, the weather is relatively mild, and we thaw out in the taxi while en route to an excellent hotel. Near the entranceway, I notice a medical office, where I poke my head in the door, half jokingly, as soon as I unload my suitcase. After explaining to the female doctor on call

what happened to me on the airplane, I insist that I could not possibly have survived such an experience without serious consequences. I want to be examined, I tell her, because I need to know if I am going to get pneumonia. The doctor, a typical middle-aged Russian woman, with a sharp, penetrating glance, and a no-nonsense manner, does not let herself be taken in by me. “Young man,” she says while looking me up and down, “more than a doctor, what you need is a fortune-teller. I’ll go ahead and give you a check-up, since you seem so concerned, but I can only diagnose a case of pneumonia if you actually had it before you left Moscow.”

After I have stripped from the waist up, she proceeds to examine my chest, and reassures me that everything is just fine. “For now, you’re perfectly healthy,” the doctor concludes. “And you’ll probably stay healthy for a long time, since I see that you have a nice strong chest, and good muscle tone. Do you do any exercises?” “I’ve never once set foot in a gym,” I answer while I am getting dressed again. “However, I do lead a very active life. I walk a lot, and I even run when I’m being followed by the police...” The doctor laughs, and makes as if to throw her stethoscope at me. Having thanked her for her help, I bid her farewell, and then go out to dinner with Dima.

If I have understood correctly what my superiors expect of me, my primary responsibility is to file stories on central Asia that confirm the fact that the ethnic Russians, who took over this territory in the second half of the nineteenth century, are living in perfect harmony with the descendants of the subjects of the Khan. The following day, however, an Uzbekistan woman, suffering from a sudden attack of car sickness on the bus, vomits all over the stockings of a Russian woman who is seated next to her. Absolutely furious, her neighbor reacts by repeatedly shouting insults at her. Could this episode have happened in reverse? I honestly do not know, nor

do I actually believe that in just a couple of weeks, I will be able to fathom the real nature of inter-ethnic relations in this (Soviet, Socialist, Federated) republic. What would happen if I were to find out that these same relations were far from idyllic? Perhaps I had better concentrate on the local folklore instead.

From this point of view, Tashkent has very little to offer. Even though it was an important branch of the old Silk Road from pre-Christian times, it is now a completely modern industrialized city, known primarily for its cotton mills. And so off we go again in the car, headed for Samarkand, which is 250 kilometers to the southwest.

Destroyed eight centuries ago by Genghis Khan, and rebuilt two centuries later by Tamerlane as the capital of the khanate, Samarkand has managed to preserve the extensive area that houses the oldest part of the city, starting with Reghistan Square, which lies at the center of an endless array of splendid monuments, including mosques, madrassahs and mausoleums. For the next two days, I spend a lot more time in this neighborhood than Dima himself would have liked, if he had been left to his own devices. He is much more inclined toward the western sector, where the modern city begins, and where our hotel and restaurant are located.

I return to this part of town to meet with a most courteous guide, who is a prominent local archeologist, and who graciously gives me an autographed copy of one of his books. However, having just come from a lunch where I had to join in one too many toasts, I am soon obliged to excuse myself in the midst of his discourse on Ulugbek, a famous fifteenth-century astronomer, in order to go and take a nap in the car that has been put at our disposal.

When I wake up an hour later, the archeologist has gone off on foot. Right next to the car, however, there is the ever faithful, Dima, who is waiting for me, as usual.

At the radio station, Dima produces the segments dedicated to stamp collecting, which are extremely popular with a great many of our listeners. Since he does not know Italian, he writes his scripts in Russian, and then has them translated by others. While never failing to share the latest and most complete information with his audience about the steady stream of commemorative stamps issued in the USSR, he is simply not interested in anything else, never mind the contents of my current news stories.

On the other hand, not only does he scrupulously perform his duties as the organizer of all the logistical aspects of our trip (appointments with the local authorities, travel tickets, hotel reservations, and such), but he has also assigned himself the task of protecting me from the dangers lurking in these treacherous territories.

On the morning of our last day in Samarkand, we make the rounds of a typical oriental market, where pyramids of red pepper of every imaginable type are prominently displayed. While we are leaving the premises, I happen to see some donkeys lined up right outside on the street, and I ask the custodian if I can have myself photographed with one of them. With the air of someone who is by now resigned to the eccentricities of this world, their keeper gives me permission to do so with a barely perceptible gesture of his hand. I then climb up on the back of the most photogenic of these beasts of burden, and wait for Dima to get us in focus.

Unfortunately, I had not realized that there was a policeman in the immediate vicinity, who materializes as soon as the first shot is taken. “What are you doing?” he asks me with a scowl on his face. Before I can finish explaining the circumstances to him, Dima intervenes in his role as guardian angel, which only serves to make things worse. “And who might you be?” the police officer demands of Dima, becoming more annoyed with us by the minute. “I’m the

interpreter,” declares my guardian angel without the slightest hesitation. “What interpreter? This man speaks Russian, for God’s sake!” “Yes, but in private, I always speak to him in his own language,” he says, whereupon he turns to me, and in rapid succession, he pronounces the only Italian words that he actually knows: “piacere, scusi, arrivederci, grazie, prego, buongiorno.”

“Buonanotte,” I add, while getting down off the donkey. Obviously impressed by our mutual command of a foreign language, the policeman calms down a bit, and then reminds us of the prohibition against taking photographs of the marketplaces. “I’m aware of that, but aren’t we out on the street?” “Never mind,” he responds. “These donkeys work for the market.” “I’m sorry, I didn’t know,” I say.

That evening we visit a public ballroom on the outskirts of town with Russian music playing in the background, where I dance with an Uzbekistan girl whose distinctly Chinese features make me wonder if her ancestors might not have arrived in Samarkand by crossing through Kirgizistan or Tazhikistan. When she is ready to go home, I walk along with her for some hundred meters on a road that seems to lead to nowhere. Before saying good-bye, we sit down on a bench for a short while to finish the conversation that we had started earlier.

The girl, who evidently feels that she can trust me, is a member of the working class, and is anything but enthusiastic about the Soviet system. “They keep telling us,” she complains, “that in the capitalist countries, there are very few rich people, and many poor people. Just like here, with the only difference being that we have a lot more poor people than they do, and it’s a lot harder for them to get by.”

As I am about to take my leave, I notice that someone is standing in the shadows fifty steps or so from the bench. It is Dima, who has decided that rather than waiting for me in the

ballroom, he will sacrifice his own pleasure to make sure that I am safe and sound, in his role as my indefatigable protector.

After traveling almost 200 kilometers by car to an area northwest of Samarkand, we are within shooting distance of Bukhara, when we happen to pass through a village where we notice a large crowd of people gathered in front of a house surrounded by high walls. Our driver stops the car, and we are then invited into the courtyard, where a huge wedding feast is under way. While neither widowed nor divorced, the head of the household has just entered into the holy state of matrimony for the fourth time, in accordance with the laws of Allah and those of the republic of Uzbekistan. In the midst of various near and distant relatives, the child bride looks absolutely radiant, as do the other three wives, who are not quite as young as she is. "So long as everybody is happy," mutters Dima under his breath.

Legend has it that Bukhara, which is first mentioned in the sixth century A.D., has had more different names than any other city in the world. There is some dispute, however, about the origin of its current name. Some say that it could have come from the Chinese word "Buhkar" ("place where idols are sold"), while others believe that it is from the Iranian "But-oro" ("place adorned with idols"), and still others insist that it comes from the Sanscrit "Vikhara" ("monastery"). As for the eminent Russian scholar, V. Bertold, who has no doubt whatsoever about its original name's having been "Vikhara," his learned opinion is good enough for me.

Next on the list is the ancient fortress where none other than the famous Tajik writer Sadriddin (heretofore completely unknown to me, I am ashamed to admit) was imprisoned in 1917. We then proceed to visit the turreted madrassah, as well as those without turrets, in addition to the various mosques, the bazaars with their great domes, and the mausoleums. Perfectly lucid,

and not drowsy, as I was in Samarkand, I continue taking notes while in the company of a local historian, who tells me everything I need to know, and who at the end of the tour, no less generously than my earlier guide, gives me an autographed copy of one of his books.

Just before we are ready to leave the city, we are treated to an incredibly beautiful spectacle of Uzbekistan dance, which I will write several pages about in my report, particularly with regard to the lead female dancer, a sinuous creature of incomparable grace and bravura.

At the end of a thousand-kilometer journey on a sleeper train headed due north, we arrive at dawn in Alma-Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, which is the last stop on our tour of central Asia. We then take a taxi to the center of the city, which is about an hour's drive from the station. At the beginning of the ride, a tremendous snowstorm breaks out, which I have to face all on my own, having stopped the car and walked off to the side of the road to relief myself of the "prostokvasha" (home-made yogurt) that I gulped down after buying it from a local peasant woman when the train stopped in who-knows-where, which has made me sick to my stomach. The storm suddenly ceases just as I am getting back in the car, however, and the weather is once again calm and peaceful.

The eastern part of Kazakhstan is where most of the immense steppes are located. These are the so-called "virgin lands" that Khrushchev plowed up and cultivated for grain (especially wheat), having been seriously misguided by the court scientists. The results of this initiative, which were to cost the country an arm and a leg, would be an economic and ecological disaster that also marked the beginning of the end of Khrushchev's political alliance with Malenkov. In fact, after the first harvest, which yielded barely double what was originally planted, rather than becoming green again, these vast tracts of land were reduced to a dust bowl of topsoil that was

blown away by gusts of wind. At this point, it is anyone's guess as to how long it will take to restore the balance of nature.

Since this territory is now completely off limits in terms of radio or newspaper coverage, we spend all our time in the capital itself, whose low buildings, which are interspersed with lush parks, gardens and orchards, attest to the fact that it is located in a heavily seismic area. As far as the name of the city is concerned, we learn that it was still called Almaty when Stalin exiled Trotsky there in 1927, and was only rebaptized as Alma-Ata four years later. While no one seems to know why this change in names occurred, they are able to tell us that both its original version, which was "Kazakha," and its current one (Russian?), have the same meaning, which is "the land of apples."

As they are still in the business of growing big, beautiful, delicious apples, two crates of them are given to us by the local authorities as we are about to leave by plane for Moscow. Imagining the problems involved with transporting them home, I hasten to tell our benefactors that they have been far too generous, and that one crate is more than enough. While continuing to thank them profusely, however, I happen to notice Dima glaring at me for all he is worth. The fact of the matter is that he wants to take advantage of this opportunity to make his children happy, and provide them with plenty of vitamins as well. In the end, after having biblically eaten a single apple, I let Dima take charge of both of the crates, provided that he lug them back on his own.

XXX

I start suffering from the cold again just three days after my return to Moscow. On this occasion, Slava and I are sitting side by side on an intercity bus, in the company of several dozen

colleagues from other radio stations. We are on our way to “Atomnaya Stantsya,” the site of a nuclear reactor that is located 100 kilometers south of Moscow on the road that leads to Tula.

While we are creeping along a narrow highway filled with any number of heavy vehicles, and amusing ourselves by talking about everything under the sun, Slava suddenly asks me if anyone has told me that the director of our own broadcasting station will soon be leaving us to go to work for the Roman office of TASS, the official Soviet press agency. “No, I knew nothing about this,” I answer, “but I’ve heard that there’s a long-standing tradition that says that anyone who makes it to our main office can count on being transferred to Italy.”

“On the contrary, that tradition is rather new,” Slava informs me. “Not very long ago, when Stalin was still in power, for months at a time different directors would arrive on our doorstep every single day. In the morning, they would be introduced to the staff by a bunch of fast-talking big wigs from the radio. That same evening, they would be carted away by a couple of tight-lipped thugs. In those cases, however, their final destination was never Italy. It was always Lubyanka.”

Half an hour later, when we are only a quarter of the way there, the heating system suddenly shuts down. Outside the bus, it is barely -10 degrees C., which means that the situation is not quite so dramatic as it was during my flight from Kzyl-Orda. Nonetheless, we arrive at our destination completely numb with cold, and half starved to death. Unfortunately, however, due to logistical problems that are out of our control, we have to hunker down for a while longer until we can have lunch in the cafeteria. At least the meal itself is abundant, and really delicious.

Next we are off on a guided tour of the nuclear plant, which involves wandering through a number of areas where there is really nothing to be seen. When we stop for a moment in a small room that is incredibly overheated by huge pipes filled with boiling water, I calculate that the temperature has got to be at least 40 degrees C. In fact, a colleague from India, who is almost moved to tears, exclaims for all to hear, “Finally I feel at home!”

XXX

“After a meeting, Pasternak partially accepted the criticism of his book and recognized the need to revise it.” So reads the above-quoted document of January 16, 1957, in which the CPSU resolves to intensify its efforts to persuade Feltrinelli to give up the manuscript of *Doctor Zhivago*. But this is not exactly what transpired.

Ten days earlier, on January 6th, Goslitizdat worked out the long-discussed contract with the author for the publication of the novel, reserving the right to make whatever modifications to the text it deemed necessary, this time under the authority of the Editor-in-Chief, Aleksandr Puzikov. Pasternak refrained from raising any preliminary objections – which is obviously very different from actually agreeing to this or that revision – in order not to immediately provoke the hostility of the supreme censors.

In any case, he still does not in the least believe that *Doctor Zhivago* will ever be printed in Russia, and he wisely views the contract as nothing but a feint on the part of the publishing house in response to a script that has been written by the powers that be.

And how will this feint be parried? Without wasting too much time, Goslitizdat prepares the draft of a telegram in which Pasternak asks Feltrinelli to return the manuscript of the novel, and to send it directly to the address of the publishing house in Moscow. While the idea itself is

hardly new (as the documents show, it has been discussed at length among the party higher-ups), it is the first time that it has actually been presented to the author. Pasternak himself, however, has no intention of going so far. Such an agreement would mean the end of his dream, and no matter what price he may have to pay, he absolutely refuses to sign.(15)

As a consequence, Goslitizdat will have to make do with an alternative version of the script. At the beginning of February, they show the author the draft of a different telegram to Feltrinelli, which reads as follows: “With reference to a request from Goslitizdat, Novo-Basmannya 19, Moscow, please postpone by half a year the Italian edition of the novel, until September 1st and the publication of the Soviet edition. Respond by telegram directly to Goslitizdat.”(16)

By now, Pasternak understands full well that the authorities are simply trying to gain time in order to put further pressure on the Milanese publisher. Since it would not be in his best interest to flatly reject a proposal that seems to be reasonable, he does not voice any objections, and agrees to sign the telegram. He does, however, warn Feltrinelli in advance, by means of a letter dated February 6th, in which he asks him to delay publication if it “does not interfere with his own plans,” and urges him to keep the Italian translation as close to the original manuscript as possible.(17)

The telegram prepared by Goslitizdat and signed by the author, which is transmitted on February 13th, will not be acknowledged until almost four months later. On the other hand, Feltrinelli does send a short note to Pasternak on March 22nd, telling him that he was pleased to learn that *Doctor Zhivago* will be printed in Moscow in September. While he assures him that the Italian translation is proceeding according to schedule, he does not say a single word about

publishing the novel in keeping with the original text.(18)

Perhaps technical difficulties have somehow interfered with communications between the author and the publisher? Whatever the case may be, the increased pressure that is now being put on the Milanese publishing house by the ICP has created even greater dissension within the ranks of the editorial staff with regard to *Doctor Zhivago*, which has led Feltrinelli himself, as they say, to pause for reflection.

In the end, however, the opinions of a number of top editors who support the idea of returning the manuscript received from Pasternak, and waiting for the revised Soviet edition before deciding what to do with the novel, will not prevail. For this we can thank both Valerio Riva, the “enfant prodige” of the editorial staff, who is violently opposed to any form of censorship, and Pietro Zveteremich, who has been given the task of translating *Doctor Zhivago* into Italian, and who considers any revisions “a crime against culture.” The final decision will therefore be to publish the novel in strict adherence to the original text (which will not be returned) as soon as possible after September 1st, whether or not the Soviet edition is actually printed.

As of the month of March, however, communications between Pasternak and Feltrinelli will be forced to come to a halt when the author is hospitalized until the end of June for a serious attack of arthrosis, which has affected his knee. During this period, having lost touch with him as well, I make repeated attempts to reach him at Peredelkino. When I finally decide to pay a visit, for the first and last time, to his apartment on Lavrushinsky Lane in Moscow, his wife, Zinaida, greets me at the door, and tells me about his illness, adding that the author is still in excruciating pain, and that it would not be advisable to go and see him.

Prior to this conversation, Pasternak wrote me the following letter, dated April 16th, which confirms just how much physical pain he was suffering, and how distressed he was about the ultimate fate of *Doctor Zhivago*:

“Dear d’Angelo, what a pity that we did not have the chance to see each other when I was feeling well. For quite some time now, I have been confined to bed at the Kremlin Hospital, in terrible pain, and I have no idea when and how I will recover.

The telegram with regard to postponing the publication of the Italian version of the novel until September 1st was sent to Feltrinelli by Goslitizdat. The deadline of September 1st was, in fact, promised to me when the telegram was transmitted.

As for their request for revisions to the Italian translation that differ from the original text of the manuscript, I never asked Feltrinelli for anything of the sort, and the idea that the Italian version, which is true to the original, would deviate from the edited Russian edition has never deterred me or intimidated me.

These supposed modifications will be made, and inserted in the Russian text, not by me, but by a special editor who has been asked by the publishing house to eliminate those parts of the novel that are considered to be unacceptable for the Russian edition. I myself have not yet seen the results of his work, and since I am now hospitalized with a disease that is causing me excruciating pain, and whose end is nowhere in sight, surely I will not see them any time soon.

At this juncture in my life – given my physical condition, my worries, and the situation with regard to the edition of the novel being prepared here – it would seem to me that the publisher Feltrinelli, as gracious as he is, should not go as far as he is apparently willing to go, but should limit himself to postponing the printing of the novel in Italian until the first of September

of this year.

To what extent they will distort the novel so as to make it acceptable for publication I cannot even begin to imagine. It is anyone's guess at this point. In addition to the amount of uncertainty contained in these conjectures, the situation has been complicated to a terrible degree, for an unexpectedly long period of time, because of my illness. Will Feltrinelli really allow himself to be influenced by circumstances that have yet to be determined?

It is difficult (physically painful) for me to write. Forgive me. I hope that you will be able to find something useful in these words of mine in terms of your own decision.

Be well, and thank you for your concern.

Yours truly, Boris Pasternak”(19)

This letter, which never reached me, may well have been intercepted. Whatever the truth may be, Pasternak expressed himself as if he had definitely learned at an earlier date – through a missing letter from Feltrinelli? – that besides being postponed, the Milanese edition would include the revisions made by Goslitizdat. In this case, it goes without saying that only a zombie, and not the authentic *Doctor Zhivago*, could make its way around the world with all the official blessings of the highest Soviet authorities. In the end, however, things will take a different turn.

XXX

At the beginning of May, having worked at the radio for more than a year, I take part of my official vacation to enjoy two weeks in Italy. Giulietta is not able to go along with me, as she only arrived in Moscow in July of last year, and started her job as a radio announcer a month later. On the other hand, she will return home for good in September (knowing that I myself intend to conclude my current experience at the end of the year), both because she wants to be with the

children again, and because she has had enough of the Soviet system, and has already decided to leave the ICP.

In Italy, I spend most of my time in Rome with the children, and numerous relatives and friends. Naturally, I also make sure to pay a brief visit to Milan. After welcoming me with open arms, Feltrinelli invites me to lunch at his house, where he introduces me to Alessandra (Nanni) De Stefani, a friendly, attractive young Roman girl whom he is about to marry.

The news concerning *Doctor Zhivago* is very encouraging. Zveteremich's translation is almost completed, and the poet, Mario Socrate, is rapidly putting the finishing touches on the verses that accompany the text. Everything will be published as soon as possible after the first of September, in absolute keeping with the original Russian. As if that were not enough, photocopies of the text itself, as well as the relevant contracts regarding publishing rights, are already in the hands of other important Western publishers.

The die is finally cast, and Feltrinelli seems both satisfied and relieved. He assures me that while he is still a man of the left, he will always fight for freedom, and as a publisher, he will fight for the freedom of thought and culture.

Upon my return to Moscow, I learn from Giulietta that Olga Ivinskaya has come to our house to speak to me about a sensitive subject. In her memoirs, published long after the fact, Olga confuses the date of this episode, making it a year earlier, in the spring of 1956, when my wife was not yet in Moscow: "I arrived at a large building near the Kiev Station, easily found the right apartment, and rang the bell," she writes. "The door was opened by a charming woman who might have come straight out of an Italian film: long-legged, dark, with ruffled hair, a sculpted face, and eyes of astonishing blueness...After about an hour and a half...d'Angelo himself appeared on the

scene...”(20) Her description of my arrival at the apartment is also incorrect.

I actually meet Olga for the first time at her own apartment in Potapovsky Lane, the day after my return from Italy in the late spring of 1957, when she asks me for my advice on the best way to handle the pressures that Polikarpov, the head of the Culture Section of the party, and Aleksei Surkov, the head of the Writers’ Union, are now subjecting her to while Pasternak is still in the hospital. What they expect her to do is to convince the author to send a personal letter or telegram to Feltrinelli, asking him to give back the text of *Doctor Zhivago* for revisions and additions.

After sharing with her what I learned in Milan, I tell her that at this point, no matter what expedient Polikarpov and Surkov may come up with, I think it is probable (my use of the less positive term being only for the sake of irony) that the edition that is in keeping with the original will be published very soon in Italy. Olga jumps to her feet: “Probable? But it has to be certain!” “It is certain,” I immediately make clear. “The party higher-ups here are doing their best to shut the barn door after the horse has bolted. You should continue to procrastinate for as long as Pasternak is in the hospital, and then we’ll see what happens.”

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With her blond hair, prominent facial features, and lively expression, Olga looks considerably younger than her forty-five years. Her personality is both forceful and sweet.

Among the terrible challenges that she has already had to face in life – which she will never burden me with – in 1939, she lost her first husband, Irochka’s father, when he hanged himself. Her second husband, Mitya’s father, died of pneumonia at the beginning of 1942.

In 1946, at the age of thirty-four, she met Pasternak, who was twenty-two years her senior,

divorced and remarried with two children, with a “strange, African profile” (in Irochka’s words), and a fascinating and passionate personality. The two of them fell madly in love, and Olga, a literature major who was then working in the publishing field, became his personal assistant. While typing his manuscripts, including the early chapters of *Doctor Zhivago*, and discussing his new projects, she also tried to protect him as much as she could from any interference on the part of the politico-cultural authorities. As a consequence, it did not take long for her to put herself in a bad light with those same individuals.

Since the man that she had become so attached to had never followed the precepts of “socialist realism,” his style as a poet and prose writer was defined by the powers that be as “petit bourgeois,” decadent and reactionary. But the worst was yet to come. In fact, when Beria, the head of state security, took a good, hard look at a file containing information on the Pasternak family, he learned that the author’s father, Leonid, a well-known portraitist of the rich and famous, had left for Germany in 1921 together with his wife and two daughters (with the assistance of Anatoli Lunacharsky, the People’s Commissar for Education), for the purpose of undergoing medical treatment, and had never again returned to his native country. During the Nazi era, he had immigrated to England, where he died in 1945. His two daughters, Josephine and Lidya (Slater), had then settled in Oxford. Given all of the above, it is not difficult to assume that in the logic of the supreme Soviet policeman, Boris himself, who remained in Moscow, was most probably in the pay of British intelligence.

How did someone like this go unpunished? Word had it that the Georgian-born Stalin was pleased by the fact that Pasternak had admirably translated the poetry of several of his co-nationals into Russian, thereby exposing them to a much wider audience than they would have

enjoyed in the small Caucasian republic, and had tacitly decided to spare this eccentric artist.

Could this really be true? What is known for sure is that Stalin, in his own capricious way, had shown a special interest in Pasternak. At one point, he even called him on the telephone to taunt him sadistically. This happened after the arrest of the great poet Osip Mandelstam, who would die in a concentration camp in eastern Siberia in 1938. Well aware that Pasternak was very close to the victim, Stalin asked him point-blank, “What do you think of Mandelstam?” Rather than lying to him outright, the author responded that he had not seen him in quite a long time, whereupon Stalin said, “In your place, I’d defend my friends a little better.”

In any case, Pasternak would never be taken into custody. For Olga, however, there was no escape. In 1949, Beria’s men arrested her and took her to Lubyanka, where they tried to get her to “confess” to something that would compromise her friend the author. Because of the mistreatment that she suffered, she lost the child that she was carrying, whom she had wanted so desperately to give to Pasternak. She would then remain incarcerated, between prisons and lagers, until the death of Stalin in 1953, and the beginning of the thaw.

During those same years, the author would do everything in his power to help Olga’s two children, Irochka and Mitya, both of whom were still very young. He was also in a position to give them financial assistance, since he was earning a fairly decent living (especially as a translator of various classical poets, including Shakespeare and Goethe), and his own needs were extremely modest. Frugal by nature, he had never denied anything to his own family either, continuing to support his first wife as well, and even the widow of his dear friend, the Georgian poet, Titian Tabidze, who was executed by firing squad in 1937.

After her release from prison, Olga would once again be able to enjoy a period of relative

peace and quiet. In Izmalkovo, she rented a small house for herself so that she could be close to Pasternak (just fifteen minute walk or so) during his prolonged stays at his dacha and make sure to be available

whenever he needed her help with his work – a small house where also the last part of *Doctor Zhivago* happened to be typewritten. Critically aware of the fragile relationship that now existed between the author and his family, she had also chosen never to set foot in the house where Zinaida was sometimes present. Despite the complicated nature of a very human love story, she remained firmly convinced that her own and the other woman's dignity should never be violated under any circumstances.

At her apartment in Potapovsky Lane, where I will visit Olga many times during the remaining months of my sojourn in Moscow, I will get to know her two children as well. The nineteen-year-old Irina, or Irochka, as she is often called, is following in her mother's footsteps, and studying literature at the university. She still has the slim body of an adolescent, and enchanting almond-shaped eyes. She is also highly intelligent, with a sparkling wit. Her brother, Mitya, who is sixteen, is a big, tall boy who, if I have understood correctly, is not the world's best student. His own dream is to become a sailor.

As of the month of July, having recovered from his attack of arthrosis, Pasternak will once again be a frequent and most welcome guest in this apartment.

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After a delay of almost four months, Feltrinelli replies on June 10th to the telegram that was signed by Pasternak, and sent by Goslitizdat on February 13th, by means of a very friendly letter, in which he agrees to accept the proposal to postpone the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* to

the first of September, when the Soviet edition has already been printed. He also notes that in his opinion, the so-called “controversial points” in the novel will not be the cause of either astonishment or alarm in the USSR, where the revelations of the Twentieth Party Congress (Khrushchev’s “secret report”) were acknowledged courageously, and where there is nothing that can stop the march toward Socialism.(21)

The members of the Soviet hierarchy that are controlling Goslitizdat’s actions are not pleased with this letter for two obvious reasons. First of all, the deadline of September 1st is by now so close that there is little time left for their final attempts to get the manuscript back from Italy. Secondly, the comments made by the Milanese publisher with regard to the “controversial points” clearly indicate that he has refused to revise the text.

Pasternak himself, who is now in a clinic undergoing physical therapy, and who is still in the dark concerning the latest news that I was given in Milan, is also on tenterhooks. On June 20th, he writes to Feltrinelli that he will be profoundly bitter if the novel is not published in Italy on September 1st in keeping with the original text, which would also interfere with the printing of the various foreign editions (in France, England, Czechoslovakia, and so on), whose promotion he has sent specific instructions to Milan about.

“Here,” he reiterates, “the novel will never be published.” But this does not matter to him. “The trials and tribulations that perhaps await me if the foreign editions come out without an analogous Soviet edition are absolutely not our affair – neither yours nor mine. For us, the only thing that counts is that the work see the light of day. For this, I need your help.”(22)

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Between six and seven o'clock on the evening of July 3rd, I am all alone in the Italian news bureau (the other co-workers on duty are probably either in the recording studio or the cafeteria) when a messenger arrives from the radio's central office, who hands me a brief news item, in triplicate, stamped with an official press embargo until the following day. Its contents reveal that at a Plenary Session held from June 22nd to June 29th, the Central Committee of the CPSU adopted a unanimous resolution whereby Malenkov, Kaganovich, Molotov, and their "associate" Shepilov were expelled from the CC for having formed an "anti-party group" with the intent of changing the composition of its power structure in an effort to impose their own conservative and dogmatic positions.

By now, I no longer have the illusions and inhibitions that I did a year ago. Without giving it a second thought, I call Leo Paladini, and ask him if he wants to have dinner at my place. We can meet first in Pushkin Square and buy something to eat at the local gastronom. Fine, he says, I'll see you in half an hour. When he arrives, I immediately tell him under my breath about the copy of the news item that I put in my pocket, which I will hand over to him as soon as we are safe from prying eyes.

Leo gets the scoop. And it is huge. The following day, on July 4th, the resolution on the "anti-party group" appears in all the Soviet newspapers, while the early editions of those of the rest of the world – with the exception of *Avanti!* – give no advance notice whatsoever. Even our own correspondents for the Communist press in Moscow miss the story. If what they tell me is true, Boffa instead sends a ponderous article to *l'Unità* on the success of collective farming.

Naturally, the *Avanti!* scoop infuriates the Soviet leaders, who would have liked the news

about the expulsion of the “anti-party group” to be announced to the world along with an official explanation, revised and rerevised in the days since the event occurred, up to the last moment before publication. As a consequence, Leo is called to a meeting at MID, where they ask him to reveal who leaked him the story.

Although they try to treat him with as much tact as possible, repeatedly calling him comrade, all they succeed in doing is to send him into a fit of rage. “Don’t call me comrade!” he shouts. “My name is Mr. Paladini!” After this episode, he will inevitably begin making preparations to leave the Soviet capital for good, needless to say without any regrets. He will be replaced (and not incidentally) by a “good comrade,” in the words of the top Socialist leader who recommends him for the job as Moscow correspondent. In fact, he will turn out to be so “good” that many years later, his name will be in the headlines for having performed important services for the Soviets outside the realm of journalism.

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What is now happening at the Kremlin is a power struggle pure and simple, in the sense that there are no opposing factions actively involved, with convictions and commitments of a political nature that are in contrast with one another. Khrushchev has succeeded in getting rid of his principal adversaries, but in a totally indiscriminate way. In fact, he has included Malenkov, who was the co-author of all the reforms introduced after Stalin, in the “anti-party group,” which has been stigmatized as conservative and dogmatic. To bring up the rear, he has even included the young Shepilov, who rode to his position as Foreign Minister on the crest of the reformist wave. As if that were not enough, during a meeting held on July 6th, he pulls an ace out of his sleeve that is fairly typical of the old days, inflicting a final blow on Malenkov when he accuses him of

having had a leading role in the “Leningrad Affair,” when Voznesensky, Kuznetsov and other important Soviet leaders ended up in front of the firing squad in 1949 as a result of trumped-up charges on the part of the police.

In light of such a serious accusation, one of the two adversaries should have been condemned by any civilized court of law – either the accuser, for defamation of character, or the accused, as an accomplice to a multiple homicide. But that does not happen here. Khrushchev remains head of the party, and begins making a bid for the title of Prime Minister, which he will assume the following year, in spite of the much-touted “collective leadership.” Malenkov, on the other hand, leaves for the hinterlands of Usk Kamenogorsk, where he will become the manager of an electric power plant.

In addition to Malenkov, the other members of the “anti-party group” who have gone down in defeat manage to survive their ordeal fairly well. The youngest of them is given a modest job in some other part of the country, and the older ones are forced to retire. One day, in a hallway of the radio station, I run into Molotov, who was Foreign Minister for many years, and who played a determining role just before the war, along with his counterpart, von Ribbentrop, in formulating the Soviet-German pact for the partitioning of Poland. Now, he looks like a most ordinary little man, who is visiting some old friend that left a pass for him at the reception desk.

In the end, none of the party higher-ups will be physically eliminated. Beria was the last to suffer this fate. At a lower level, however, among the approximately one million prisoners that now populate the lagers (which is nothing in comparison with the Stalinist era), who often freeze or starve to death, there are more than a few dissidents and political opponents. Officially, they are not categorized as such. Instead, they are usually condemned to five years of imprisonment (which

can be extended) as parasites of society, after having been removed from their jobs, and not having been allowed to look for other work.

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Slava and I have been assigned to do a story on the Permanent Exhibit of Soviet Agriculture, which is located in the northern part of the capital. At the director's suggestion, Rita comes along with us at the last minute to get a little journalistic practice.

We make up an interesting group. Rita herself is a young wife who is barely over twenty, with a slim figure, very pretty features, a well-scrubbed complexion, and flaxen hair, which is typical of a Karelian-Finnish girl. When you first meet her, she seems somewhat reserved, which would lead you to believe that she lacks a sense of humor, and might not get the gist of your jokes. Nothing could be farther from the truth. A keen observer of her fellow human beings, she can actually read your expression, and when you say something amusing, she rewards you with a knowing little smile.

Sometimes, when I see her concentrating so hard on her work (and she is really good at what she does, having also learned to speak an excellent Italian), I cannot help but tease her in a friendly way, calling her by her full name and patronymic, Margarita Nikolayevna, which is how the Russians address their senior citizens to show their respect. She simply goes along with the joke, pretending that she does not know what I am up to.

The exhibit's main attraction is a gigantic truck, almost the size of an ocean liner, with a wheel diameter of around five meters. Since it obviously weighs hundreds of tons, even when empty, they must have assembled it on the huge cement platform where it is currently on display, which it could not be moved from without having it sink far more rapidly than the Titanic. The

fact of the matter is that it serves no purpose whatsoever. In 1907, even the race cars on the Beijing-Paris circuit sank into the soft, alluvial, rock-free soil of the endless plains of European and Siberian Russia (no one here has ever engaged in an intifada). Just imagine what would happen to this colossus under similar circumstances.

Slava contemplates it at great length with absolutely no expression on his face. “Mass production of consumer goods,” he finally comments, still completely dead pan, “is an absurdity of the capitalist system. Building millions of cars and washing machines every year is a maniacal act of repetition. We, on the other hand, hold the record for the single model, which has considerably more value and prestige. Here we are with the largest truck in the world. And we also have the highest tower.” “Including,” I add, “an antenna that is two hundred fifty meters long.” “Which in and of itself is the longest on the planet,” Slava continues. “And I read in *Pravda* that in the not-too-distant future, there will be an huge, round swimming pool within shooting distance of the Kremlin, where thousands and thousands of citizens can all swim together. That puts to shame those artificial puddles that so many Americans have in their own back yards.”

“Let’s not forget,” interjects Rita, “that we also have the oldest man in the world. He’s a Caucasian. They recently took him to a medical convention in Moscow for scientific observation, along with other people who are over one hundred. No one knows exactly how old he is, because personal documents have been lost. Think of all the time that’s gone by...In any case, according to our gerontologists, he has to be at least one hundred forty, and the secret of his longevity lies entirely with yogurt.”

Thanks in large part to interviews with the exhibitors (with Rita as our enthusiastic

assistant), we will include a detailed technical description of the gigantic truck in our final news report, without much discussion on its actual utility. We will also describe the other farming equipment, from tractors to combines, without dwelling on how they were employed during the “virgin lands” campaign. “A little tact,” says Slava, “can never hurt.”

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As far as tact is concerned, I have to admit that our news director, and the deputy director that will soon succeed him, have been very tactful with me. They both realize that I personally do not want to tell any lies, and that I often take refuge in the office kitchen, where I can work on translating, editing, collating, etc. so as not to be forced to write them. I do not even care about the fact that I could be earning extra money for special news reporting. At this point, they have a tacit agreement to give me only those assignments that do not involve a lot of the typical propaganda.

Fortunately, I am not responsible for any commentary regarding the major issues involved in domestic and foreign policy. That is the territory of the central news bureau and the excellent editors that work in our main office. In any case, in an effort to utilize my services as best they can, they ask me at one point if I would be interested in doing a news story this autumn on the oil fields of the middle Volga. This idea suits me just fine. The Soviet production of oil is an extremely important subject, and I will be able to provide a good, objective overview of the situation in terms of investments, extracting techniques, and methods for increasing output, without having to avoid discussing the inevitable and well-known defects in the system, which should make my report more realistic and convincing.

Sergio the Romagnolo, on the other hand, is given the assignment of covering the

administrative elections for the local Soviet constituents. I certainly do not envy him. Like the political elections for the Supreme Soviet, the administrative elections are run according to a law that has remained unchanged from time immemorial, which is a complete farce in terms of a popular vote. Perhaps a more detailed description of the entire process would be helpful.

In each election district, a single candidate, whether a party member or not, is designated by acclamation at an assembly composed of both card-carrying Communists, and representatives of local “social organizations”(company members, women, young people, pacifists, and so on), after his name has been proposed by several individuals who take their orders from on high, and has been accepted by all those present for the sake of peace and quiet.

When election day comes around, the voters proceed to their polling place in parade formation, complete with flags and placards, led by a group of “social activists,” who are also responsible for seeking out those who have either forgotten to vote, or who are late in arriving. At the polling station, each elector has the option of voting for or against the candidate, who must obtain at least half of the votes plus one. Otherwise, a new candidate has to be designated, and the election must be repeated.

He does not, however, have the option of writing a different name on the ballot. He can either cast his vote in one of the special voting booths, or simply fold the ballot in half in front of the president and the poll watchers. This very public and exemplary way of voting “yes” for the candidate, which is strongly recommended by the “social activists,” is the general procedure that is followed, since the actions of those who choose to use the voting booth, which indicate their intention of cancelling the name printed on the ballot, will certainly be noticed and duly reported.

As there is no secret vote involved, one hundred percent of the candidates in the

political elections, which are those that are most carefully monitored, are invariably elected to office. In the administrative elections, on the other hand, there is usually some slight deviation from the norm, particularly in the outlying regions. This year, for example, out of a total of one and a half million candidates, thirty-nine will not be elected.

A year ago, immediately after the political elections, *Pravda* announced the party's victory in a full-page headline that preceded a triumphal account of the results. A short time later, I remember making three very ingenuous comments about the election while chatting with my co-workers in the editorial office: I understand the reason for a one-party system, in that Marxism-Leninism taught us that the plurality of parties, which reflects those of the social classes, with their differing interests, would make no sense in the classless Soviet society; I also understand that elections in the USSR should not and could not result in anything but victory on the part of the single party; what I do not understand, however, is why *Pravda* announced a victory that was a mathematical certainty with so much pomp and circumstance, which would seem to indicate that there had been some doubts about the outcome of the election.

I should have bitten my tongue instead. My colleague Lida, who is ideologically and politically aligned, and a member of the Soviet Communist Youth Organization (Komsomol), agreed that what I had said made perfect sense. She then made my comments her own, and proceeded to blithely repeat them to certain individuals who interpreted them as an inadmissible lack of respect for the central organ of the CPSU. As a result, the poor girl was subjected to a good tongue-lashing from the proper disciplinary authority.

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On August 1st, a memorandum from the Culture Section of the Central Committee, signed

by the Deputy Secretary, Ryurikov, is sent to the party's top leaders, indicating that while Pasternak is doing nothing to revise *Doctor Zhivago*, Feltrinelli has informed Goslitizdat that he is ready to publish the novel when the deadline for postponement has passed. The proper initiatives should therefore be taken to prevent, or at least delay, the publication of the Italian edition.(23)

About two weeks later, Olga arrives at my apartment in tears, and tells me that Pasternak has once again refused to sign a telegram demanding that Feltrinelli return *Doctor Zhivago*. This time, however, they have seriously threatened him, warning him that if he does not sign, he could end up in prison from one moment to the next. She then begs me to speak with him personally.

Of course I will speak with him, this very day if necessary. But who was it that threatened him? What exactly happened? Choking back her tears, Olga relates the following series of events.

At the beginning of the month, none other than the Secretariat of the Presidium, the top organ of the CPSU, held a secret meeting at which Pasternak's presence was requested. Their purpose, which was more than obvious, was to give the author tangible proof that the order to sign the telegram, in case he still had not understood, was backed by the highest level of the political power structure. Although Pasternak used the excuse of his poor health not to show up at the meeting, he was fully informed of what had taken place.

Immediately thereafter, Polikarpov, confident that this scenario had been sufficiently intimidating, summoned the author to a private meeting with the expectation that he would finally give in. The result was minus zero. Instead of showing up in person, Pasternak had Olga hand-deliver a letter of refusal that concluded as follows: "If writing the truth, which I know only

too well must be paid with suffering – something, for that matter, that is anything but new – then I am ready to pay.” Polikarpov then lost his temper, and ordered Olga to tear up the letter in front of him.

In the end, Pasternak was not able to avoid meeting with both Polikarpov and Surkov. While treating him with all due respect, the heads of the CC Culture Section and the Writers’ Union made it clear to him that his time was up. Therefore, if he refused yet again to sign, he should prepare himself for “very unpleasant consequences” in the immediate future, which would occur with no prior warning. He still did not give in, however.(24)

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This time, my meeting with Pasternak does not go smoothly. Anyone who is closely acquainted with the author knows only too well that despite his cordiality and expansiveness, and discreet and magnanimous nature, he is fully capable of reacting to gross injustice with outbursts of pride and rebellion. And in these last days, his exasperation has reached its limits. Having sensed the reason for which Olga and I asked to see him, he does not let either of us speak first. “If you’re here to advise me to capitulate,” he says in a broken voice, “you should know that your charitable mission shows a lack of respect for me personally. You’re treating me like a man who has no dignity. The publication of *Doctor Zhivago* has become the most important thing in my life, and I don’t intend to do anything to prevent it. What would Feltrinelli think if he received a telegram that contradicted everything that I have written and rewritten to him up to now? Would he take me for a crazy man, or a coward?”

After a brief pause, I remind him of the details of the news that I myself had first hand. I then observe that even if Milan were to take seriously a telegram that had obviously been

extorted (which is highly improbable), all the Western publishers who have already received photocopies of the novel would certainly go ahead on their own. Although I admire the courage that he has demonstrated in recent circumstances, I see no valid reason to continue resisting an obtuse authority (in his own words) that still does not realize that it has already irreparably lost its ridiculous war against *Doctor Zhivago*.

I do not know what effect my argument actually had the author. Certainly, such a humiliating gesture, even if entirely rational from a practical point of view, represented an enormous sacrifice for him. On the other hand, the idea that not only he, but Olga herself, would inevitably be subjected to harsh persecution, must have influenced his final decision to sign the telegram.

The document itself, however, is so verbose and poorly written that no one would ever assume that it was drafted by him. Obviously the work of some bureaucrat, it reads as follows:

“While in the process of further revising the manuscript of the novel *Doctor Zhivago*, I reached the profound conviction that what I wrote cannot be considered the final version. I consider the copy of the manuscript of this novel that is now in your hands a preliminary draft of the final work that is in need of further revisions.

I do not think that an edition of the book in this form is possible. That would be in contrast with my rule of only publishing entirely finished works.

Please make the necessary arrangements for sending the manuscript of *Doctor Zhivago* back to me at my address in Moscow as soon as possible, as it is absolutely indispensable to me if I am to continue with my work.”(25)

This telegram as a whole is nothing but a piece of useless nonsense. Even more

nonsensical, however, is having Pasternak write that the manuscript is “absolutely indispensable” in terms of his further revisions. In fact, the “manuscript” in question is only one of the identical, carbon-copied typescripts that were handed over to me some time ago by the author himself, which by now have been photocopied hundreds of times in Milan. While the idea of extorting a telegram from Pasternak, for the purpose of giving false information and preventing the publication of *Doctor Zhivago*, still makes some kind of evil sense, requesting the return of the “manuscript” could have no other result than that of making a little extra work for the post office.

The telegram is sent on August 21st. On the same day, Polikarpov informs the party’s Central Committee of this latest event by means of a memorandum from the Culture Section, with a copy of the telegram itself attached, urging them to pass it on to their “Italian friends” so that they can use it “in terms of putting pressure on Feltrinelli and, if necessary, speaking to the press.” This recommendation, which is countersigned by Suslov and Ponomarev, then becomes a directive. The document arrives at the ICP on August 23rd via the Soviet Embassy in Rome.(26)

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“Ce avemo er core audace, lottamo pe’ la pace, ché tanto ha da venì Stalì Stalì” (“We are brave at heart, we are fighting for peace, and we are waiting for Stalin to come”). A group of young people who have just arrived by train from the Italian capital are singing these words at the top of their lungs in Roman dialect, to the tune of a popular song, as they get off the train at the Kiev Station in Moscow, which is right across from where I live. They are here to participate in the International Youth and Student Festival.

I myself am here for the radio. Naturally, the Italian train, which is extremely long, is not carrying just those who are nostalgic for “Baffone” (“Big Moustache,” as Stalin is sometimes

called). Among the many passengers that I know personally, I immediately run into Vittorio Strada, a moderate Communist, and a Slavic expert and philosopher. Since he has read with interest several books by Evald Ilyenkov, I take him to see him on the following day.

I will later find out that Strada has also managed to go out to Peredelkino in a car provided by the Writers' Union for a meeting with Pasternak. While they undoubtedly talk at length about Strada's essay on the author's poetry, Pasternak is still upset about the ugly business of the telegram, and before the young Italian Slavic scholar leaves, he asks him to explain the circumstances to Feltrinelli.

The festival gives me the chance to touch base with many of my old friends, more than a few of whom are in political crisis. I also make the acquaintance of Ignacio, who is not participating in the festival, but who happens to be standing next to me during a parade. One of the many Spanish children who immigrated to the USSR toward the end of the Civil War after having lost their entire family, Ignacio has never gotten over his personal tragedy. Like the majority of the single men living in Moscow, he is forced to live in an "obshezhitie," a large room with wall-to-wall cots. He has not formed any solid friendships among his co-workers in a foreign-language publishing house, nor has he been able to have any meaningful relationships with women.

An extremely bright and sensitive young man, he is also depressed, and his hair has turned prematurely gray. Seeing how desperately lonely he is, I invite him to come home with me. During his many return visits in search of the warmth of a family, Giulietta and I will both become very attached to him.

At the time of the festival, there is also some turnover within the ranks of the Italian

correspondents stationed in Moscow. The Paladini, who are the first to leave, will once again become part of our lives when we ourselves return home, where we will continue to experiment with Russian recipes. They are followed by Cesare Zappulli, whose company I will enjoy frequently in Rome, and occasionally in Washington, D.C., for work-related reasons.

Among those who have just arrived in the capital, there is my old friend, Pino Garritano, along with his wife, Mirella, and their five- or six-year-old daughter. Pino and I actually worked together at the ICP publishing house. A native of Calabria (or better yet, of “Graecia Magna”), he is an extremely cultured, capable gentleman, and also very stubborn. While in Moscow, he will act as a correspondent for the magazine *Vie Nuove*, as well as a deputy correspondent for *l’Unità*, for a period of more than two years.

Also during the festival, I have an extraordinary conversation with Velio Spano, the head of the Foreign Affairs Section of the ICP. As a member of his party’s delegation, he has just come out of a conference with the top brass of the CPSU, and he is in an absolutely foul mood. “I thought this meeting was for the sole purpose of discussing important political problems,” he tells me. “Not on your life. Khrushchev even brought up you and Pasolini. First he said that Pasolini bit the hand that feeds him when he wrote in *Vie Nuove* that Moscow is nothing but a big ‘Garbatella’ [a poor neighborhood in Rome], where only the women do any work, while the men drink themselves to death. And then he said that you, who were assigned by our party to work as a journalist for Radio Moscow, have created a real turmoil over Pasternak’s novel. Can you believe all this?”

My answer to him is that while I cannot help but feel flattered to have been mentioned in the same breath as the famous writer, Pasolini, and even acknowledged by Khrushchev himself, I

am surprised that a politician of his caliber would speak to me as if he were unaware of the fact that there is no longer the thaw that was in effect when *Doctor Zhivago* began its travels.

Spano, who is a native of Sardinia, possesses a great deal of southern humanity. He half smiles at me in agreement. “I don’t blame you entirely,” he says, lowering his voice to almost a whisper. “The novel itself is the least of our problems. Just between you and me, the real problem here is that Khrushchev doesn’t have the political stature that someone in his position should have.” I let the subject drop. However, I think that there are not very many leaders of the ICP who would express such a courageous opinion, even if only confidentially, now that the head of the CPSU, having settled accounts with the “anti-group party,” seems to be firmly in the saddle.

Spano will amaze me yet again when during a conversation with the top leaders of the CPSU, he suggests that they ask me to do some research on old documents involving relations between the Soviet and Italian Communists at the headquarters of the Central Committee (located on Staraya Ploshad, the Old Square of Moscow) as part of the preparations for the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of November 7th. What does not amaze me is the fact his proposal is completely ignored. In my own opinion, the reasons for this decision are more than obvious.

XXX

Last year, the Soviet labor unions, which have never been allowed to organize strikes of any kind, and which have always functioned as an instrument of the powers that be, included a rave review of Dudintsev’s novel, *Not by Bread Alone* (already cited by me with regard to the thaw), in the October 31, 1956 issue of *Trud*, their daily newspaper, several sentences of which

were as follows:

“In his work, V. Dudintsev describes in particular the forces that the protagonist, who is a courageous and honest patriot of our country, must struggle against, thereby revealing the rusty hinges of bureaucratic machinery...The novel distinguishes itself by its profound representation of life’s simple truths...V. Dudintsev is a sign of the times...In this novel, Dudintsev’s literary talents have acquired a real ideological and artistic maturity...The powerful, combative novel of V. Dudintsev renders a great service to our society.”

On August 27 and 28, 1957, Radio Moscow broadcasts two recent speeches by Khrushchev on the subject of Soviet literature.

“The offices of *Novy Mir* have allowed the pages of that publication to be used to publish the work of Dudintsev and his ilk,” the head of the party points out, among other things. “The editorial staff of numerous literary journals, as well as the heads of certain publishing houses, were not equal to the task, and in some cases, they ignored essential questions of principal...We cannot entrust these positions of authority in the publishing world to insecure individuals. They must be put in the hands of more faithful and loyal workers, who are more politically sound, and more dedicated to our cause.”

“What do you think?” I ask Slava, hoping to provoke a response. “Zhdanov can finally stop turning over in his grave,” he answers. Then he confides to me that certain students at the University of Moscow, who were found to be in possession of a complete copy of “secret report” that they themselves had prepared, were arrested several days ago.

XXX

During the first half of September, Giulietta and I take advantage of the vacation time that

we have accrued at the radio to make an extensive tour of China, all on our own, as we like to do, without having to troop around with other tourists. We return to Moscow in time to greet the arrival of Zveteremich, the Italian translator of *Doctor Zhivago*, who is part of a delegation being hosted by the Writers' Union. My friendship with him, which goes back a number of years, includes such memories as the time I sold him an "Indian 750" motorcycle for next to nothing. For all I know, he may still be riding around on this close relative of the mythical Harley Davidson.

When we get together, we go and pay a visit to Olga, who will arrange for him to see Pasternak. In the meantime, however, something else has happened. As soon as Zveteremich arrived at the Writers' Union, they urged him not to proceed with his translation of *Doctor Zhivago*, inasmuch as the publication of this novel in Italy would constitute an affront to both its author and the Soviet authorities. As proof of such, they handed him a type-written letter, addressed to him personally, in which Pasternak repeated at length the concepts that he had already expressed in the extorted telegram, while lamenting the fact that Feltrinelli never even bothered to answer it. All it is, however, is a cruder version of the previous expedient. In fact, when Pasternak was shown the letter, he told Zveteremich that not only had the text been forged, but his signature had as well.

In any case, the author takes full advantage of the translator's visit to clarify, at his request, a series of expressions contained in the original Russian version of the novel. He also gives him a brief letter for Feltrinelli, apologizing once again for everything that has recently occurred. Finally, he asks him to personally suggest to the Milanese publisher that he include an introductory note in the translation in order to let the reader know that *Doctor Zhivago* was

completed more than three years earlier, and that its publication in the USSR was announced by the magazine, *Znamya*, as well as by Radio Moscow.(27)

XXX

On October 4th, Radio Moscow announces that a multi-stage missile has launched an artificial satellite beyond the limits of the earth's atmosphere that is designed to orbit the planet for months. This is the first Sputnik. The immediate declarations on the part of the Soviet scientists underline the fact that it is meant to be a contribution to the various initiatives involving the International Geophysical Year. In reality, it is the result of an enormous concentration of resources aimed at building intercontinental ballistic missiles that could strike the United States in the case of a nuclear war. America itself is already able to keep the most important part of the Soviet territory in check by means of medium-range missiles installed in the countries of Western Europe. In other words, this particular event marks the beginning of the balance of terror.

Sputnik is also destined to become the object of a deafening propagandistic campaign both inside and outside the Soviet Bloc. Its more generalized significance is expressed on November 6th, on the eve of the fortieth anniversary of Soviet Communism, in a euphoric speech given by Khrushchev. The USSR, affirms the head of the Kremlin, has demonstrated that it is now the world leader in terms of scientific and technological progress. For this reason, it must be prepared to outrank every other country in terms of the overall economy as well. This will come about, he predicts, in the next fifteen years – by 1972 – when it surpasses the American gross national product.

More than a prediction, this is a pure illusion, as the facts will demonstrate well ahead of

the fifteen-year deadline. In the meantime, however, it will serve other purposes. As of the end of 1957, the sixth five-year economic plan is suspended less than two years after it was initiated (with the exception of 1941, when the country was at war, this has never before occurred), under the pretext that it is now necessary to adopt more ambitious objectives. The truth of the matter is that even the existing objectives are not achievable, as the official statistics will later prove beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Once the announcement has been made that the “land of milk and honey” is well within their reach, political pressure is increased both in the USSR and the Eastern Bloc in the name of a grandiose mobilization that demands absolute discipline and dedication. To cite but one example, the economic squeeze that is then imposed on the satellite countries is intensified to the point where in May of 1958, the USSR will even cancel the credits that have already been granted to Yugoslavia.

“We will reach and surpass America” is the obsessive slogan that stands out on the billboards and dominates in the assemblies. One of the clever political jokes that abound only in those countries where there really is no freedom is now circulating widely among the Soviets. This is how it was told to me. During a party assembly, after the speaker has insisted on the solemn pledge that has now been taken by all the people, a lowly comrade stands up and says: “For me, it’s right to reach America, but wrong to surpass it.” “And why is that?” those seated at the chairman’s table ask him, both amazed and indignant. “Because as soon as we surpass them,” he replies, “they’ll see the patches on our behinds.”

XXX

Since 1223, Kazan had been part of the Golden Horde, the western-most state of the

Mongol Empire. Around the year 1400, when the Horde was broken up, it would become one of the independent Tartar khanates. In 1552, it was conquered by the Russians, under Ivan The Terrible, who obliterated many of the traces of the former civilization, but not that which is commonly known as the “Turkish toilet.”

The proof of this is waiting for me at the pretentious hotel, overflowing with red velvet drapery, where I arrived yesterday evening. The following morning, I go into the bathroom, which consists of several individual booths for washing up, and a long room with a row of eight round holes in the floor, intended for those functions that elsewhere are considered private, and that here are part of the process of socializing. Unfortunately, however, the person that designed this facility has made a technical error. The raised footholds that are supposed to help the users take their position in correspondence to the holes have not been installed in the proper place, with the result that the users themselves, not wanting to go through even minimal contortions, regularly deposit their solid wastes on the surrounding tiles. I have gotten up a little late, and when I enter the bathroom, there is no one else left inside. An old Russian peasant woman, who is there to clean, comes in behind me, and as she points her finger at the material she has to pick up, she exclaims in disgust, “So much for our intelligentsia!”

It is the first days of October. Giulietta left some days ago for Italy, and I myself am now in Kazan, 1,000 kilometers east of Moscow, just about ready to arrive at the oil fields of the middle Volga. This time, I am escorted by Lolly, one of the two excellent editors (the other being Vadim) who normally work in the director’s office. What can I say about him? He is a vivacious little mite of a man, both friendly and talkative, who will one day pitch his tent in Rome, where he will make a name for himself.

While traveling to the south of Kazan, in the area where I will be writing my story on the oil fields, we pass through two different cities. The first of these is Ulyanovsk, formerly known as Simbirsk, which is the birth place of Lenin, whose house we dutifully visit, and also of Aleksandr Kerensky, the head of the provisional government of 1917, whose name has not been mentioned in public in the last forty years. The second, Kuibyshev, which was once called Samara, was the temporary capital of the USSR when the Germans were bivouacked at the gates of Moscow.

In this stretch of territory, which covers about 300 kilometers, the Volga is as wide as a sea. Beyond its banks (on its west bank lies the city of Ulyanovsk, and on its east bank, Kuibyshev), there is the vast expanse of the steppes, whose landscape is occasionally broken up by little dwarf-hills, and dotted with oil derricks. Perhaps because of the mud that has built up after the recent rains, or perhaps because of the low, gray sky, wherever I look, I get the impression of infinite dreariness. Until the eve of our departure, that is, when Lolly manages to have us driven by courtesy car to an isolated villa, which is so beautiful that it seems almost like a mirage. Inside, the atmosphere could not be more welcoming. We dine in a small, elegant room with warm, defused lighting, discrete, solicitous waiters, and exquisite food and drink, all of which makes me feel that I am being wrapped in the privileges of power.

Several years from now, barely 60 kilometers northwest of Kuibyshev, on the same eastern bank of the Volga, a city called Togliatti (Togliattigrad, the Russian equivalent of the phantom “Civita Togliatti,” is a name invented in Italy) will be the site of the large automobile factory built by Fiat. According to Lenin’s theory, this factory, like every other technico-industrial contribution made by the West, gives Communism the rope to hang the

capitalists with. According to the theory of Gianni Agnelli, on the other hand, it can only help to make the Soviet system less rigid and perhaps more democratic.

At the end of our tour, while we are sitting in a room at the Kuibyshev Airport, I happen to notice a large oil painting that is hanging above the boarding gate, which depicts a meeting of the top leaders of the Kremlin. All the faces, starting with that of Stalin, are more than familiar to me, except for that of one personage with thick, jet-black hair and a low forehead. Who might it be?

Meanwhile, Lolly is telling me that his grandfather, a Communist from day one, and a combatant in the revolution, had been arrested during a Stalinist purge. By then an irascible and somewhat foul-mouthed old man, he had grossly insulted the secret agents who wanted to interrogate him, and had made his way to the exit door.

At this point, rather than waiting for the happy ending to this story, I ask Lolly to identify the mysterious personage in the painting. While blushing slightly, he satisfies my whim. That one there is Beria, who in real life was as bald as a billiard ball. They camouflaged him, making him unrecognizable, so they would not have to discard the painting.

This immediately reminds me of a similar episode from the past. During my final days as manager of the party bookstore, when my transfer to Moscow was imminent, I was asked by Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga, the USSR agency for the sale of books and periodicals abroad, to remove some pages from our copies of the *Grand Soviet Encyclopedia*, which was then in the process of being reprinted. If I remember correctly, what was involved was one sixteen-page signature that contained Beria's biography. In its place, I was supposed to insert a new signature,

which would be sent to us as soon as possible.

Obviously I did not receive it in time, since my own personal library still has a copy of the encyclopedia with the biography that should have been done away with. In order not to have to change the page numbering for the rest of the volume once that Beria's entry had been eliminated, they must have had to extend the length of some of the neighboring articles. I personally would like to think that this was a propitious occasion for widening the Bering Strait.

XXX

On October 10th, Feltrinelli sends a letter to Pasternak, care of the Writers' Union, flatly rejecting the author's telegraphic demand that he return *Doctor Zhivago*, all the while pretending that he has taken him seriously. After insisting that the text has no need for further revisions, he mentions the agreements that have gone back and forth regarding the publication of the novel, and reminds him that he has already acceded to Goslitizdat's request that the Italian edition be postponed. He also notes the fact that the USSR has no intention of publishing the book.

As for the scandal that will undoubtedly occur when *Doctor Zhivago* is finally printed, he lays the blame squarely at the feet of certain tactless individuals in positions of authority within the Soviet publishing industry, especially with regard to their lobbying efforts both in Italy and England. This is a classic case of intending your remarks for one person while speaking to another. In fact, as could be expected, the bureaucrats will be the first to read this letter, which they will only transmit to Pasternak a month and a half later.(28)

In spite of all this, Surkov has not yet given up entirely. He cancels the first name on the list of a Soviet delegation that has been invited to our country by the Italy-USSR Association,

replaces it with his own name, and several days later, he arrives in Milan. Once in Feltrinelli's office, he waves around the copy of the telegram extorted from Pasternak, but to no avail whatsoever. After glancing ironically at the piece of paper in Surkov's hand, Feltrinelli concludes the meeting with a single sentence: "We know only too well how certain things are done."

Surkov's disappointment overflows on October 19th, during the course of a press conference, when he asserts the following: "Pasternak has written to his Italian publisher, asking him to return the manuscript to allow him to make further revisions...*Doctor Zhivago*, as I read yesterday in *Il Corriere* and today in *l'Espresso*, will nevertheless be published against the author's will. The Cold War seems to have gotten mixed up with literature. If this is the West's definition of freedom, I have to say that we have a very different idea of it."(29)

On October 22nd, the author sends me a handwritten note, expressing his indignation at "the under-heard of farce of the correspondence drafted by the Central Committee," and "the threats of death and arrest" with which they hope to force him to renounce his own work. "Can one participate in this shameful duplicity, this demeaning of the conscience and the life of a man?" He then asks me to urge Feltrinelli "not to say one word in response to this bogus correspondence, to ignore it completely," and "to make sure that this type of coercion does not fool anyone, that no country pays any attention to this request, and that the books come out as soon as possible."(30)

A letter dated October 23rd, which is typed in Russian and apparently signed by Pasternak, does not take long to reach Feltrinelli. The author deplores the fact that the Milanese publisher never responded to his telegram of August 21st, and reiterates in a very harsh tone that he wants *Doctor Zhivago* back, including the copies that

were transmitted to the Gallimard and Collins publishing houses.(31)

Pasternak never mentions this letter to me. His signature could well be false, since they are not too fastidious about such things here (remembering the message given to Zveteremich). On the other hand, if it is authentic, the author was correct in going along with the authorities. Such was the case of the telegram, which he signed at my insistence. Now more than ever, it would make no sense to let himself be destroyed by the powers that be, who have already been beaten at their own absurd game. In any case, it does not seem possible that on October 23rd, the members of the literary hierarchy know nothing about Surkov's Milanese fiasco, or that they are so naive as to think that there is still some way to remedy the situation.

XXX

Marshal Zhukov is the military commander who won the Battle of Stanlingrad, liberated the besieged Leningrad, and conquered Berlin. The public idolizes him. They probably consider him a reincarnation of Kutusov, the general that saved Russia from the Napoleonic invasion, who is another icon of Soviet Communism. At the end of the war, however, his immense popularity begins to overshadow Stalin, and he falls into disgrace. Khrushchev mentions in his "secret report" that he had dared to contradict the supreme despot, stating that he considered Zhukov a "good general." Zhukov, who has since become Minister of Defense, repays him by siding with him during the "anti-party group" affair, as well as on the day after the Hungarian Revolution.

Now, however, upon his return to Moscow from an official mission to Yugoslavia, Zhukov is greeted at the airport by the dull figure of Marshal Malinovsky, who presents himself as the new Minister of Defense. At the October 28-30 meeting of the Central Committee, after being accused of having introduced the cult of his own personality into the army, and having

neglected the training of the soldiers, he is also relieved of his official party duties.

I myself wonder if there is something behind all this. I begin to find the answer in the corridors of the radio, where someone tells me a piece of news that had completely escaped me. Little more than two months ago, at an assembly in celebration of Fleet Day (July 13th), Zhukov made mention of the bloody “Leningrad Affair,” in which Malenkov, according to the accusations hurled at him by the head of the CPSU, had been one of the major accomplices. He then called for a thorough investigation of all those responsible for the Stalinist crimes, thereby alluding to Khrushchev’s own transgressions in the Ukraine in a not so subtle way.

As for Zhukov’s reasons for such a tactic, there can be no doubt. Knowing that he himself could never be accused of having engaged in any complicity during the Stalinist reign of terror, he decided to put pressure on Khrushchev in order to extort a political promotion from him, in exchange for his own loyalty to the cause. What he really wanted was to take the place of the shaky Prime Minister Bulganin, who had behaved in a rather ambiguous way during the “anti-party group” affair. But he completely miscalculated the risks involved.

Khrushchev sees Zhukov, whose prestige is completely intact, as the most dangerous of his political adversaries. He imagines that he will not be satisfied for long with the post of Prime Minister (which he wants for himself, as head of the CPSU), and that he will eventually attempt to scale the highest peak of political power. Therefore, rather than supporting his ascent, he decides to get rid of him as soon as possible.

The grand finale of Khrushchev’s counterattack takes place on November 3rd, when Marshal Konev utterly destroys the image of the former Minister of Defense in a long article in *Pravda*. Zhukov, writes his accuser, does not possess any real military talent. In fact, he was one

of the individuals who were responsible for the unpreparedness of the armed forces on the eve of the German attack. He also had a negative influence on the progress of the war both in the defensive phase, when he could have reduced the dimensions of the retreat, and in the offensive phase, when he could have prevented the large German units from escaping from the “pockets” they were trapped in. Furthermore, he committed a number of “grave errors and blunders” that ended up causing an enormous loss of human life and military equipment and supplies. Finally, he was not the principal architect of the victories of Stalingrad and Berlin, as he led us falsely to believe, because those victories were due to the strategy of other military commanders.

In conclusion, Zhukov is no longer the brilliant tactician and triumphant hero of the “great patriotic war.” He is simply a good-for-nothing, and a hot-air balloon. After this sterling testimonial, he makes his final exit at the age of sixty-one.

XXX

On the basis of the latest news from Milan, I confirm to Olga that things could not be going any better. The Italian edition of *Doctor Zhivago* will come out in several weeks, and the editions being published by other important countries are well on their way. Olga then tells Pasternak, who writes the following euphoric letter to Feltrinelli on November 2nd :

“I can find no adequate words with which to express my gratitude to you. The future will reward both of us for the shameful humiliations we have suffered. Oh, how happy I am that neither you, nor Gallimard, nor Collins was fooled by those idiotic, brutal appeals accompanied by my signatures (!), signatures that were all but false and counterfeit because they were extorted from me by fraud and violence...Soon there will be Italian, French, English and German *Zhivagos*, and perhaps one fine day, although geographically distant, Russian *Zhivagos*!! Do not

worry about my money. Let us postpone the financial issues (for me they do not exist) until it is perhaps possible in the twentieth century to write to each other, and to travel. I have unlimited faith in you, and I am sure that you will put aside for me whatever you have decided I am due. Only in the unfortunate event that they deprive me entirely of my earnings and take away all means of subsistence (only in this event, and nothing can be foreseen) will I find a way to let you know, and to take advantage of your proposal through Sergio, who in keeping with his name is a true angel who has devoted all his time and effort to this tiresome affair.

With my very best wishes,

Yours truly, Pasternak.”(32)

The world premiere of *Doctor Zhivago* takes place in Italy on November 23, 1957.

I learn about it immediately thanks to a telephone call from Giulietta, who resorts to her usual garbled language just in case anyone is listening in, and I celebrate the event in Potapovsky Lane with Pasternak and Olga. While we are congratulating each other, I ask both of them an indiscreet question: Aside from certain artistic touches, is it true that the two of them, as is already being said, are really Zhivago and Lara, the main characters in the novel? Pasternak avoids giving me a direct answer. “Let’s leave that decision to the imagination of the reader,” he says. Olga simply responds with an enigmatic smile that is worthy of the “Mona Lisa.” I then ask another question: How were the names Lara and Zhivago chosen, both of which are rather unusual? “Lara has a very soft, sweet sound to it,” the author replies, “and I was immediately convinced about the name Zhivago when I saw it on a manhole cover.” I personally think that he liked the name Zhivago, which also seems to be that of a foundry owner, because its root is “zhiv,” which in Russian means “alive.”

Toward the end of the month, on November 25th, Pasternak again writes to Feltrinelli:

“Dear Sir,

Not having had the chance to write at length before now, I hasten to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the fact that everything has ended up so well, due to the keen far-sightedness with which you dealt with every aspect of this unusual case. I am eternally grateful to you.

I would never be so bold or foolish as to compare myself to the voice of truth itself, but I dare to hope that I share the aspirations and expectations of all those who love their own country, life, truth and beauty in a genuine and appreciative way. For this reason, you, who have done so very much for me, have contributed to the achievement of a real and wonderful goal.

I have known suffering and felt shame at having created a name for myself with so little as a few odd poems, because contemporary poetry (including my own) has been divorced from reality, reduced to half a word, and kept far from the totality of this epoch, which is great and full of responsibility, and which demands nothing less than clear vision and coherence of ideas. It has only been through the exacting art of prose writing, which for me has been a long and difficult task, that I have been able to put an end to this painful and shameful situation, and open a new chapter in my life, which while late in coming, has finally arrived in the end. I will let you be the judge of how thankful I am for your help.

And now I have a great favor to ask of you. Nothing that has happened would have been possible without the participation of S. d’A., who has been our guardian angel. Although such extraordinary assistance cannot be evaluated in monetary terms, do give me the ultimate pleasure of compensating him, when he returns to you, for the endless amount of time and energy that he

has spent, in the following manner. From the sum that you consider necessary to put aside for my future, deduct a significant part for S. d'A., as much as you deem necessary, and *double the amount*.

May you have a long and happy journey, dear, dear author of my new, happy fate (notwithstanding the frightening consequences)!

Yours truly,

B. Pasternak”(33)

Years will go by before I become aware of this letter, or even the passage that regards me directly. It does not matter. For the part that I played in the story of *Doctor Zhivago*, I want no material compensation from Pasternak. His deep affection, which he expressed to me in so many different ways, is more than enough to pay me back.

XXX

For a long time after the war, Pietro Secchia was considered by many of the militant members of the Italian Communist Party as the head of the extremist wing, the adversary of Togliatti's legalitarianism, and the potential force behind an armed insurrection. To what degree this is true, I cannot say. In any case, Secchia was one of the top leaders of the party, until one day, before entering the Barvikha Sanitorium, where he found himself in the company of Robotti in September of 1956, he slipped on a political banana peel, and his personal power crumbled.

However, falling into disgrace is less serious in the ICP than in the CPSU of Khrushchev, not to mention that of Stalin. In Italy, for reasons that we might call “environmental,” the one

who has fallen is not only allowed to defend himself in public, but he also keeps his seat in Parliament (at least until the following election), as well as his preferred residence and his passport. And now Secchia, who could have chosen to travel to the four corners of the earth, has decided instead to spend a little more time in these parts, perhaps to receive free medical treatment for the aches and pains of old age.

He gets in touch with me, and asks me to come and see him at his hotel. He is particularly interested, he explains politely, in hearing the opinion of someone who has had a good deal of experience in the USSR, and who can also think with his head. Out of curiosity, I accept his invitation, and our meeting lasts for almost three hours. Above all, Secchia wants to listen to what I have to say rather than speaking himself. At the beginning, he asks me a few general questions about the USSR: what I think of the current political and economic situation, and if there is any possible way to get out of it. I do not hide a thing from this wounded lion, who is still a lion after all. I talk to him as I would to my confessor.

I begin by telling him that I am very disillusioned. For all those like me, the “secret report” was a rude awakening from a beautiful dream that we wanted to continue, calling us back to a harsh reality that we refused to believe. However, it could also have been a clean break with the aberrations of the past, a recovery of revolutionary values, and a turning point toward a future of freedom and justice. Instead, even if the worst of Stalinism has been repudiated, nothing has been done to give a voice to the people, or to create the instruments of a fundamental democracy, while on high, they perpetuate the practice of the old palace conspiracies. I then give him some concrete examples. I am only interrupted once, when I maintain that at this rate, they will never get beyond what Togliatti himself labeled as the “degeneration” of the Soviet system during a

famous interview he gave last year, and he corrects me philologically: “You mean elements of degeneration.”

I shrug my shoulders and go on. Without the creative participation of the workers, not even the economy can improve. Khrushchev’s challenge to America is nothing but a piece of gross propaganda, and a smoke screen. The USSR will continue to wallow in all its misery, and thanks to what Sputnik has come to mean, it will continue to be touted as the underdeveloped superpower. In an effort to be more convincing, I go into details about the unreliability of official statistics, with my first example being the annual indices of total industrial production. The fact is that these indices are contrary to the comparisons between the levels of the Soviet and American gross national products that are published periodically in the USSR. If we were to assume that the annual indices of the USSR are accurate, and that those of the United States have not been doctored to make them lower, we would have to conclude against all evidence that Khrushchev is just one step away from winning his arrogant challenge. This is not a question of higher mathematics. It is a question of simple arithmetic calculations, which various Western economists have already made, and which you can certainly make without being an economist yourself.

Where is this country going? Not toward Socialism, that is for sure. And where is the Cold War going? I shrug my shoulders. I still do not know.

At the end, Secchia thanks me for having told him facts and opinions that will help him to understand a reality that he has been thinking about for quite some time. I believe he is being sincere, and not just polite, while at the same time reminding myself that it is difficult, if not impossible, to see into a man’s soul.

XXX

After the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* – an event that was not even mentioned to the ordinary Soviet citizen – the foreign correspondents in Moscow ask the State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, which is part of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, to organize a series of interviews with Pasternak. The response is negative. However, that does not prevent the American, British and Italian journalists in particular (such as Vero Roberti) from finding a way to approach the author.

When faced with this situation, the literary authorities can only twist their mouths. Polikarpov is the first to raise the question formally in a memorandum dated November 29th (approved by Pospelov and made into a party resolution), in which he notes that given the current state of affairs, it would be advisable to organize interviews with limited (that is, selected) groups of foreign correspondents, and to remind Pasternak that it is his responsibility, in any such circumstances, to corroborate what he wrote to Feltrinelli regarding the need to make further revisions to his novel.(34)

This leads to a massive lobbying effort on the part of the usual cast of characters in this tragicomedy, as they try desperately to tell the entire world the fable of a *Doctor Zhivago* that has been repudiated by its author, while at the same time promoting a series of violently critical articles about the “stolen” novel in the foreign press that is controlled by the Communists. At the risk of boring the reader, I will refrain from relating the whole chronicle of events. I will, however, make an exception for a case that is truly pathetic.

The forty-two-year old Konstantin Simonov, Director of the literary journal *Novy Mir*, is an “enlightened” Communist. In 1956, he published a serialized version of Dudintsev’s

controversial novel, *Not by Bread Alone*, which recently made him the target of Khrushchev's fury. *Novy Mir* had also received the typescript of *Doctor Zhivago*, as had the magazine *Znamya*, the almanac *Literaturnaya Moskva*, and the Goslitizdat publishing house, and it probably would have printed it if the thaw had actually continued.

Instead, Simonov will be forced to print a thirty-five page letter – in reality, an extremely long “review” – signed by the entire editorial staff of *Novy Mir*, and addressed to Pasternak, which challenges the ideology of *Doctor Zhivago*, and concludes by totally rejecting the novel. This “review,” which distinguishes itself by its measured tone, and is therefore more palatable and influential from a propagandistic standpoint than the invectives of the Polikarpovs and Surkovs of this world, is dated (or backdated, as I have already said I suspected) September, 1956.

In a memorandum written by Simonov on December 7th – whose recipient is not indicated in the document contained in the State Archive – he suggests that the “review,” which was sent in 1956 to the Central Committee of the CPSU, where it was read by the Culture Section and the CC Secretaries Suslov and Pospelov (who among them would have an interest in challenging the date?), could be used, together with Pasternak's signed requests to have the manuscript returned, to counter the anti-Soviet attacks provoked by the Italian edition of *Doctor Zhivago*. In particular, he proposes that an older writer, like Fedin or Lavrenev, be sent to the European Culture Society convention, which is about to be held in Venice, where he would present the “review” from *Novy Mir*, and would make sure that it was published in the Communist or Socialist press. Simonov also indicates that he himself plans to use the “review” during a business trip to France that is scheduled for the end of the month. (35)

Perhaps in all his surprising zeal, the Director of *Novy Mir* has persuaded himself that he can actually save his job. If so, he is sadly mistaken. In fact, he will lose it very soon.

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On the eve of my return to Italy, I invite an incredible number of people to my apartment for a festive farewell party that starts in the afternoon, and goes on until the wee hours of the morning. There is hardly enough room for everyone, even though they are crammed into the kitchen and bathroom as well. Fortunately, there turns out to be a steady stream of arrivals and departures, which also means a constant supply of food and drink.

Among the guests who stay from beginning to end, there are for the most part my male and female co-workers from the Italian news bureau, including Lilya, Sergio the Romagnolo, Rita, Slava, Valya and Borya, to name but a few, and Ignacio, the Garritanos and other close friends. As for those who leave before it gets too late, there are Olya and Evald Ilyenkov, Fulvio and Alberto, the two “old-timers” from the office, who have become very attached to me, several colleagues from other news bureaus, including an American woman and a Frenchwoman, and Adriana and Mario, an Italian couple who arrived in Moscow a few months ago after a long assignment in Prague. Then there are those who stay for only a short while, such as my two superiors at the news bureau, a number of newspaper correspondents, including Boffa, and others whom I cannot recall.

In the midst of incredible confusion, everyone is eating and drinking, laughing and singing, and talking and back talking. There is even a rather startling musical interlude, when someone puts a record on the gramophone with a Mexican ranchera sung by Mejias, accompanied by the rest of the ensemble, who shout the same happy refrain every few seconds. It

just so happens that this particular refrain sounds like the popular Russian term for a certain part of the male anatomy. Everyone has a good laugh. Olya Ilyenkov, pretending to be scandalized, turns to me: “Seriozhenka, what’s this all about?” After duly apologizing to her, I whisper to Slava, who is standing next to me with his glass of vodka, “What do you think about the Mexicans’ Russian accent?” “It’s perfect,” he says in reply.

My very young co-worker, Borya, who has been buried in a corner of the news bureau’s kitchen ever since I have known him, whether out of shyness or by design I cannot say, has brought me an unusual farewell present in the form of a small booklet with the telephone numbers of Moscow’s public services. What am I supposed to do with it? Borya apologizes for giving me such a small gift, and explains that he was not able to find a regular telephone book (which simply does not exist in Moscow). Then he shows me the dedication: “To my dearest Seriozha, the indomitable champion of prosperity and happiness for all mankind, from his humble but faithful servant, Borya.” What can I say? These discontented Russians certainly have a subtle sense of humor. The little booklet will therefore become part of my permanent collection of mementos, which I keep stored in a cardboard box.

Several of the guests have turned the bedroom into a discotheque, since it is larger than the living room. They are dancing not only to fox trot and tango music, but also rock and roll, which has just been smuggled into the country. Valya, who is a great jazz enthusiast, is sorry that he did not bring along his trumpet. However, the racket that we are making ends up worrying the “liftiorsha.” This is the young woman who runs the elevator, and whose other functions include manning the front door, and spying for the “domoupravlenie,” which is the agency that manages a whole group of buildings, as well as politically monitoring them.

In any case, our “liftiorsha” is a big, beautiful girl who would probably be only too happy to join in the fun. Instead, she asks us very diplomatically to lower the noise level a bit, as there are people who are trying to sleep. And then she says, “I’d never leave if I had a house like this.” Rather than telling her that my apartment in Rome is a good deal more spacious than this one, and having her take me for a braggart, I come up with the excuse of being homesick, and needing to see an old aunt of mine again.

Our music director, Zhenya, who has overheard the conversation, says to me with a great sigh, “I’m going to miss this place terribly.” What this dedicated bachelor is actually referring to is an episode that occurred just a few days ago, when I returned to the building in the late evening, and found him waiting for me at the front door. He was with a girlfriend, whom he obviously could not take back to his dormitory, and he asked me if I would lend him the keys to my apartment for an hour or so, during which time I could go and take a walk. He also assured me that he would restrict his activities to the living room sofa. I gave in to his wishes, out of male solidarity, even though, damn it all, it was minus ten degrees outside.

Just before the party is over, Rita pulls me toward a window opening, where she tells me a secret that I would never have imagined. “Now that you’re about to leave,” she blurts out, “I want to tell you something. You’re what is known as a real man. Even here, where it’s not easy to do so, you’ve always conducted yourself with great dignity...I’ve fallen in love with you...I haven’t told you...But if I weren’t married, and if you were free, I would have liked...” Her voice breaks, and she is about to cry. “Good-bye, Sergio. I’ll always remember you.” I look at this Karelian-Finnish girl with her flaxen hair, so sweet and sincere, and I feel an infinite tenderness for her. Then I try to make the situation a little less emotional by saying to her teasingly,

“Margarita Nikolaevna, you’ve just told me about the biggest non-event of my life!” I kiss her gently on the forehead. “Good-bye, Rita. I will never forget you either.”

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Pasternak lets me know ahead of time that he is coming in from Peredelkino to say good-bye to me personally. As always, we get together at Olga’s apartment in Potapovsky Lane. It is Christmas morning. Although Christmas is not a national holiday here, Irochka, as delicious as ever, has taken time off from her studies to join us in a toast, and share some little pastries.

Even on this occasion, the conversation inevitably comes around to *Doctor Zhivago*. The author has not yet received the Italian edition, and he is anxious to hold a copy of it in his hands, and turn it over and over again to see just how it looks. (Unfortunately, he will have to wait several more weeks to have this pleasure, due to communications problems. I myself will see it first, upon my return to Italy.) All I can do for the moment is to reassure him that he will be more than satisfied with the final product. Thanks to his art director, who is truly a genius, Feltrinelli’s books are always beautifully designed.

Our conversation then turns to the great Mandelstam, the author’s dear friend who died in a concentration camp. Among the personal papers that he keeps in Potapovsky Lane, there is a book of Mandelstam’s poetry, which he admires immensely. When he asks me to give it to Feltrinelli, I tell him that I would be more than happy to do so. In fact, in just a few days, I will be delivering a package of books that I have already prepared for him, and will make sure to include the poems.

In answer to their questions regarding my plans for the immediate future, the only thing that I can say with certainty is that I will never again work for the Communist Party in any

professional capacity. Furthermore, unless there is a radical (and highly improbable) change of course, based on a full admission of the truths, most of which have still not been told, I have no intention of renewing my party membership, or continuing to give them my vote.

As far as employment is concerned, Feltrinelli is willing to take me on immediately. He has known me since the days when I worked as a translator and writer of prefaces for several books that were part of his first literary series, which were issued even before the publishing house was founded. For the moment, I think that I will accept his offer, and then I will see what happens. Especially in light of the “economic miracle” that has just taken place in Italy, I anticipate that there will be other job possibilities as well.

We promise each other that we will keep in touch to the extent that it is possible, hoping that there are better days to come, when we will be able to get together again, either here or elsewhere, in a far more tranquil environment. All three of us are feeling very emotional. Before we raise our glasses in a farewell toast, however, the author excuses himself for a moment.

Since it is important to understand exactly what happened then (later on, the reason will become clear), I quote from an article that I myself wrote in May of 1961:

“Pasternak wanted to hand me a letter to give to Feltrinelli as soon as I arrived in Italy. ‘Please read it – in fact, read it now.’ There were various things said, but one of them took me completely by surprise. The author was signing over to me ‘one half and even more’ of his earnings from *Doctor Zhivago*. At first, I tried to joke about it, telling him that such an idea would be just fine with me the next time around, when we would write a new novel together. Then I asked him to take back the letter, because I did not want Feltrinelli to think for a moment that I had urged him to make such an offer. And since Pasternak would not budge (‘as far as this

matter is concerned, you won't be able to get Olga to go against me either'), I wrote a definite 'no' in block letters next to the sentence that regarded me. 'You're a foolish man,' he said, 'but that won't stop me from loving you.'

At that time, I still thought that sooner or later, Pasternak would be able to receive all his money on a regular basis, and I did not see any valid reason for taking advantage of his generous offer. For that matter, I never received the least compensation from the publisher Feltrinelli, nor did I ever request it.”(36)

We toast each other, we exchange good wishes, and then we all embrace. There is no way that any of us can know that this will be our last encounter.

Notes

1. Olga Ivinskaya, *A Captive of Time: My Years with Pasternak* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1978), 199-201.
2. V. Yu. Afiani, and N.G. Tomilina, *Boris Pasternak i Vlast. Dokumenty 1956-1972* (Boris Pasternak and Power. Documents from 1956 to 1972) (Moscow: Rosspen, 2001), 95.
3. AP RF (Archive of the Chairman of the Russian Federation), Fond 3, Opis 34, Delo 269, Listy 1-7.
4. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 207.
5. RGANI (Russian State Archive of Contemporary History), F. 5, Op. 28, D. 417, L. 106.
6. The stage name of the Neapolitan Antonio De Curtis, a comic actor of extraordinary talents and the protagonist of innumerable films [trans.].
7. The acronym for “Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi,” the Italian energy and chemical conglomerate [trans.].
8. An allusion to the Emperor Vespasian’s famous quote, “pecunia non olet” (“money doesn’t stink”), delivered when he was asked to justify his taxation of “stinking” public lavatories [trans.].
9. A famous personality in both the political and journalistic arenas, Ferrara was also a minister in the first Berlusconi cabinet. He is now the publisher of *Il Foglio*, an influential newspaper, as well as the moderator of politico-cultural debates on television that are extremely popular with the general public [trans.].
10. For an extensive and well-documented description of the part played by Khrushchev in the repressions in the Ukraine in 1937-38, see Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin’s Purge of the Thirties* (London: Macmillan, 1968).
11. Report on Modifications to the Statute made at the 18th Party Congress of the Communist Party (b) on 18 March, 1939, in *XVIII Syezd Kommunisticheskoi partii (b) SSSR* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1939), 522.
12. Yuri Krotkov, “Trois suicides,” in *Le contract social* (Paris: December 1968), 245.
13. These exploits of Beria were recently confirmed by Valentin Berezhkov in *Ryadom e Stalinim* (At Stalin’s Side) (Moscow: Vagrius, 1999), 397-98. For many years, Berezhkov served as personal interpreter, both in German and English, for members of the top Soviet echelon, including Stalin and Molotov, during their meetings with Hitler and Churchill.
14. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 37, L. 2-3.
15. Elena Pasternak and Yevgeny Pasternak, “Perepiska s Feltrinelli” (Correspondence between Pasternak and Feltrinelli), in *Kontinent*, number 107 (Paris-Moscow: January-March 2001), 290.
16. Ibid
17. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 291-292.
18. Ibid., 293.

19. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 293-294.
20. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 201.
21. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 37, L. 16-17 (copy).
22. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 296.
23. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 37, L. 15.
24. With the exception of very few insignificant details, Olga's account corresponds to the information contained in E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak., op. cit., 299-300.
25. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 300.
26. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 37, L. 18.
27. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 301-303.
28. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 305-306.
29. *L'Unità* (Rome: 22 October 1957).
30. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 306 (from RGALI, the Russian State Archive of Literature).
31. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., and RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 37, L. 21-22 (copy).
32. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 307.
33. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 37, L. 24-25.
34. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 37, L. 23.
35. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 37, L. 24-25.
36. *Paris-Jour* (Paris: 7 May 1961), and *Vita* (Rome: 11 May 1961).

Part Two

A Triumph Denied and the Death of the Author

It is shortly after New Year's Day in 1958. At his headquarters in Milan, Feltrinelli takes off at a run, skidding down the corridor, until he reaches a small group of editors who are more or less as young as he is. While giving them instructions, he also gives them pats on the back. When he finally notices my presence near the main door, he greets me with a "welcome aboard." All in all, it would seem that the commander of the ship is in an excellent mood.

I have just arrived from Rome, where I spent the holidays with family and friends, shaking off the brutal cold of a Moscow winter, and now I am here to find out exactly what type of work is planned for me. Escorted by one of his colleagues, Feltrinelli ushers me into his office – which is filled with copies of *Doctor Zhivago*, photographs of Pasternak, and reproductions of Russian documents of the time in celebration of the coup – where he asks me first and foremost for the latest news from the USSR.

I tell him whatever I have heard, and then I hand him the letter that Pasternak gave me on Christmas Day. He begins reading it immediately, pausing when he comes to the part where the author offers me "one half and even more" of his royalties. After staring at the big "no" in block letters that I myself wrote next to the text as a way of declining the offer, he congratulates me on my decision: "Good for you. By doing this, you've silenced all those people who would otherwise have accused you of a political about-face just for money."

Moving on to the subject of my employment, we agree that I should continue to handle Russian and Soviet works, as a consultant, translator and editor, at the publishing house's branch office in Rome. I am satisfied with this arrangement, since it will allow me to be close to my family after almost two years of separation. I will also be doing a job that I enjoy, with a good

deal of autonomy, and with a direct line to the headquarters in Milan.

As I will soon find out, the atmosphere in the Rome office could not be any more pleasant. The building itself, which is a nineteenth-century palace with high frescoed ceilings, is also not far from my home. The office space is shared by five or six other people, including the famous author, Giorgio Bassani, who is working as a talent scout for a series on new Italian fiction writers, and whose most important discovery thus far has been *The Leopard*, by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, which is Feltrinelli's second literary coup. Thanks mainly to Bassani, whose office is right next to mine, I can also watch the comings and goings of a number of interesting people.

Among those individuals that I have known for years, the first one that I renew my acquaintance with is the literary critic, Carlo Muscetta, who is about to leave for the USSR with some delegation or other. Like so many other intellectuals, Muscetta reacted to the Soviet repression in Hungary by tearing up his party membership card. However, he soon realized what he had done. In Italy, not even a man (and prima donna) who is as capable and brilliant as he is can avoid paying the price of at least a partial eclipse for having left a party that is in control of almost all the instruments of cultural paternalism, starting with the bass drum.

Unable to resign himself to this sacrifice, he has recently taken steps to bring about a rapprochement with the ICP, and now he would like to convince me that the Soviet Union has really found the right way. When I refuse to take him seriously, he answers back, "I'll make a bet with you that even Trotsky will be rehabilitated before you know it." What a shame that I never make bets.

With the go-ahead from Milan, I translate a number of things, including Pasternak's

Autobiography, and a play by Nazim Hikmet. I also work on several volumes by the Menshevik Nikolai Sukhanov, which are extremely important in that they give a day-by-day account of the political events that took place in Petrograd from February to November, 1917 – until the moment, that is, when an armed man appeared in the doorway of the great hall of the Constituent Assembly, and announced the Communist coup d’etat with these few words: “The guards are tired, and the palace is closed.”

During the same period of time, Leo Paladini and I start writing our monograph on economic and political events in the USSR, which is entitled *Khrushchev’s Challenge*. Before it is actually published, however, it will have a story of its own to tell.

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“I do not want my friends to argue among themselves,” writes Pasternak to Feltrinelli on January 12, 1958. “Please make all the necessary arrangements directly with her [Jacqueline de Proyart]. Do not write to me, and do not raise any issues about money. You must deal with me now in the same way that you have dealt with me in the past, and maintain your silence. I embrace d’Angelo warmly and devotedly. All his acquaintances here send him their fondest wishes.”(1)

What has happened? Countess Jacqueline de Proyart de Baillescourt, a young Parisian Slavic scholar with an entree into the French publishing world, met with Pasternak at the beginning of 1957, during a brief visit to Moscow for research purposes. At that time, the author gave her his power of attorney with regard to managing his royalties, as well overseeing the Western editions of his works.

For the moment, I know none of the details of the situation. I myself am not involved, nor

do I want to be. What I will eventually find out, however, is that Feltrinelli considers the power of attorney, or at least the way that the Countess intends to exercise it (with her lawyer husband's help), as an undeserved denial of the role that he himself has played in the promotion of *Doctor Zhivago*, and a serious impediment to the negotiations that he has conducted halfway around the world with publishers interested in the novel.

He is so upset, in fact, that at one point I hear him angrily mispronounce the second part of the proxy's noble last name, which sounds in Italian like "dalle balle corte" (whose lies are soon apparent). Despite Pasternak's own wishes, the battle that has already broken out between the two of them will last a considerably long time, and will force the author to engage in correspondence that is embarrassing, and at times, very painful.

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In the Soviet Union, it would now seem that Pasternak no longer exists. The newspapers make no mention of him, nor is anything of his being published, notwithstanding the fact that it was announced some time ago that two volumes of his poetry were soon to come out.(2) However, the guardians of literature are ever vigilant, and now that the Italian edition of *Doctor Zhivago* is a fait accompli, they try desperately to block the publication of the novel in other important countries. In January, Surkov goes to Gallimard in Paris, while Fyodor Panferev visits Collins in London. As both of them should have anticipated, however, their efforts come to nothing.

In any event, before departing, Panferev falls ill and is hospitalized in Oxford, where he meets with Pasternak's sister, Lidya Slater, and decides to play his last card. He reminds Mrs. Slater, to her horror, of the terrible things that could happen to her brother if Collins were

to publish *Doctor Zhivago*, and suggests that she should do whatever she personally can to prevent the English edition from ever seeing the light of day.

In Moscow, they have another idea in mind, even if it is hardly new. Pasternak has to be persuaded to sign a letter (which he will not do) giving permission to Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga, the Soviet agency that is responsible for the sale of books and periodicals abroad, to contact the foreign publishers of the novel, requesting that the manuscripts be sent back, and that they abandon their publishing plans.(3)

During the same period of time, the Soviet think tanks have also come up with the idea of impeding wherever possible the circulation of *Doctor Zhivago*, through an avalanche of negative reviews that would be written by their “friends.” One of these critiques (whose author I choose not to mention), which appears in Italy, claims that those who have bought the novel are not even able to get through it. In fact, many of them think that “Zivago” (the Italian transliteration used in the Feltrinelli edition) actually means “zio vago,” or some vague and senile old uncle.

However, there are far more positive reviews than there are negative ones. The author Carlo Cassola, whose ideas are anything but reactionary, expresses himself as follows: “No other contemporary novel has inspired in me such enthusiasm, solidarity, and intellectual satisfaction, or inspired me with such high ideals and magnanimity.”(4) The literary critic Carlo Salinari, a militant Communist, writes that while *Doctor Zhivago* is indeed a novel that is ideologically outdated – a portrait of the sunset – in all honesty, he has to admit that “even a sunset can sometimes be marvelous.”(5)

In any case, the popularity of the Italian edition of *Doctor Zhivago* has exceeded everyone’s expectations, and it has already been reprinted a number of times. By the summer, the

English, American, German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian, Israeli and Mexican editions will follow.

As if this were not enough, at the end of March, another thorny problem will arise to worry the Muscovite crusaders for literary orthodoxy. Among the rumors that are already flying around with regard to the possible candidates for this year's Nobel Prize for Literature, both Shokolov and Pasternak's name have been mentioned for the Soviet Union. In order to prevent the author of *Doctor Zhivago* from being the one who is eventually chosen, any number of Soviet institutions begin firing messages and orders back and forth, some of which are stamped "secret," and others "top secret." Besides the indefatigable Surkov and Polikarpov, others who enter into the fray include the Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Ambassador to Sweden, the Minister of Culture, Ekaterina Furtseva, and the supreme ideologue, Suslov.

Given the current situation, I am extremely cautious about communicating with Pasternak and Olga by letter. In July, I send the author just a short note, along with a photograph that was taken of me in front of the Cathedral of Salamanca during my vacation. On September 29th, I also let him know that in response to a note from him, I have forwarded the correspondence that he sent me through the wife of a mutual friend, and have also fulfilled Olga's requests, particularly with regard to asking Feltrinelli for copies of his reviews of *Doctor Zhivago*.⁽⁶⁾ We will write nothing further for several months to come.

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On October 23rd, Pasternak is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and sends the following telegram of thanks to Anders Østerling, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy: "Infinitely grateful, moved, proud, amazed, overwhelmed."

That same day, from the heights of the CPSU, Suslov dictates a five-point memorandum outlining a plan of action. First: make it known publicly that the awarding of the Nobel Prize to *Doctor Zhivago*, which is a calumnious and counter-revolutionary novel, is a maneuver on the part of international reactionaries to denigrate the Soviet Union, and to fan the flames of the Cold War. Second: through Konstantin Fedin [who will soon succeed Surkov as head of the Writers' Union], put pressure on Pasternak to retract his acceptance of the prize, and to announce as much to the press. Third: publish the letter dated September, 1956 (the thirty-five pages signed by the editorial staff of *Novy Mir*) in the journals *Novy Mir* and *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. Fourth: publish a special article in *Pravda* with a highly critical review of the novel, and explain the reasons behind the hostile campaign being waged by the bourgeois press with reference to Pasternak's having been awarded the prize. Fifth: organize and publicize a concerted lobbying effort on the part of the most famous Soviet writers to let the world know that they believe that the award is being used to inflame the Cold War.(7)

No sooner said than done.

On October 25th, Polikarpov sends a memorandum to Suslov to inform him that Fedin has had an hour-long conversation with Pasternak, who initially refused to make any public statements about the prize, and then said that he needed several hours to ponder his decision. He adds that Fedin feels that it is necessary to resort to "harsh measures" against Pasternak if he does not change his attitude. The memo also contains a postscript: "Fedin just called to let me know that Pasternak did not show up at the appointed time to resume their conversation. This can only mean that Pasternak will not declare publicly that he has renounced the prize."(8) On the same

day, the Executive Committee of the Writers' Union issues an official communique asserting that the Nobel Prize, which "has not been accepted," is an act of hostility toward the USSR.(9)

On October 26th, the Soviet Consulate in Stockholm receives two orders based on a resolution passed by the Presidium: forward a note to the Swedish Academy protesting the awarding of the Nobel Prize to a defamatory work that is totally devoid of any artistic value; deny visas to newspaper correspondents and other individuals whose intention it is to travel to the USSR for purposes related to the prize.(10)

On October 28th, the Executive Committee of the Writers' Union expels Pasternak from the Union, stripping him of the title of "Soviet writer," and convenes the plenary assembly of Muscovite authors for a kind of "Universal Justice" in reverse.(11)

On October 29th, Vladimir Semichastny, the head of Komsomol (Soviet Communist Youth), and future head of the KGB, harangues the Central Committee of his organization with these simple but powerful words: "Pasternak is worse than a pig, because pigs at least do not foul their own troughs; therefore, his status as an internal emigrant must be changed to that of a true emigrant, and the government will not oppose it."(12)

On October 27th, which is the last day that he can call himself a "Soviet writer," Pasternak forwards a letter to the Executive Committee of the Writers' Union, stating that he does not consider himself a "parasite of literature," and that he is willing to ask the Swedish Academy to allocate his prize money to the World Peace Council. "Comrades, I am prepared for anything," he concludes, "but I do not blame you for this. Circumstances may force you to punish me by sending me far away, and then rehabilitating me, under pressure from the usual sources, when it will already be too late. But in the past, so many of these things have happened! Do not be hasty,

I beg you. This will not give you greater glory or happiness.”(13)

This appeal on the author’s part will have no effect whatsoever.

The following morning, Pasternak arrives at Olga’s little cottage in Peredelkino immediately after her return from Moscow with her son Mitya. In the depths of despair, he says to her in a trembling voice: “I cannot stand this business anymore. I think it’s time to leave this life, it’s too much. There’s no way now for you to get out of it all. If you think we must stay together, then I’ll write a letter, and we’ll just sit here this evening, the two of us – and that’s how they’ll find us. You once said that eleven tablets of Nembutal is a fatal dose – well, I have twenty-two here. Let’s do it...It will cost them very dearly...It will be a slap in the face...”(14)

Olga, by now completely distraught, manages to see Fedin personally at four o’clock that afternoon. After telling him what has just happened, she promises that she will get Pasternak to sign “whatever letter” they want him to if they will just help her to save him. Fedin immediately informs Polikarpov of the encounter, making sure that he will not eventually be accused of naivete by expressing his own cynical opinion that Olga’s hysterical behavior may simply have been an act.(15) In the end, this appeal on Olga’s part will have no effect either.

On October 29th, Pasternak, barely recovered from the crisis of the previous day, makes the most important gesture demanded of him by the authorities, even if motivated by factors that are entirely different from those that Polikarpov and Surkov will allege. “I must retract my acceptance of the prize that has been awarded to me,” he writes in a second telegram to Østerling, “in consideration of the meaning that has been attributed to it by the society to which I belong. Do not be offended by my voluntary refusal.”(16)

Even this ultimate sacrifice on the author’s part will have no effect. In fact, rather than

abating, the campaign of persecution now becomes so vehement as to be almost incredible.

When the plenary assembly of Muscovite authors is reconvened on October 31st, it will not be easy to avoid attending without a valid excuse. In response to a telephone call requesting his presence, Ilya Ehrenburg pretends to be someone else, and indicates that the writer has left on a long trip.(17) Few are those who dare to cite health problems, or commitments that they cannot break.

In a brief opening speech to set the tone of the session, Sergei Smirnov, a close collaborator of Surkov, will therefore be addressing a full house. “A group of Muscovite writers who were appalled by Pasternak’s conduct,” thunders Smirnov, “wrote a letter that was meant to be published by the press...but then this thought occurred to me: why was the letter signed only by a group of Moscow authors? Perhaps the Muscovite organization as a whole does not wish to express its opinion with regard to what has happened in our midst?...We of the Muscovite organization cannot remain indifferent when faced with this grave act of betrayal...There are only two sides to the barricade...In the word ‘apolitical,’ the prefix ‘a’ is often changed to the prefix ‘anti.’ Certain friends of Pasternak who in one way or another choose to defend the thesis of pure art should think about this...Those who idolized Pasternak should have the courage and conscience to stand up and be counted, and to go to the podium and say, ‘I am one of those who idolized Pasternak and put him on a pedestal’ ...I am not very concerned about the ultimate fate of Pasternak in this whole affair. Once the Pasternak chapter had been closed, I felt an immediate solidarity with the words pronounced by comrade Semichastny...Perhaps the words were a little crude, including the comparison with a pig, but in substance, this is exactly what has happened. In fact, for forty years, our hidden enemy has lived and eaten among us, full of hatred and

viciousness...I think that it is preferable that he actually align himself with the anti-Soviet camp and continue to receive awards. The fact of the matter is that we have had our share of traitors, and of dogs that have barked at us.”(18)

The scramble to survive leads to a total stampede. Out of opportunism, fear, or even feelings of inferiority, those who take the podium try to outdo each other in hurling the most shameful accusations and insults at Pasternak, despite the fact that most of them have never read a single line of *Doctor Zhivago*. The following are but a few examples: “He is a literary nonentity.” “I had the impression that he was spitting on me.” “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” “He has won the Nobel Prize of anti-Communism.” “Nobel would turn over in his grave.” “The weeds must be pulled out.” “He’ll be useful to them over there as long as he remains here, and then they’ll discard him as they would a squeezed lemon.” “Pasternak is the Vlasov of literature, and General Vlasov was condemned to death by firing squad.”(19)

With the unanimous approval of the membership, the Assembly will then officially request that the government deprive Pasternak of his Soviet citizenship.

I have no way of knowing if the punishment of exile, which is relatively mild when compared with the alternatives, and which would be interpreted almost everywhere as an act of clemency on the part of the authorities, was anything more than a propaganda ploy. In fact, the USSR has not exiled its dissidents for many years, preferring to punish them instead by sending them to prison or a lager, not to mention the Stalinist era, when death by firing squad was so much in vogue. For that matter, in Suslov’s own directives, which called for a collective lobbying effort involving the most famous Soviet writers in order to denounce Pasternak’s prize as a means of inflaming the Cold War, nowhere does he ask that the author be expelled from the

Soviet Union.

Whatever the case may be, it is exile that Pasternak fears the most, not only because it would tear him from the Russian soil, which he feels intimately tied to both as a man and an artist, but above all, because it would lead to his being permanently separated from Olga, Irochka and Mitya. There is no way that these three individuals, whom he loves so dearly, would ever be able to join him, inasmuch as they would be held hostage in order to control his conduct while in exile. Pasternak consequently writes the following letter to Khrushchev on October 31st:

“My esteemed Nikita Sergeevich,

I am appealing to you personally, and to the CC of the CPSU and the Soviet Government.

I have learned from Semichastny’s report that the Government would not be opposed in any way to my leaving the USSR.

For me this is impossible. I am tied to Russia by my birth, my life, my work.

I cannot conceive of my destiny separate and apart from it. Whatever my errors and misjudgments have been, I would never have been able to imagine finding myself at the center of the political campaign that has been waged in the West in my name.

Having realized this, I have informed the Swedish Academy of my voluntary refusal of the Nobel Prize.

Leaving the confines of my Russia would equal death for me, and I am therefore asking that you not take this measure in my regard.

With my hand over my heart, I swear to you that I have done something for Soviet literature, and that I can still be useful to it.

B. Pasternak”(20)

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In the end, although Pasternak is not subjected to exile, after his expulsion from the Writers' Union, he loses his job as a translator of the classic poets, which is his only source of income. He will also have to leave his rented dacha in Peredelkino, which is now under constant surveillance by various agents of the secret police, who bar all strangers from entering the premises.

As the days go by, however, word begins to spread that in the name of a childhood friendship, Zinaida Pasternak, who comes from a wealthy family, has gone to see Nina Khrushchev, whose father was a humble schoolmaster, to ask her to persuade her husband to allow Pasternak to remain at Peredelkino. After welcoming her with open arms, Nina promises her that she will speak to him that very evening.(21)

According to Nina's own memoirs, this was only idle gossip. In any case, since the eviction was overturned, and only a solitary "gardener" was left to guard the property, we can assume that Khrushchev did intervene in the matter. Later on in the text, I will explain his reasons for doing so.

Pasternak's right to health care, through Litfond, the benefit program for members of the Writers' Union, is not taken away from him either. However, the quality of care in the USSR is often affected by the lack of proper equipment and supplies. As we shall see, it is sometimes even corrupted by the fact that medical personnel are forced by the KGB to engage in disreputable activities that are not related to their profession.

Once the commotion has subsided, Pasternak's official status still remains that of an "internal emigrant." As such, he is kept under constant surveillance by the KGB, who follow his every move, intercept his correspondence, and even go so far as to plant a hidden microphone in Olga's cottage at Peredelkino,(22) while being subjected to repeated intimidation on the part of the Prosecutor General of the USSR and the usual guardians of culture. However, there is nothing to discover, nor is there much to forestall.

At times, the situation becomes completely absurd. On February 18, 1959, for example, the KGB sends a lengthy "top secret" memorandum to the CC of the CPSU. Signed by Shelepin, it is intended to expose every possible aspect of Pasternak's personal life. As such, it contains not only information concerning the expatriation of the author's father and sisters, which has obviously been taken from the same file that had made Beria suspicious, but also more recent facts with regard to Feltrinelli, d'Angelo, Countess de Proyart and the Nobel Prize. All of this is old hat, however, with the exception of one specific point: "Olga is not unwilling to emigrate together with Pasternak;" she wants to marry him, and is therefore insisting that he divorce Zinaida.(23)

Given the current circumstances, and the absolute impossibility of such a thing ever happening, it does not take much to imagine that the two main characters in this detective farce have been having their own fun with the poorly hidden microphone, in the grand tradition of those who live in the police states of this world. Among the higher-ups at Lubyanka, however, they still do not seem to get the point.

No less absurd is the interrogation of Pasternak conducted on March 14th by Roman Rudenko, Prosecutor General of the USSR, and former Soviet representative at the Nuremberg

Trials. The author, who is described in the interrogation report as “of Jewish nationality, married, with no party affiliation,” is accused of “particularly dangerous crimes against the state,” not only for having manifested anti-Soviet sentiments with *Doctor Zhivago*, and having conducted himself inappropriately during the succeeding events, but also for having given a poem entitled “Nobel Prize” to a correspondent from *the Daily Mail*, who published it about a month ago.

At the end of the interrogation, Rudenko admonishes Pasternak as follows: “If these acts, which have already been defined as criminal, should ever be repeated, you will be asked to account for them in prison.”(24) And before the eyes of the Prosecutor General, Pasternak’s face fades into that of Goehring or von Ribbentrop...

However, the author is most anxious about Olga’s increasingly dangerous position, which he mentions in various letters to friends in the West, as the following passage shows only too well: “God forbid, if they ever arrest Olga, I will send you a telegram that says that someone has come down with scarlet fever. If this should happen, all the bells must toll, because an attack against her is an attack against me.”(25) In other letters, he predicts that Olga will only be arrested after he is no longer alive.(26)

During this same period, as I will learn from Olga herself, Pasternak is suffering from the after-effects of a heart attack. He is also worried about his family’s well-being, given the fact that he is no longer able to earn a single ruble, nor can he draw from the “Judas’ gold” (as defined by the Soviet hierarchy) that he is due from *Doctor Zhivago*. Despite these serious concerns, he continues to pursue his literary activities, both in writing poetry, and gathering his thoughts about a drama set in old Russia entitled *The Blind Beauty*, which he will begin to work on in the summer.

In yet another act of extraordinary generosity, Pasternak also decides to distribute a part of his “Judas’ gold”(110 thousand dollars) among seventeen of his Western relatives and friends, including his sisters, myself, and even a poor fellow who once wrote him a nice letter of encouragement that he was particularly moved by. With this in mind, he writes to Feltrinelli on February 2nd,(27) and again on April 4th,(28) urging him to distribute the gifts, which have probably been delayed due to the publisher’s extended absence abroad.

Even before learning about this myself, I write to the author to tell him that through certain friends of mine who are totally reliable, I now have the means to send him several installment payments as part of the royalties being held by Feltrinelli. If he is in agreement with this plan, he should establish the exact amount I am to receive, which I will then deposit in a special account. I will also make sure to provide him with a financial update on a regular basis.(29)

The following is his response, dated April 6, 1959:

“Dear Sergio,

Thank you for your letter. We still think of you as our very good friend. Since the last time we saw each other, so many unexpected and important things have happened. Many of the speculations that I mentioned to you, although only vague, uncertain desires that were expressed without any knowledge of the legalities involved (with regard to literary translations, editions, etc.), have since been surpassed by reality, which has gone beyond our wildest dreams.

Everything has been exaggerated and complicated, not only in a negative sense, to tell the truth, but even more so in a positive way. Although the dangers they have most recently threatened me with are without any exaggeration truly mortal, they are more than compensated

by those immortal things that have been achieved in the meantime.

Thank you for your offer of help. For the moment, I am uncertain about what to do. They have proposed an official transfer of funds to me, but I do not know whether this is actually a hidden trap to ruin me even further (their desire to drown me is so great that I can see nothing but this desire in my regard; worse yet, it is always accompanied by the pretext that they would have prepared something good for me, but that they did not have time, that I again have spoiled everything, and that a reconciliation is once again impossible – just think what vile baseness!) As for their proposal to transfer funds officially, I still have not decided anything. In the case of an emergency, perhaps I can take advantage of your good will. In fact, you should explore this possibility immediately, without waiting until the last moment.

I cannot, however, give you my power of attorney with regard to my funds, because I gave it some time ago to Mme. de Proyart. For that matter, you do not need to go through such a procedure. You should contact her directly for advice. If she approves of your idea (and like you, she is my friend, like you she is very kind and thoughtful), she should set aside a fairly large sum (let us say – if my earlier requests and allotments have not reduced the remaining moneys to below this figure – let us say up to one hundred thousand dollars – 100,000). You should withdraw your funds from there, without having to account for them to me (I cannot correspond about this subject), and you should credit a certain amount to yourself, since I would not want your time and effort to go uncompensated.

I mentioned above the requests for money that I have already made to Mme. de Proyart, which have reduced the original remittance fund. Among these instructions, I have sent her a list of persons that I want to send gifts of money to. On this list, I have indicated that you are to be

given ten thousand dollars, just like my sisters; forgive me if it is so little. But that has no relationship with what you are proposing. For the purposes of the financial support that you wish to provide for me, there should be a completely different fund, which I have already talked about. Therefore, the ten thousand dollars is yours, even if you choose to argue with me, and decide that you wish to forget me. I have also asked that two thousand dollars be given to...[the name has been cancelled at the request of the recipient].

Mme. de Proyart's power of attorney came about all on its own, as a logical consequence of the developments that I told you about at the beginning of this letter. As I did with you (in the same friendly manner), I talked to her about my autobiography and many other things. She has translated it, and her translation has preceded the Italian edition. She is also very close to me spiritually, and I have been able to entrust her with the task of overseeing the literary and philosophical aspects of many different matters (a propos of which, the Milanese edition of the Russian text of the novel is filled with typographical errors; I am horrified by how many there are. Do send us two or three copies when you have the chance, however, as well as two or three copies of the Russian-American edition, which I have not seen at all). (At this point, I will not mention anything further about the foreign editions, not of the novel itself, but of others of my works in various languages. You could perhaps send me some packages of them by registered mail, because in that way they will be sure to arrive.) In any case, my giving my power of attorney to Mme. de Proyart (21, rue Fresnel, Paris XVI) was not intended to tie Mr. Feltrinelli's hands, nor was it meant to indicate a lack of confidence in you or him, or preferential treatment with respect to my sisters. It was meant to be separate and apart from these relationships. It has been a heavy burden for Mme. de Proyart, who is a writer, teacher, public

personality and mother of children. In fact, she does not have a moment to devote to herself or her own personal affairs.

The letter to Feltrinelli will pass through your hands. Please read it. I am also enclosing a note for Mme. de Proyart, with which you should contact her directly with regard to your plan, either by correspondence or in person. You yourself speak and write Russian magnificently well. Mme. de Proyart teaches the Russian language. I am telling you this just in case it is more difficult for you to express yourself in French or English. Please tell...about his two thousand dollars.

I shake your hand in friendship. Do not be angry with me if I do not seem to be very grateful or considerate.

Yours truly, B. Pasternak(30)

The enclosure, which is written in French, reads as follows: "I hereby authorize Mr. Sergio d'Angelo to withdraw one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from my royalties for those intents and purposes that he shall make known to Mme. Jacqueline de Proyart de Baillescourt and Mr. Giangiacomo Feltrinelli in their capacity as my agents. B. Pasternak."(31)

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When I first read the letter, I find it curious that Pasternak would tell me that he cannot grant me his power of attorney when I had made it absolutely clear in my letter that I was talking about establishing a remittance fund ("vklad") in an amount to be determined by him. With regard to Mme. de Proyart, whom he praises over and over again in terms of her professionalism

and humanity, I also find it curious that the author almost seems to feel the need to justify himself for having given her a responsibility that has nothing to do with my own areas of expertise.

Then I realize that Pasternak, who is counting on the fact that Feltrinelli will also read the letter, has used this correspondence as an indirect (and therefore, more convincing) means of telling him that he did not grant Mme. de Proyart his power of attorney to offend or control him, but rather to relieve him of some of his duties by providing him with a highly qualified collaborator. As far as his suspicions regarding the proposal to officially claim his royalties are concerned, the following series of events will prove that he was entirely correct.

At the end of March, 1959, Inyurkollegya, the Judicial College for Foreign Affairs, informs Pasternak that the Soviet Consulate in Oslo has offered to withdraw those of his royalties from the novel that are deposited in a Norwegian bank. The College also tells the author that they themselves can withdraw other funds accredited to a Swiss bank account through a special power of attorney.

Before replying to my own proposal, Pasternak sends a letter on April 1st to Polikarpov, reporting what he has just been told, and asking him for his opinion: “You know that as of this moment, I have not received one single penny of what is owed to me in royalties from the foreign editions of my novel, nor have I made any attempt to come into possession of this money. But now I believe that I can accept the official offer to claim the royalties without doing anything that is counter to the interests of the state. You also know that my books are not currently being

published in the Soviet Union, and that the contracts that were already signed have been suspended, so that I cannot count on any earnings from inside the country...I would like to transfer a part of this money to Litfond USSR to help elderly writers who are in need of financial assistance...Please let me know if for some reason you think it inadvisable for me to receive funds from abroad and transfer a part of them to Litfond, so that I can avoid making a faux pas that could have serious consequences.”(32)

There is no immediate response, and on April 6th, Pasternak requests that I make arrangements to send him funds on an informal basis “without waiting until the last moment.”

Ten days later, on April 16th, Polikarpov forwards the following memorandum to the Culture Section of the CC: “Pasternak has asked me for my advice...According to his letter, he would like to receive these moneys and give part of them to Litfond to help elderly writers who are in need of financial assistance...In my opinion, Pasternak must refuse to accept the money... I am therefore requesting authorization to express this point of view to him.”(33)

As is evident from a note attached to the same document, the requested authorization arrives in record time, signed by E. Furtseva, the Minister of Culture. Now that Polikarpov has his back covered, he speaks directly with Pasternak and Olga. As far as he is concerned, he tells them, given the scandal provoked by *Doctor Zhivago*, it would not be a good idea for them to receive the money through official channels. Then he suddenly blurts out that perhaps it would be better if they had it sent to them “in a sack.”(34)

This song and dance finally ends on April 24th, when Pasternak sends a short note to the Soviet Agency for the Protection of Copyrights: “I hereby refuse to utilize the royalties from the edition of the novel *Doctor Zhivago* that have been deposited in my name in banks in Norway

and Switzerland, as I was informed of by Inyurkollegya.”(35)

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As soon as I have the chance, which is toward the end of April, I send Pasternak another letter, which can be summarized as follows: Thank you so much for telling me about your gift; I have no problem with the person you have chosen as your proxy; I have already gotten in touch with her, and I plan to meet with her in Paris in the near future; I do not want any personal compensation for managing the remittance fund; I intend to tell Mme. de Proyart as much; from what I hear, an illegal Russian edition of *Doctor Zhivago*, filled with printing errors, was published first in The Hague, in the name of Feltrinelli, who obtained an injunction against it, and then in Milan, in an edition printed from the Dutch text; when I was in Milan, I called to ask them to send me several copies of this last edition, but they told me that they are out of them at the moment; I will send you two or three copies of the American-Russian edition (The University of Michigan Press) as soon as I am able to get them.(36)

When I write this letter, I can have no way of knowing that Boris’s son, Yevgeny, and his wife, Elena, will one day credit me with having corrected the printers’ galleys for the American edition as part of their commentary on the author’s correspondence with Feltrinelli.(37) I am not the one who actually proofread them, which may be the reason why the edition turned out so well.

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Toward the end of May, I make a brief trip to meet with Mme. de Proyart in Paris. When I arrive at her magnificent apartment overlooking the Seine, she and her lawyer husband welcome me most warmly, telling me that they are pleasantly surprised to see that I am not an elderly gentleman, as they expected. We talk at length about our experiences in the USSR, and we exchange information and opinions on Pasternak's various trials and tribulations. I have no trouble at all convincing them of my plan, which they both agree to without reservation. They then inform me, however, that the amount designated by the author for the remittance fund can only be allocated to me after they have agreed on the status of their professional relationship with Feltrinelli, who is still holding Pasternak's royalties in trust. In any case, the publisher has promised that he will soon make a visit to Paris to discuss the issue with them personally. We ourselves should therefore stay in touch.

As I am about to take my leave, M. de Proyart asks me if I would like to keep him company on his way to the Île de la Cité for a court appearance. I agree to do so, and just before we arrive at the bridge we are supposed to cross, we get stuck in a traffic jam, which leaves us little hope of finding a parking space in the immediate area. This gives the attorney a chance to go on for another quarter of an hour, citing one example after another to illustrate the complexities involved in negotiations with Feltrinelli. Despite his charming Parisian manner, it is more than obvious that he himself does not care for the gentleman.

A short while after my return to Rome, the French couple inform me that Feltrinelli has cancelled his scheduled trip to Paris, claiming urgent commitments elsewhere, and has asked them to come to Milan in a couple of weeks. Consequently, it would be a good idea for us to see each other there, immediately following their meeting with the publisher, so that we can

clarify our own situation. On the appointed day, when I show up at the Palace Hotel where they are staying, they tell me with obvious disappointment the latest piece of news. Just before their arrival, the publisher left a message for them saying that he had to leave town unexpectedly. “Il est farfelu” (“he’s crazy”), says the attorney, touching his forehead with his index finger.

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In July, I finally receive the author’s gift of money through Feltrinelli.

As far as the current relationship between the publisher and the author’s proxy is concerned, Pasternak sends me a letter several weeks later in which he describes a most upsetting state of affairs. Dated July 21st, it is addressed to H el ene Peltier Zamoiska, a professor of literature at the University of Toulouse, and a friend of his and Mme. de Proyard’s. There is also a note enclosed for me, asking me to read it before forwarding it to the recipient. The pertinent passages are as follows:

“It is a terrible misfortune for me that F. and J. P. have not been able to find a common language...F., I tend to think, wants me to sign several new contracts. I am completely in favor of all his projects. I would never deny him anything. But signing is the one graphic gesture that I do not have the right to make...Olga is alarmed 1) about the ambiguity of my situation here, how precariousness it is, and how constantly it is being reinforced and perpetually threatened; 2) about the terror she feels at the possibility that there might be any legal proceedings involving F. and J., which would only serve to feed the publicity hounds “overseas,” and end up destroying me once and for all, which is exactly what they are trying to do...Her proposal: Jacqueline should find a means of establishing a permanent understanding with F....If such a friendly relationship is simply not possible, she should relieve herself of the duties that I assigned to her, and turn over

her power of attorney to F. as our (hers and mine) one and only agent...It is up to J. to decide... May she forgive me...I admire and adore her...But as each day goes by, it becomes more and more difficult for me to keep track of things from so far away, to sort them out from this terrible, insurmountable distance...An entire organization is against me, idiotic but ironclad; I am under constant surveillance, and with every move I make, there are obstacles put in my path... Olga has asked me to raise this question. She is fully aware of how dangerous any type of dispute would be for me, particularly a legal one, with all the unpleasant rumors that would accompany it in the press. She knows this only too well; she has learned it through great pain and personal suffering. If the only way to live (modus vivendi) with F. is war, then we must surrender.”(38)

After reading this letter, I realize that there is no way to predict how long the stalemate will last, or when the remittance fund will actually be placed at my disposal. Therefore, in order to help Pasternak as soon as possible, I decide to draw from the ten thousand dollars that I received as a gift to send him two separate payments, the first in October, 1959, and the second in February, 1960. For the second of these installments, the author signs a receipt on February 10th in the amount of forty-four thousand rubles, which is something that I would never have dreamed of asking him to do. However, I will publish this receipt after his death to give the coup de grace to the Soviet attempt to make the world believe that Olga had organized a

“currency smuggling operation” for her own personal gain without the author’s knowledge.(39)

In the meantime, Feltrinelli has let Pasternak and Olga know that he has authorized a

German journalist by the name of Heinz Schewe to act as his personal agent in Moscow. Schewe, who has recently arrived in the city to work as a correspondent for the Hamburg newspaper, *Die Welt*, has been asked by Feltrinelli to keep up the pressure on Pasternak until he agrees to sign a new contract regarding the rights to *Doctor Zhivago*, a draft of which was sent to the author on November 13th. When Pasternak continues to insist on the fact that doing so would only serve to give his persecutors more ammunition, Feltrinelli suggests that all they have to do is to backdate the contract to 1956. However, it does not take a legal expert to understand, with one glance at the contract (a copy of which Pasternak immediately forwards to Mme. de Proyart), that the publisher's new powers are defined so broadly as to make it incompatible with de Proyart's power of attorney. If the contract were actually backdated, these same powers would invalidate all prior negotiations conducted by her. As a consequence, nothing will be decided for the time being.(40)

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"Perhaps I have recently put too much stress on my heart," Pasternak tells me in his letter of November 19th. "I can feel it from time to time. All I ask is that it not interfere with my work, or force me to stop working entirely. If I can only avoid this danger, everything will be fine."(41)

In a letter written to me at the same time, on November 19th, Olga also makes it clear that the author's physical condition has taken a turn for the worse: "The health of the 'classic' [as they often call him in Potapovsky Lane] is not very good. He is suffering from heart trouble. If you can, please send me some heart medicine, but make sure that it is not too strong. His eyes are also bothering him. There is a brand of eye drops here called 'Intermidina,' but it is impossible to get it. Perhaps you have it there? Or maybe some other kind of eye drops."(42)

Pasternak's physical problems are also making it more and more difficult for him to stay involved in any number of controversial issues concerning the novel, including Russian language editions, and film, television and radio rights. In his letter of January 20, 1960, he therefore decides to surrender to Feltrinelli at long last: "My wishes coincide with yours, and I now believe that your official duties should be entirely separate from hers, and that you should be given total authority to act on my behalf; I myself will write to Mme. de Proyart to let her know."(43)

Very soon thereafter, when Mme. de Proyart releases her power of attorney, her only request of Pasternak (which he honors) is that he acknowledge that she has adequately fulfilled her responsibilities as his literary agent. In choosing not to challenge the author's difficult decision, she shows her understanding of the fact that Pasternak's present physical condition, and his precarious situation, must take precedence over any other considerations. However, this magnanimous gesture will be somewhat overshadowed many years later, when she refuses to admit that she was actually outdone by Feltrinelli, and insists that she gave up her power of attorney so as not to be implicated in the "adventurous and unrealistic" plot that I myself had organized "to allow Pasternak to receive an enormous sum of contraband money."(44)

Even if this version of events were true, it would still need to be explained (apart from our conversations in Paris and Milan, and correspondence both before and after) why Mme. de Proyart did not let the author know that she was against any such idea. There is no evidence whatsoever to indicate that she did so, despite the fact that Pasternak had asked me in no uncertain terms to get the opinion of his proxy, indicating that he would go ahead with the plan only "if she approves of the initiative," as he stated in his letter of April 6, 1959, which I showed her the first time we met.

As for the almost three-year standoff that occurred between the publisher and Mme. de Proyart, I myself had neither the possibility nor the desire to get involved. In fact, as I had little knowledge of what was actually taking place, I chose not to sympathize with one side or the other. I only had to wait for a considerable length of time before receiving the sum of money that Pasternak had specified for the establishment of the remittance fund.

My wait will finally be over on March 10, 1960, when Feltrinelli credits me 100 thousand dollars on one of the accounts (EFEMI, Handels Anstalt, Schaan, Liechtenstein) where he has deposited, at least in part, the royalties from other publishers of *Doctor Zhivago*. I immediately send Pasternak a small sum of money while I begin making plans to forward him a more substantial amount.

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In the meantime, the author's health is failing. He is suffering terrible pains in his chest and shoulder, and is no longer able to work. On April 23rd, he gives Olga the unfinished manuscript of *The Blind Beauty*, telling her that the only thing he can be concerned with at the moment is his illness. This is the last time that the two of them will ever see each other.(45) After another heart attack, he is confined to his dacha at Peredelkino, where he is forced to spend most of the time in bed, while she maintains the promise that she made never to set foot in the house.

Pasternak does, however, write her little notes every day, until the very days last of his life.(46) He also sends her long letters, filled with affection, which she will publish many years later, if only in part, as some of them have been confiscated by the police.(47) She receives this mail at the front gate, when she stops by to ask about his condition.

In mid-May, Olga goes to Moscow to consult with Professor Dolgopolosk, a leading cardiologist, and arranges for him to visit Peredelkino. After examining Pasternak, he assures her in the most encouraging of tones at the garden gate that he “had to all intents and purposes got over the heart attack.”(48)

Pasternak seems to be feeling somewhat better, but this condition will not last for very long. On May 28th, he suffers an acute respiratory attack, and after a portable x-ray machine is brought in to take a picture of his chest, he is diagnosed with an advanced lung tumor that has metastasized to the abdomen. By May 30th, the author is in his death throes. He is given a blood transfusion, which proves to be useless. That evening, just after eleven o’clock, he hemorrhages from the mouth, and several minutes later he dies. He had turned seventy on February 10th.

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The funeral takes place on June 2nd, at four o’clock in the afternoon. In the midst of the large crowd that has gathered, there are the inevitable not-so-secret KGB agents, whose various activities, including listening in on conversations and taking photographs, manage to provoke a certain amount of righteous indignation. According to the most conservative estimates, there are hundreds of people in attendance. According to Arkadi Gaev, a famous essayist who will later be sent into exile, the actual number is closer to three thousand.(49)

Apart from relatives and close friends, most of the crowd is made up of young people, including students and workers. There are also many writers, although others of their colleagues, who are conspicuous by their absence, have chosen to stay away out of hostility or sheer cowardice. Finally, there are significant numbers of foreign correspondents from newspapers and press agencies, the majority of whom are the same ones that have been traveling back and forth

between Moscow and Peredelkino for the past several weeks to bring themselves up to date on the condition of the famous patient.

Among those present are Vero Roberti (*Il Corriere della Sera*), Bob Elfick (Reuters), Preston Grover (The Associated Press), and Tom Lambert (*The New York Herald Tribune*), who had left together for Pedelkino two evenings before, when Pasternak was dying. As Roberti would later tell me, they never arrived at their destination, because Elfick, who was driving, had accidentally hit a drunken army colonel who had appeared out of nowhere on the roadway.

Of all the correspondents who are at the funeral, the busiest is the German Heinz Schewe, Feltrinelli's "ambassador" in Potapovsky Lane, where his presence is so assiduous that they have jokingly nicknamed him "Shavochka" ("little pug"). As Olga recounts in her memoirs, "...Heinz Schewe managed to stick with me all the time. Heinz extricated me from the crowd, and took me across a field of potatoes directly to the grave, which had been dug on a hillock under three pines trees – Boris Leonidovich had admired them from his window for many years. In the middle of the field we were waylaid by two journalists, one French and the other Italian. Heinz squeezed my elbow and told me not to speak to them. 'She is so upset that you should be ashamed to ask questions,' he said to them in his broken Russian."(50)

The eulogy is delivered by the essayist and philosopher Valentin Asmus, who describes Pasternak as a "genial writer, poet and translator, whose name will live on for as long as the Russian language and literature exist on this earth." Asmus does not speak at great length, however, since "he was a very reserved man, and he did not like people to say too much about him." The burial service is concluded just before a violent thunder storm breaks out, which finally disperses the enormous crowd who have come to honor Pasternak in defiance of his

persecutors.

Not a single obituary appears in the Soviet press. The only item that is published is a brief statement issued by Litfond, which simply announces the author's death. The powers that be cannot turn their backs, however, on what has just happened at Peredelkino. On June 4th, the CC Culture Section sends a report to the high-ranking Soviet officials, which first plays down the event ("the attempts to exploit Pasternak's funeral in order to create a scandal and promote unsound ideas did not succeed"), and then ends with an eloquent suggestion: "We need to remind the Writers' Union and the Ministry of Culture about the necessity of intensifying their efforts to educate students and young people engaged in creative work, some of whom (a negligible quantity), contaminated by morbid, rebellious sentiments, want to portray Pasternak as a great artist who was misunderstood by his own generation."(51)

Notes

1. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 312
2. *Novye Knigy*, number 31 (Moscow: 1956), and *Sovietskiye Knigy*, number 87 (Moscow: 1956).
3. These efforts are referred to in E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 312-313.
4. Letter from Feltrinelli to Pasternak dated 5 September 1958, in E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 315.
5. *Contemporaneo*, number 3 (Rome: 18 January 1958).
6. E. Pasternak and Ye. Pasternak, op. cit., 314.
7. RGANI, F. 3, Op. 12, D. 440, L. 178-179 (copy).
8. Ibid., F.5.Op. 36. D, 61. L. 64,65 (original).
9. TASS (Moscow: 25 October 1958).
10. RGANI, F.3. Op.14. D.251. L.23. (original) .
11. TASS, 28 October 1958.
12. *Komsomòlskaia Pravda*, 30 October 1958.
13. AP RF, F. 3, Op. 34, D. 269, L. 58-59 (copy).
14. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 233.
15. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 61, L. 44-45.
16. E.B. Pasternàk, *Materiali dlià biogràfii*, Moscow 1989, 647-650.
17. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 259.
18. *Feniks 66* (Milan: 1968).
19. In O. Ivinskaya cit., 253-258, these speeches are quoted more extensively .
20. *Pravda* (Moscow: 2 November 1958).
21. Julian Dubavin, *La Tribune de Genève*, February 13-14 1960, and Yuri Krotkov,

Contract Social cit.

22. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 233.
23. AP RF, F. 3, Op. 34, D. 269, L. 96-101.
24. AP RF, F. 3, Op. 34, D. 269, L. 269.
25. *Observer*, 22 January 1961.
26. Ronald Hingley, *Sunday Times*, 22 January 1961.
27. Elena Pasternak and Yevgeny Pasternak, "Perepiska s Feltrinelli" (Correspondence between Pasternak and Feltrinelli), in *Kontinent*, number 108 (Paris-Moscow: January-March 2001), 233-235.
28. *Ibid.*, 242-244.
29. The draft of the letter has been kept by this author.
30. *Paris-Jour*, 7 May 1961, and *Vita*, 11 May 1961 (the *Vita* article also includes a photocopy of the original Russian).
31. *Paris-Jour*, 7 May 1961, and *Vita*, 11 May 1961 (the *Vita* article also includes a photocopy of the original French).
32. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 93, L. 23.
33. RGANI., F. 5, Op. 36, D. 93, L. 21-22.
34. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 345.
35. RGANI. F.5. Op.36. D.93. L.24. (certified copy).
36. The draft of the letter has been kept by this author.
37. *Kontinent* n. 108 cit., 247.
38. Jacqueline de Proyart, *Boris Pasternak: Lettres à mes amies françaises, 1956-60* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994).
39. A photocopy of the receipt is included in *Vita*, 18 May 1961.

40. *Kontinent* n. 108 cit., 259-263.
41. The unpublished letter is in this author's possession. The quoted lines appeared in the article "Der Fall Pasternak – Zehn Jahre danach," in *Osteuropa* (Munich: 1968).
42. Photocopy of letter in *Vita* cit.
43. *Kontinent* n. 108 cit, 265.
44. Jacqueline de Proyart, op. cit., 48-49.
45. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 319.
46. Edward Crankshaw, *The Observer*, London 1 October 1961.
47. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., Appendix A, 371 et seq.
48. *Ibid.*, 320-321.
49. Arkadi Gaev, "B.L. Pasternak i ego roman," in *Sbornik statei posveshennykh tvorchstvu B.L. Pasternaka* (Munich: Institut zur Erforschung der UdSSR, 1962).
50. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 330.
51. *RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 119, L. 63-64.*

Part Three

The Regime's Attempt at "Rehabilitation" Ends in Failure

About a month after the author's death, Feltrinelli asks me to transfer the remittance fund to him, claiming that he can manage it better than I can. I myself am not convinced of this, and I tell him so in no uncertain terms. He does not know any of the details of how I have been running the operation, which I have kept from him for security reasons (just as I have kept them from everyone else who is not directly involved). He has no idea of when the money was sent, the country where it was exchanged, the identity of my couriers, or the methods that were used for delivery. All he knows is that the "packages" arrived at their destination without the slightest hitch. Assuming that he really does want to send funds, he could not possibly handle the situation more efficiently.

In any event, I tell him that even though I am now technically free and clear of further obligations in this matter, I consider it my moral obligation to respect Pasternak's obvious wishes, and let Olga herself decide what should be done with the moneys. I am therefore planning to visit her in Moscow before the end of the summer, and I will do whatever she wants me to. Feltrinelli is obviously annoyed, but he does not insist.

On May 15th, the publisher had written the following note to Pasternak: "As per the instructions you gave me in the letter I received through d'Angelo, I have transferred the sum of 100,000 dollars from the royalties held in trust for you to our friend Sergio d'Angelo, and I hope that you have already received it...Please let me know as soon as possible, through H. Schewe. It will make me happy to know that all went well, and that there is no reason to be concerned."

It would seem from this note that he wanted the entire amount of money to be delivered within the space of just two months.

In a letter to Olga dated July 8th (which I will refer to later on), Feltrinelli then attempts to exert his own influence over her before I myself can see her in Moscow. In fact, in a postscript, he says the following: “D’Angelo still has a lot of things here. My own opinion is that his methods are too dangerous. I would suggest that you write me a letter requesting that he return whatever is left to me. I will send it to you whenever and however you decide.”(1)

Having no knowledge of this correspondence, in July I make the necessary arrangements to send what will be the final payment that I am able to make. It will also be the largest, even if the fund is far from depleted. Giulietta and I then accompany another couple from Rome to West Berlin in a Volkswagen Bug that has been acquired for the purposes of this trip. From there, the two of them proceed on their own to Moscow via Warsaw. We ourselves fly directly back to Rome. Two or three weeks later, we receive a phone call from Slovenia, which is where the wife was raised. During an otherwise casual conversation, they let us know that the set of crystal glasses, which they had made sure to handle with the greatest of care, was delivered safe and sound to the newlyweds on August 1st.

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In the vicinity of Rome’s Termini Station, there is a travel agency that is specialized in organizing tours and making individual arrangements for trips to the Iron Curtain countries. When Giulietta and I make our way to their office at the end of August to book a brief stay in Moscow, they assure us that due to their connections, Soviet visas are issued without having to go through a lot of unnecessary red tape. In fact, they should have everything ready for us within half an hour, signed and sealed. After handing over our passports, we settle the account for the round-trip airline tickets, as well as the hotel room and meals, which are required to be paid in

advance.

On September 3rd, we spend the night in Copenhagen, and the next morning, we depart for Moscow. When we arrive at Sheremetovo Airport (which we are seeing for the first time, and which looks very much like Vnukovo), we manage to get through customs without having to open up our suitcases, which in any case are absolutely “clean.”

Moscow greets us with a sky full of rain. Outside the city limits, we notice any number of large new buildings, all of them perfectly uniform and aligned. Once inside the Garden Ring, however, where little if anything has changed, we are moved to see the familiar and somewhat shabby sight of the old city, which both of us have come to know so well, and which brings back so many memories. After checking in at the Hotel Ukraine, the Stalinist skyscraper where we will be staying for the next six days, we go off on our own. We walk over to the apartment house where we lived for so long, across from Kiev Station, and then we buy a “knizhka,” or book of ten tickets, at the entrance to the nearest subway station. We take a trip on the recently extended north-south lines, all the while looking out at the new, and less pretentious stations, and finally get off at one of them that for some reason or other they decided to build in the center of a bridge over the Moscow River. At the end of our nostalgic journey, we travel first by bus and then by taxi, and between one ride and the next, we make a series of calls, at the appropriate times, from the public telephone booths (rather than ever calling the radio station) to try and get in touch with old friends who will surely want to see us again.

At around seven o'clock in the evening, I dial Olga's number. However, I have trouble getting through to her, and while I am dialing her number again, I have to fight off some drunk who is pounding his fists on the glass. When a strange female voice finally answers the phone,

and I ask if I can speak with Olga, I am told that she is not at home. I then ask at what time she is expected back, only to be told that no one knows.

Two hours later, to make things a little less complicated, we find our familiar way to Potapovsky Lane. We open the gate of the little green fence, and enter the courtyard of building 9/11. We then walk up the steps of stairway 1, which is narrow, dimly lit, and completely deserted, until we reach the fifth floor, where we knock at apartment 18. The name Kostko is still written on door, just as it was three years ago, in memory of Olga's stepfather.

The door is opened by someone who looks as if she might be the cleaning woman. Perhaps she was even the one who answered the phone when I called. "There's no one at home right now," she says. "Olga's out of town, and Irina and Dmitri will be back tomorrow." Since we both know that Olga goes out to her little cottage in Peredelkino on a regular basis, and often stays there for several days in a row, we are not surprised by what we have just been told.

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The following morning, September 5th, we wander through various shops, spending extra time at the Petrovksy Passazh, where Giulietta is curious to have a look at the latest Soviet fashions, and see how much they cost. Then we have lunch with Ignacio, who appears to be more isolated than ever, and whose hair is even grayer than before. Our surprise visit does manage to lift his spirits, however, which makes both of us very happy.

In the afternoon, I call back Olga's number, and this time Irochka answers the phone. I tell her how delighted I am to hear her voice again, and I let her know that Giulietta and I have been in Moscow since yesterday. When might it be possible to visit the family? We cannot wait to see all three of them. However, as I will come to find out many years later, I am not speaking

to the real Irochka. Thanks to a trick on the part of the KGB, I am actually speaking to someone who is imitating her voice.(2)

“Mom’s on vacation in the south,” she replies, “and she won’t be back until the end of the month.” I do not even try to hide from her how surprised and disappointed I am by the lack of enthusiasm in her voice. “Well, maybe we could get together with just you and Mitya,” I then suggest. “This afternoon would be fine with us.”

“I’m sorry, but I’m already busy. If you don’t mind, could you call back later?” When I call her again at four o’clock, she tells me that we can come over to see them at six. But when we show up at Potapovsky Lane at the appointed time, Irochka herself is not there to greet us. Instead, we find Mitya, who has grown a lot since I last saw him. He takes us into the little living room, every detail of which I remember so well – the sofa bed, with its faded throw, the little desk, and the photographs of Pasternak on the walls.

We all sit down, and then I look at him questioningly. “Irochka’s really sorry,” he says, while blushing in embarrassment. “She had to leave rather suddenly. She had the chance to get a ride with friends who are driving to the south, and she wants to go and visit our mother...” Giulietta and I exchange a knowing glance. Mitya is not telling us the truth. Not only that, but judging from how nervous and uncomfortable he is, someone is obviously listening in on our conversation.

“I guess we were just unlucky,” I say. “But what are you doing here all by yourself? Are you studying? Why don’t you come and take a short walk with us?”

“I can’t. I’m waiting for a friend.”

“Well, we’ll be here in Moscow for a few more days. We’re staying at the Ukraine. If you

have any free time, come on over and see us.” And as we are leaving, I make sure to add, “If your mother should happen to call, tell her we send her our very best wishes. I know it’s a lot to ask, but wouldn’t it be wonderful if she could meet us here in the city? It would make us so happy to see her again.”

Once we have left the apartment, Giulietta and I come to the same conclusion: our presence in Moscow has not gone unnoticed. Someone, either at the airport or in the hotel, has realized that we are not the typical tourists, and the police have told the two women to avoid us like the plague. Perhaps they even suspect that I want to get my hands on some other unpublished work by Pasternak. At this point, we might as abandon the idea of seeing Olga and the children. It is obvious that Mitya was forced to come up with excuses.

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The following day, September 6th, I leave the hotel early to go and explore the bookshops in the MKhAT and Kuznetsky Most in search of several publications that I am interested in. I take the bus, where several passengers are reading the newspapers, with their violent charges against the West for engaging in espionage, which have been triggered by statements made by two American technicians who recently defected to the USSR. Above the headlines of one of the daily papers, there is a huge banner bearing the words, “Citizens, be on your guard!”

When I get back to the hotel, Giulietta informs me that Mitya called to tell us that his mother, who had learned about our arrival in Moscow, had just sent him a telegram authorizing him to keep notes on our messages.

“This is a trap,” I say immediately. How could Olga possibly have sent such a suspicious telegram? And why would Mitya have taken the initiative to make such a phone call? Even

children know that the telephones in the hotels are always tapped. Which means that the police are trying to find out what it is that we want from Olga, and they are using this fake telegram (we know only too well that forgeries are a daily occurrence here) to get us to go back to Potapovsky Lane in the hopes that this time they can discover what we are up to.

We work out a plan of action. Giulietta will return to Olga's by herself. She will tell Mitya that I could not accompany her because I had to see an old friend of mine, but that I will meet them both in half an hour in front of the Academy of Medicine. If the boy actually comes outside with her, we will be able to ask him to tell us the truth about what is going on.

At around four o'clock, we get out of a taxi on Chernyshevsky Street. The rain is still coming down, and the busses are splashing mud in every direction. I remind Giulietta that she has to be very insistent with Mitya, so that if there is a spy in the house, he will at least have a good excuse as to why he agreed to leave with her. While she turns the corner of Potapovsky Lane, I walk over to the place where we have arranged to meet, where I take shelter in a doorway. As it gets closer and closer to four-thirty, I keep popping my head out to see if Giulietta and Mitya have appeared at the end of the street, which is completely deserted at the moment.

The two of them finally arrive a few minutes late. While I am shaking hands with Mitya, I get the distinct impression that the boy is extremely worried about something. Then Giulietta tells me that the telegram really does exist. She saw it with her very own eyes. It has the date September 6th on it, along with the place it was sent from, which she cannot really remember, as well as the instructions for Mitya, and the signature "Mom."

As the three of us trudge along in the pouring rain, I ask Mitya point-blank to tell me the truth: "No one can hear us now, dear Mitya. Are your mother and Irochka actually on vacation?"

He answers in the affirmative. The poor boy, who knows next to nothing about our relationship with Olga, insists that everything is just fine at home. Irochka is finishing up her studies at the institute, and his mother is still working in publishing. She often gets visits from a German correspondent who is a friend of Feltrinelli.

At the end of our walk, we huddle together, soaking wet, in front of the gloomy structure of Lubyanka. The streets are clogged with public transport vehicles, and the nearby subway station erupts a steady stream of gray and hurried passengers. Giulietta tells Mitya that she has brought a little gift from home for his mother – as I recall, a nylon camisole and slip – just little things, but they were what Olga most enjoyed having for herself and her daughter. “The laws of femininity are the same as they always were,” Pasternak himself once wrote in one of his letters. “Therefore, if you have the chance to send me a typewriter, do not forget to enclose something pretty for our female friends, which I will also reimburse you for.”

As soon as we are able to hail a taxi, Mitya decides to come along for the ride in order to pick up the package. He and I spend only a few moments together in the lobby of the hotel while waiting for Giulietta to go upstairs and come back down before he says good-bye. Since I would like to drop off a note for his mother, we arrange to meet each other again at their apartment late in the evening of September 8th.

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For the next two days, we have plenty of other things to think about. On the morning of September 7th, the telephone rings in our hotel room while Giulietta is out shopping, and a young lady on the other end politely offers to come up and keep me company, whereupon I tell her no less politely that I was just on my way out the door to go and meet someone. Therefore, I would

appreciate it if she could call me back a week from now, when my wife will be in Leningrad. I have no doubt, however, that the young lady is already fully aware of our travel plans.

A short while later, Giulietta and I happen to cross paths with Pietro Ingrao as we are walking along Gorky Street. (Ingrao is an atypical ICP leader, and for all I know, he may be anything but pleased about being in Moscow.) Our friendship goes back a long way. In fact, several years ago, after I had sent a letter to the party higher-ups explaining my reasons for not renewing my membership, he called to invite me to have a friendly chat with him at the Botteghe Oscure (the main headquarters of the ICP). Our conversation ended up going nowhere, and he suggested that we pick up where we left off some other time. But this is certainly not the time. So we pretend that we did not see each other.

Once again, rather than calling the radio, we get in touch directly with two of our former colleagues, one of whom is Slava. He and his wife join us for dinner in the somewhat noisy dining room of the Ukraine, filled with American tourists who are good-naturedly complaining about the exasperatingly slow service, while we ourselves enjoy the usual banter and backbiting, which remind us both of the good old days. Even though Slava does not bother to ask me why I am in Moscow, I decide to tell him just the same: "I came to see you." "That's obvious," he says, without batting an eyelash.

Giulietta and I also have a chance to meet with Luca Pietromarchi, the Italian Ambassador to the Soviet Union, who has read the monograph that Paladini and I wrote entitled *Khrushchev's Challenge*, and who wants to have an exchange of ideas for a book that he himself is writing, in which both of us are quoted.(3)

On the evening of September 8th, I write my note to Olga, telling her that I am very

disappointed not to have seen her, despite the fact that I had let her know in advance that Giulietta and I would be coming to Moscow in the early part of the month. However, we are unable to give the note to Mitya, because several hours later, when we knock at the apartment in Potapovsky Lane, a woman's voice (which sounds like the one I heard before) shouts through the door that the boy is out, and that we had better not keep looking for him.

XXX

We leave the USSR on September 9th, and several days later, when I am back in Milan, I have a meeting with Feltrinelli. Just the two of us are in his office, and the door is closed. The publisher then asks me sarcastically if I have really been in Moscow, and when I say yes, he wants me to prove it by showing him my passport. I remind him that you do not need a passport to travel from Rome to Milan, and therefore I am not carrying it with me, at which point he asks me even more sarcastically if I had a chance to meet with Olga. I tell him that we were not able to get together because there was some kind of misunderstanding. And then we arrive at the grand finale when he suddenly screams at me that Olga was arrested on August 23rd, and that it is all my fault. This is more than I can take. I scream back at him that he is a son of a bitch, and I slam my way out of the office. Obviously, I am fired on the spot.

Feltrinelli had probably been informed by Schewe of Olga's arrest, whether true or false, before I left for Moscow. Why did he keep the news from me? Whatever the case may be, at this point, some background information on the man himself is necessary in order to put in the proper perspective many of the disconcerting events that would have an effect on the Pasternak affair, or better yet, on its repercussions in the USSR and the West.

For a start, it must be said that for some time now, Feltrinelli has not been the same

person that he was several years ago. In other words, he has lost the sense of balance that he seemed to have gained after making the decision to turn his back on the ICP, and pursue his publishing interests as a free man.

The negative experiences of his childhood and adolescence have certainly contributed to the undeniable psychological fragility that has brought him to where he is now. He is still a young boy when he loses his father (the founder of an immense industrial and financial empire), who takes his own life in the compartment of a train. He has a distant and often contentious relationship with the other members of his family, including his mother and her new husband, Luigi Barzini, Jr. For many years, his world is one of private tutors, irregular studies, loneliness, and flights from home.

In the first months of 1945, he joins the Italian Combat Groups at the age of nineteen to be a part of the fight against the Germans, but his time with them is cut short when the war ends on the Gothic Line. In order to find an outlet for his boundless energy, and satisfy his burning desire to do something important, he becomes a member of the Socialist Party, and then the ICP (his mother, who rides around in a Rolls-Royce, is a Monarchist with close ties to the royal family). He often goes out in the middle of the night, armed with a paintbrush and a can of red paint, and covers the walls of the city with the words “Down with the Feltrinellis!” to prove that he is a dedicated anti-capitalist. One time he is even caught in a police dragnet, and ends up spending the night in a jail cell with the worst of Milan’s criminal elements.

When he comes of legal age (which is then still twenty-one), rumor has it that he wakes up every morning lying on a pillow stuffed with large banknotes, which is his private income in the amount of millions and millions of liras. While his great wealth allows him to do whatever he

wants, it also makes it more difficult for him to play by society's rules. He is obsessed by the idea that both his male and female companions are only interested in his money. He is even convinced that no matter what he chooses to do with his life, he will be judged on the basis of his private fortune rather than his personal talents.

With regard to the ICP, there is no end to his generosity. Not only does he subsidize its Milanese federation, but many other sectors as well. As requests for contributions to the cause continue to pour in from various of the party constituents, he can always be counted on to fulfill them in one way or another. Luigi Tombesi, the Deputy Administrator of the Botteghe Oscure, tells me that he tried to sell him the Libreria Rinascita some time before I became its manager. Although Feltrinelli did not take him up on his offer – bookstores had yet to become one of his passions – at the end of their conversation, so as to avoid any possible criticism, he voluntarily signed a check in the amount of twenty million liras for the party's war chest – and twenty million in those days was no small change.

Rather than compensating Feltrinelli with a political appointment or supporting his candidacy for public office, the ICP decides to take advantage of his entrepreneurial ambitions by nominating him for membership (not without a price) on several boards of directors of their own import-export companies, which function as a main conduit for financing from the Eastern Bloc.

In 1950, Feltrinelli provides nine-tenths of the capitalization for a company named Somico, and is elected Chairman of the Board. Despite a great deal of time and effort on his part, including frequent trips to Prague to personally conduct negotiations, everything ends ingloriously with his resignation and the liquidation of the company several years later. (4)

In the meantime, however, he begins to work for himself. He publishes several book series, which are a prelude to the publishing house that will bear his name. At the same time, he creates a foundation, endowed with major funds, for the purpose of researching and collecting documents on the international workers' movement.

Among the members of his team, who are in large part Communists or Communist sympathizers, there are a number of talented individuals, several of whom will make rather witty remarks about the inadequacies and idiosyncracies of their employer. I think, however, that it was his second wife, Nanni De Stefani, who expressed the most impartial opinion during an interview she gave many years after his death: "He was neither ungenerous nor generous, neither good nor bad, but a combination of everything." (5)

Although Feltrinelli likes to give the impression of being a decisive, self-assured entrepreneur, he is actually very easily influenced by others. Anyone who is in the proper position and who has the right powers of persuasion can steer him in the direction of a specific objective, mission or adventure. The more hyperbolic it is, the more interested he becomes.

In the spring of 1959, Feltrinelli returns to Milan after an extended trip to the American continent, during which he has married (in Mexico) a German girl whom he met in Hamburg some months before. Since he is still legally married to his second wife, Nanni De Stefani, this latest involvement is not considered valid in Italy, where the law permitting divorce has not yet been passed. Having had his first marriage annulled through the "Sacra Rota" ecclesiastical tribunal, he is now waiting for a second annulment. (However, when it is finally granted in 1966, his relationship with the German woman has been over for quite some time, leaving her with custody of their young son, the use of the luxurious residence that the two of them once shared,

and an important position at the publishing house, where she is already working. A short while later, Feltrinelli will marry a much younger woman, and this time the marriage will be legal.)

When I meet with him after his return, what concerns me most is not his complicated personal life, but rather his newly acquired political convictions. After he insists that the United States is moving toward Fascism, and preparing to launch a Third World War, I try to reason with him, but to no avail whatsoever. In his opinion, the only way to combat this situation is through a general mobilization of the “real forces of the left.”

This mobilization begins in the publishing house itself, where a cycle of hirings and firings soon takes place, accompanied by a number of major changes in production plans. Although the editors who are working at the headquarters in Milan have a much clearer picture of this transformation, I myself have been intimately involved with two of the projects that will feel its immediate effect.

The first of these is the book by the Menshevist Suhkanov, which is of great historical value in that it gives an objective, day-by-day account of the political events in Petrograd that preceded the Bolsheviks’ assumption of power in 1917. These volumes, which took me about a year to translate, are taken off the list of works to be published, and end up in a drawer, if not a wastebasket.

Khrushchev’s Challenge, the monograph that Leo Paladini and I wrote from original Soviet sources with Feltrinelli’s full approval, narrowly escapes becoming the second victim. When it is already in galley form, the publisher stops the printing presses, and sends me a letter telling me that he does not agree with our conclusions (which will turn out to be more than prophetic). The monograph is accompanied by a preface written by Antonio Giolitti, the famous

scholar and parliamentarian who left the ICP following the Hungarian Revolution, and who now has an important role in the autonomist wing of the Socialists of Nenni. When I alert him of the unexpected turn of events, Giolitti responds by saying that he can have the text published instead by Einaudi, whom he collaborates with on a regular basis. At this point, so as not to give in to the competition, Feltrinelli reverses his decision, and prints the monograph in the first half of 1960. He does not, however, give it the benefit of a promotional campaign.

The growing chain of bookstores that now bear Feltrinelli's name will also feel the effects of change when the catalog is suddenly filled with subversive pamphlets and manuals, including a do-it-yourself book on how to make bombs, and the same publications are displayed on their shelves. However, word has it that the company itself is somewhat like the *Gazzetta ufficiale dello stato* (where the laws and decrees of the Republic are published) in the sense that it can never fail. The immense fortune that continues to bankroll its activities (in the cynical words of the writer Luciano Bianciardi, who worked for Feltrinelli for a while, "there's so much money it makes you sick") will protect it from the consequences of mistakes and miscalculations, allowing it to forge ahead with not a single care in the world.

All of the above, however, is the least relevant aspect of the "revolutionary" transformation that Feltrinelli would go through from the end of the 1950's until the tragic epilogue of March, 1972 – a transformation so absurd that it would be completely ingenuous to explain it solely on the basis of his emotional instability and tendency to be easily influenced by others. There is an additional, and decisive, factor to be taken into consideration in order to understand his real motivations.

It is impossible to believe that Moscow would choose to forget about the wealthiest

militant in the history of Italian Communism in light of the *Doctor Zhivago* affair. Since it makes no sense to go back to the point of departure and his membership in the ICP, which would only serve to create embarrassment for the Botteghe Oscure, there has to be another solution.

Moscow is actively involved in a campaign of political destabilization in various countries outside the Eastern Bloc, not only by exerting its influence over the legal Communist parties, but also by maneuvering the most subversive of the leftist groups. As part of this operation, numerous terrorists of various nationalities and denominations, some of whom are Italian, will be trained in the techniques of guerrilla warfare in special camps in Czechoslovakia. In order to be able to continue to play both sides against the middle, it needs to find other major sources of funding (particularly in the pockets of others), not only for those allies who follow the ways of parliament, but also for those who, like Lenin, reject the idea of “parliamentary cretinism.”

Consequently, the KGB, whose agents include those who are specialized in psychological manipulation, is given the assignment of persuading Feltrinelli to voluntarily finance subversive terrorist groups and guerrilla cells wherever they might crop up. With the help of several of its counterparts in the Eastern Bloc, it then goes in search of the most appropriate way to succeed in such an endeavor.

The results of these efforts are widely known. Convinced that the threat of Fascism and another global conflagration is now a terrifying reality, Feltrinelli arrives at the self-serving conclusion that he himself must assume the leadership and coordination of a resistance movement on the part of the “real forces of the left.” Thanks to those who have made it their business to assist him, he has no difficulty in establishing contact with multiple terrorist groups

both in Italy and abroad.

When none of these groups takes him seriously as a revolutionary leader, and all they want is to get as much money out of him as possible, he strikes out on his own, writing obscure thoughts and “strategic” plans, and even conceiving of the idea of turning Sardinia into the “Cuba of the Mediterranean” (perhaps with the help of some bandits from Barbagia), as he travels frenetically from one continent to the next, staying at the best hotels, and showing up at different banks to withdraw money from his personal accounts.

He himself does not participate in any acts of violence. In fact, his most dramatic gesture in the 1960's is a trip to La Paz, Bolivia, in 1967, which is meant to show his solidarity with the French intellectual, Régis Debray, and the guerrilla leader, Che Guevara. Debray is in prison for having attempted to lend assistance to Che, who is marching through the Bolivian jungles at the head of a small band of fellow warriors with the intent of inciting a peasant revolt.

After spending ten or so days in the capital, Feltrinelli himself is arrested on August 18th, and held in detention for thirty-six hours. When he returns to Milan, looking gaunt and tense, the paparazzi immortalize him while he descends the exit ramp of the airplane with his young wife, who joined him on the mission, having cut short her vacation on Stromboli.

As for the two revolutionaries he left behind, Debray is treated with regard as a member of Parisian high society, and will soon be set free. Exhausted from weeks of tropical dysentery, Che is captured and killed by the forces of Antonio Arguedas, the Bolivian Minister of the Interior. Despite the famous revolutionary brotherhood between Che and Castro, Arguedas will later defect from Bolivia to Cuba.

Fearing that the police want to make him the scapegoat for the terrorist bombing of the

Banca dell'Agricoltura in Milan in December, 1969, Feltrinelli keeps his distance from Italy. On those rare occasions when he does return, he is armed with false documents, and wears facial disguises. Obviously, he steers clear of the publishing house, which still employs his German ex-wife, whom he meets abroad every so often in order to embrace his pre-teenage son. The last time that he will ever set foot on Italian soil is March 14, 1972. He will lose his life that same evening in an apparent attempt to dynamite a high-voltage electricity pylon on the outskirts of Milan, which is located on a piece of property that belongs to him. Was it a technical error? An Operation 007? An "elementary" case for Sherlock Holmes? The judicial inquiry into the exact circumstances of his death will never be able to solve the mystery.

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As far as Olga is concerned, I am not sure that the news Feltrinelli gave me is true. If she was in fact arrested before our visit to Moscow, Mitya might have been afraid to say anything about it because he had been threatened by the police. On the other hand, the authorities may have forced Olga, and then Irochka, to leave the city temporarily once they had been informed of our arrival, and the boy did not tell us about it because he had been warned not to say that the police were involved.

Over the next several months, I try to solve the mystery on my own. I ask a friend of mine who works at the Italian Embassy in Moscow for help, but each time he dials Olga's number, he is told by whoever answers the phone that she is out of town.

On October 11th, a lawyer representing Feltrinelli asks me to come and see him. When I arrive at his office, he begins the conversation by more or less apologizing for his client's outburst at our last meeting: "When people are upset, sometimes they say things they don't

mean.” Then he tells me that I will be getting a letter from the publishing house stating that my employment was terminated on an amicable basis due to restructuring within the company. In other words, I will be allowed to receive my severance pay. Finally, he informs me that Feltrinelli has heard from certain sources that Olga and her daughter, who were arrested for reasons that are still unknown, will simply be prohibited from residing in Moscow in the future. Therefore, in his opinion, until we have more details on the case, it would be counterproductive to raise the issue in the press.

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Toward the end of December, as part of a plan that will be revealed later on, the Soviet authorities let it be known within certain restricted circles, and in rather vague terms, that Olga and her daughter have been sentenced to prison. The first ones to learn this, or at least to react to the news (for the moment, through carefully worded messages to the Writers’ Union), are a group of English intellectuals.

On January 6, 1961, the author Graham Greene sends Surkov a telegram asking him to help the two women in any way that he can.(6) Surkov then forwards Greene’s message to Khrushchev on January 10th, along with a letter that has been approved by Polikarpov, in which he suggests that he respond to the writer with a telegram of his own to the effect that the mother and daughter, whose case “has nothing to do with politics or literature,” have been tried by the Moscow Tribunal in open court, and found guilty of a currency smuggling operation in which the Pasternak family is not involved.(7)

Having heard nothing from Khrushchev, Surkov again sends him the draft of the proposed telegram on January 19th, adding that it has been “written on the basis of information

and advice received from the KGB and the Prosecutor General's Office.”(8)

Greene has still not received a reply as of January 18th, when London's *Daily Telegraph* becomes the first official news source to give a more detailed account of the story leaked by Moscow several weeks earlier. The text of the article, which is signed by David Floyd, the newspaper's special correspondent on Communist affairs, is as follows:

“The closest friend and collaborator of Boris Pasternak, the Russian author of ‘Doctor Zhivago,’ was sentenced a month ago to eight years in a concentration camp. She is Mrs. Olga Ivinskaya, herself a writer, who is known to have inspired Pasternak to write his novel and to have served as the model for Lara, its heroine.

She was arrested last August, three months after Pasternak's death. A fortnight later her daughter, Irina, who is engaged to marry a Frenchman, was also arrested. The two women were kept under investigation by the Russian police until Dec. 7, when they were tried in camera. [Several days later, in a follow-up story, Floyd indicated that the actual date of the trial had been December 12th.]

The daughter was sentenced to three years' detention. She is reported to have suffered a nervous breakdown.

Friends of Pasternak's in the West, who received news of the sentences from several sources, were unable to learn what charges had been made against Mrs. Ivinskaya. An accusation by a Soviet official this week that she has sold the work of Moscow University students as her own is regarded as an attempt to discredit her.” (9)

When he receives the approval from Suslov that he had requested twice of Khrushchev, Surkov finally replies to Greene on January 20th, giving him the same information that was

contained in the original draft of his telegram (trial in open court, and currency smuggling without the knowledge of the Pasternak family). In an English-language broadcast by Radio Moscow, the Soviet government then issues a confirmation of the women's conviction on January 21st, which is repeated in an Italian-language broadcast on January 27th.(10)

In the meantime, David Carver, the General Secretary of PEN Club's London Center, forwards a telegram to Surkov on January 10th, urging him to do everything possible to expedite the release of Olga and her daughter. Not having received a reply, he sends him a second telegram on January 23rd, asking him to request the immediate publication of the transcripts from the trial.

Surkov responds to Carver the very same day, stating that the Writers' Union does not believe that there exists either a moral or legal basis for releasing the two women. Carter responds on the following day, January 24th, indicating that since the PEN Club is concerned with the interests of all writers, regardless of their status, he feels that it is his responsibility to examine the trial transcripts, and to insist that Surkov use his authority to petition for an act of clemency.(11)

On the same day that Surkov receives this last telegram, he agrees to be interviewed by correspondents of foreign Communist newspapers, at which time he makes the following statement: "I have spoken with the Prosecutor's Office and the judges...This was a matter of foreign currency smuggling. Pasternak, who was a great poet, had no part in this business. All this noise is an insult to the writer's memory. If those living abroad wish to honor his memory, they must not muddy his name just because one of his friends was an adventuress. We do not want to get involved in this affair because it has nothing to do with either politics or

literature.”(12)

On January 30th, Carver sends Surkov a letter, rather than another telegram, reminding him that while he indicated that the two women had been judged in open court, nothing has been published about their defense. Furthermore, Radio Moscow has just announced that they have lost their appeal to have their sentences reversed. Surkov should therefore ask the proper authorities to publish the transcripts of the trial, or at least what was reported in the Soviet press. He should also petition the government for an act of clemency. In his opinion, such a gesture would have a profound and lasting effect in terms of improving relations between Russian writers and those from the West.(13) At least for now, there is no response.

In March, Surkov makes a trip to Great Britain, together with Aleksei Adzhubei, Khrushchev’s son-in-law and the Director of *Izvestiya*, where they hold a series of meetings and press conferences that are intended to do a good deal more than simply defend Soviet justice. In fact, Surkov describes Pasternak as a loyal Soviet citizen, a great artist, and a close personal friend whose only fault was letting himself be duped by a corrupt, conniving female like Olga, who even went so far as to portray herself as an intellectual. Not only did she betray him with countless lovers, but she also exploited him in every way possible. Worst of all, she persuaded him to write an anti-Soviet novel so that she could get her hands on the wad of money that she knew would be made out of an international scandal. Despite what Olga has done, adds Pasternak’s posthumous friend, she will be released from prison within the next few months.

On his part, Adzhubei produces four “documents” that are meant to prove that the two women are guilty of what they have been accused of: 1) a letter from Feltrinelli dated July 8, 1960; 2) a photograph of two halves of a one thousand lira banknote; 3) a general

admission of guilt made by Olga to the investigating magistrate; and 4) a photograph of a packet of rubles.

In reality, the only piece of this so-called evidence that has any significant value is the letter from Feltrinelli. Written in German (which neither Olga nor her children understand), as opposed to French, which is the language that the publisher always uses to communicate with her, it says the following:

“Dear Olga,

Heinz Schewe’s letter and report have thrown me into a state of total despair.

It makes no sense for me to dwell on the Garritanos. All I can say to you is that I do not understand why you let people like that get involved in such an important private affair. Why, when H.S., our mutual friend, was available? In the future, do not trust anyone except Heinz Schewe. And should there come a time when he is no longer in Moscow, you must *only* trust those individuals who can identify themselves by showing you one of the missing halves.

And now to the heart of the matter. Dear Olga! I will do everything possible to avoid having to pay third parties. If I am not able to avoid doing so, and am forced to pay them, I will always make sure that a substantial part of the profits is left for you and Irina.

Now for the things you should keep in mind.

1) The former contract with Boris Pasternak for the publication of *D.Z.*, as well as the new contract (which I need you to send me *as soon as possible*), must never end up in the hands of the authorities or the Pasternak family. The same is true for my letters to you and Boris. All these private documents must not even be kept in your possession.

2) Send me any other private documents in your possession that might be useful to me in

my dealings with the de Proyarts. As far as I am concerned, everything that I receive (I give you my word of honor) has been sent to me by Pasternak.

3) I will protect you in any and every way I know how. You must trust me.

4) I will not rest easy until all the letters, manuscripts, etc. are in the West.

Dear Olga! Everything that we have done throughout the years has been made possible on the basis of trust. Difficulties have occurred only when *other* people, whom I often did not know, became involved in our affairs. Everything that we do in the future can only be done if you have full confidence in me.

With all my affection and friendship, I embrace you.

Yours, Giangiacomo

P.S. D'Angelo still has a lot of things here. My own opinion is that his methods are too dangerous. I would suggest that you write me a letter requesting that he should return whatever is left to me. I will send it to you whenever and however you tell me to.

P.S. When they show you one of the halves, you will show them the other.”(14)

Feltrinelli's own signature at the end of the letter indicates that it is authentic. In no way does it prove, however, that Olga asked the publisher to reserve for her all the royalties from *Doctor Zhivago* (an enormous sum compared to the moneys in the remittance fund) to the detriment of the Pasternak family. In no way does it prove that Olga (who certainly did not need to be reminded that her own documents must not fall into the hands of the authorities) was willing to let him have all her personal papers, including Pasternak's "private documents," manuscripts, personal correspondence, and so on. Nor does it prove that she was involved in the amateurish scheme of using two halves of a banknote, which Surkov would definitely have used

against her, or that she agreed to transfer what was left of the remittance fund to someone who could not possibly have found a safer method of delivery, other than sending her nothing at all.

As for Feltrinelli's opinions of Schewe and the Garritanos, I will discuss them at a later point in the text.

On April 3rd, shortly after his return to the Soviet Union, Surkov sends Carter a lengthy letter, requesting that he release it to the press. Once again, he resorts to slanders and accusations against Olga, specifying that she smuggled not only currency, but even a typewriter and several items of clothing. He also falsely claims that in the last thirty months of his life (after the Nobel Prize), Pasternak received a total of 496 thousand rubles for his usual work, not to mention the 27 thousand rubles spent by Litfond to pay for a decent funeral, and that he voluntarily renounced his right to receive the royalties that had accrued abroad through legal channels.

As far as Feltrinelli's correspondence with Olga is concerned, he defines as nauseating not only his letter of July 8th, with his little "detective novel schemes," but also a letter [which was never published] in which he sends her his "hasty condolences" the day after Pasternak's death, together with a long list of detailed instructions regarding their current business relationship, which includes falsifying a publishing contract.

With no facts at all to go on, he refers to me as "that international swindler, d'Angelo," one of the "filthy cynics and evil geniuses in the life of the illustrious and most honorable poet Boris Pasternak," stating that I wrote to Olga several times to urge her to keep her dealings with Feltrinelli hidden from the authorities, the author's relatives, and his French proxy, de Proyart.

Despite a preponderance of evidence to the contrary, as contained in the correspondence that I have already cited, Surkov then alleges that during the course of his long illness, Pasternak

repudiated his “shameless, greedy mistress,” the “prototype of Lara, according to certain punctilious guardians of morality and justice,” forbidding her absolutely to visit him. He also rejects Carver’s request that he use his influence to have the transcripts of the trial published, maintaining that such an action “would be judged by our public opinion as an offense to the Pasternak family and an insult to the poet’s memory,” and states that he has no intention of asking the government for a lesser prison sentence. In closing, he apologizes for having written such a long letter, but adds that it was necessary in order to put an end to such “unproductive correspondence.”(15)

It is Carver, however, who will have the last word on April 26th, in a brief note to Surkov in which he stresses two very important points. Firstly, no matter how Mrs. Ivinskaya conducted herself in the years immediately preceding Pasternak’s death, it is difficult to deny the fact that for more than ten years, she played an extremely important part, as a human being, in the life of the poet. Furthermore, evidence attesting to the immorality of the accused should not influence the court’s final decision. Secondly, he would hope that what Surkov said in his letter will not affect the assurances that he made during his stay in England with regard to Mrs. Ivinskaya’s being released from prison with the next several months.(16)

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Apart from the “official explanations,” how and why were the two woman arrested and eventually convicted?

Olga recalls in her memoirs that on August 16, 1960, several automobiles pulled up in front of her cottage in Izmalkovo , whereupon a number of KGB agents emerged, led by a fat man in a light-colored trench coat. This individual was the police interrogator Vladilen

Aleksanochkin, who accused her generically of “criminal activities,” and then ordered her to get in one of the cars, which would take her to Lubyanka, the headquarters of the KGB, where important political prisoners were held before being transported elsewhere (often to the next world in the past).

After being locked up in a cell with another woman, Olga underwent an initial interrogation, during which she was told that other searches, which were carried out simultaneously with that of Izmalkovo, had led to the discovery of sums of illegal money. Where exactly? In Potapovsky Lane, in the apartment of a dressmaker who lived on the floor below her. This much was true. Olga had recently left a suitcase containing some items of clothing at the woman’s home, promising to stop by again, as soon as she had time, to explain what she wanted done with them. But she had also hidden the last of the banknotes among the clothes.

When the search team arrived in Potapovsky Lane, they immediately knocked on the right apartment door, where they found what they were looking for – obviously as the result of a tip-off. The dressmaker herself was able to avoid any unpleasant consequences in that she could honestly say that she had not opened the suitcase, nor did she know that it contained any money.

When Aleksanochkin then insisted that Olga confess to having engaged in currency smuggling, and she replied that she had never possessed any foreign banknotes, nor had she ever had them brought into the country, he accused her of having always known that she was receiving contraband rubles. Needless to say, he also charged her with maintaining contacts with foreigners.

While Irochka herself was still a free citizen, she received an unexpected visit from Aleksanochkin, who appropriated various of Pasternak’s books, letters and manuscripts

(including *The Blind Beauty*), which would never be returned to Olga, who was their legitimate owner. Even though Irochka was not feeling very well, she somehow managed to find a defense counsel for her mother in the person of a brilliant young lawyer named V. Samsonov. On September 5th, however, she was also arrested, and then transported to Lubyanka, where she was accused of having had contacts with foreigners (particularly Mirella Garritano), and complicity in currency smuggling. These charges were aggravated by the fact that she was a student at the Institute of Literature, and therefore a member of Soviet Communist Youth (Komsomol).

After agreeing to serve as Irochka's defense lawyer, Samsonov persuaded V. Kosachevsky to represent Olga as her legal counsel. In her memoirs, Olga described her lawyer as an affable gentleman with a friendly, cheerful expression. During one of his visits to Lubyanka, however, she became upset when he seemed scandalized by the fact that Schewe had just offered him five thousand dollars as a means of encouraging him to do everything possible in defense of his client (instead of not caring about her case at all). She was also extremely alarmed when Kosachevsky informed her that Schewe himself could be arrested from one moment to the next for having been in constant contact with her.

Unaware of the fact for several months that her daughter had been arrested, even if she had a terrible presentiment that such would happen, Olga underwent a series of interrogations, until she was finally led into the presence of a mysterious individual who "consist[ed] of three spheres: his backside, his belly, and his head." He was seated at a huge desk, on which he had spread out in front of him various letters of Pasternak's and a copy of *Doctor Zhivago*. "You disguised it very cleverly," he said darkly, "but we know perfectly well that the novel was not written by Pasternak, but by you. Look, he says so himself..."

This last assertion was based on a note from the author: “It was you who did it all, Oliusha! Nobody knows that it was you who did it all– you guided my hand and stood behind me, all of it I owe to you...” “You have probably never loved a woman,” Olga replied, “so you don’t know what it means, and the sort of things people think and write at such a time.”

When she was returned to Aleksanochkin, she asked him point-blank, “Who was that idiot who interrogated me?” “Shh! That was Tikunov himself,” he hissed back at her, referring to the number two man at the KGB.

(After both women had been transferred to the Lefortovo Prison while awaiting trial, Olga told Irochka that Tikunov had actually accused her of having written *Doctor Zhivago*, whereupon her daughter, who despite everything had maintained her sense of humor, said that she should consider it a compliment, for which he deserved to be forgiven.) (17)

The trial took place in December. “Needless to say, no unwanted persons were admitted,” writes Olga in her memoirs. “In fact, nobody at all was let in. Not only was the case itself a sham, but even the actual proceedings were bogus – the whole thing was based on falsehood from beginning to end. They wanted to rush the trial through in a day, before foreign journalists got wind of it. They tried to make out that it was public, but there was nobody in court except the judge and assessors, counsel for the defense, and our interrogators (who had now exchanged their uniforms for civilian clothing).”(18)

To counter the charge of currency smuggling, the defense reminded the court that anyone could have gone to the Soviet State Bank to exchange any amount of money without needing to give an explanation, while the prosecution sustained that the case in point involved rubles that

were intentionally exported from the USSR to Italy, and then re-imported from Italy to the USSR.(19)

The defense's claim that it was possible to exchange large sums of money anonymously at the tellers' windows of the State Bank was not terribly convincing. However, the prosecution's claim, which was totally unreasonable, was made so as to avoid having to admit that rubles, which could not be legally exported from the USSR, were found under the table in most of Europe, where they were smuggled out by the party higher-ups who were able to travel abroad on a frequent basis, and who were anxious to acquire goods that were not available at home.

In any case, the "arguments" presented in court had no value whatsoever inasmuch as the convictions had already been written. In fact, on November 4th, Olga was persuaded to sign a confession of guilt, either because she was threatened with a more severe sentence, or she was promised that she would be granted clemency. This was the same statement that would be exhibited by Adzhubei during his trip to Great Britain several months later.

For both mother and daughter, there was nothing left but to serve out their sentences. From their cells in Lefortovo Prison, they would be transported to the terrible Siberian forced labor camp in Tishet. Eventually, they would be sent to the less harsh "rehabilitation" camp in Potma, located in the European part of the country.

There can be no doubt as to the why of this whole scheme either, considering that the clumsy attempts to prevent the publication of *Doctor Zhivago*, and above all, the exaggerated reaction to Pasternak's winning the Nobel Prize, had dealt a lethal blow to the image of Soviet Communism. Until the end of 1958, never having read a single line of Pasternak, Khrushchev himself accepted the opinions of the guardians of culture, and never even bothered to glance at a

brief passage from the novel, which they had sent to him as supposed proof of “heresy.” Most probably, this was due to the fact that he was too absorbed in fighting his own battles within the Kremlin walls, where the following March, it must be remembered, he would liquidate Bulganin, and take on the role of Prime Minister himself.

Not only did he go along with the campaign against Pasternak, but at the culminating moment, he even lent his personal support, if we are to believe a statement made by Semichastny during an interview conducted decades later, when he ordered the head of Komsomol to use the comparison between Pasternak and a pig in his harangue of October 29, 1958. However, as soon as he became aware of how things really stood, not only did he put a stop to the moral lynching of Pasternak, but he also retracted the threat of exile, and intervened to save him from being evicted from Peredelkino. (After having taken the time to read *Doctor Zhivago* during his retirement years, he would actually admit that the book should not have been banned, given the fact that “there was nothing anti-Soviet in it.”)(20)

So as to shore up the damage that had already been done, and not give their enemies from within and without any further ammunition, the powers that be then came up with the idea that they should no longer label Pasternak as the champion of anti-Communism, but rather as an artist who is too great to be forgotten. At the same time, they decided that the best way to bring about his “rehabilitation” was to lay the blame at Olga’s feet, identifying her as the only one who was responsible for the “errors” committed by the author, and slandering her with all kinds of false accusations, including depravity, infidelity, deception, and currency smuggling. If necessary, they could even accuse her of having written *Doctor Zhivago* herself.

However, they realized that they could not put their plan of action into effect until after

Pasternak's death, to ensure that when they made him part of the pantheon of Soviet literature there would be no ugly surprises in store. In the meantime, the KGB and their informers had a year and a half to prepare the various stages of the operation in the strictest secrecy, including Olga's arrest and prosecution, when they would destroy her more convincingly by claiming that she had been convicted in a proper court of law.

There is no way of knowing whether Khrushchev himself was responsible for the expedient of "rehabilitation." Whatever the case may be, my own opinion is that this extremely tough politician, who had the common sense of a peasant, a good sense of humor, and a great deal of scorn for the obtuseness of the typical bureaucrat, was somehow involved in Surkov's demotion from First Secretary of the Writers' Union to the more modest position of a member of the Secretariat on May 25, 1959, which had nothing to do with his age, as his successor, Fedin, was seven years his senior. In March of 1961, when Surkov was sent to Great Britain to state publicly that Pasternak was no longer a "traitor," or a "hidden enemy filled with hatred and viciousness," but an outstanding individual, and a magnificent poet and good friend, Khrushchev may have had a hand in this decision as well.

No matter who actually made this last decision with regard to Surkov, the results would be negative at best. In all his zeal to fulfill his official obligations, Surkov would go so far as to make a number of exaggerated claims that would be contradicted by a preponderance of written evidence. In so doing, he himself would deliver the coup de grace to the "rehabilitation" program devised by the regime.

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In defense of Olga and Irochka, I begin to publish a series of articles, which are low-

keyed in tone so as not to upset the Soviet authorities unnecessarily, but which include the text of the letters I received from Pasternak that contain irrefutable proof to the effect that it was the author himself who requested and received the money that was sent to him through unofficial channels. While avoiding any personal polemics, what I am basically saying is that there has been a mistake (I do not use the word calculation), and that I am now asking for reparation.

In the end, my efforts will help to support the general campaign in favor of the two women, which will involve not only high-profile figures such as the historian, Robert Conquest, and the journalist, Edward Crankshaw, but also a large part of the public opinion in the West.

As for the Soviet side, where a wall of silence has suddenly come down, only Surkov will continue to repeat the same old things like a broken record. In a memorandum to the party higher-ups dated November 25th, he will also ask for permission to request photocopies of the materials from the trial so that he can expose the slanders and insinuations of the most relentless participants in the campaign that is being waged against him, such as “the journalist E. Crankshaw, and the former Communist and renegade, Sergio d’Angelo, who was the one who gave Pasternak’s manuscript to the publisher Feltrinelli illegally.”(21)

What this shows, of course, is that while on his trip to Great Britain, Surkov lied about having read all the trial materials attentively.(22) If he had actually done so, he would have known full well that they contain nothing – not a letter, or a note, or a single line written by me – that would indicate (as he stated to Carver in his letter of April 3rd) that I contacted Olga on more than one occasion to urge her to keep her agreements with Feltrinelli hidden from the author’s relatives and the French proxy de Proyart. Nor do they contain anything that would prove for other reasons that I am a swindler.

During this time, I also decide to communicate directly with Surkov, by means of the following letter, found in a Russian archive, which is missing the exact date on which it was written:

“You consider one factor to be so extremely important and fundamental that it precludes any possible extenuating circumstances with regard to the guilt of Ivinskaya and her daughter: that is, that the request for money to be sent through irregular channels did not come from Pasternak (who, according to you, was being well paid in his own country, even after the events of 1958), but by Ivinskaya, who acted without his knowledge and against his best interests.

This is completely false. As I have shown by publishing several letters I received from Pasternak, whom you persecuted while he was alive, and whom you cannot praise enough now that he is dead, the author complained about his economic straits, and asked that a portion of the royalties from *Doctor Zhivago* be provided to him on an informal basis, which was the only way that he thought it could be done.

From these letters, which you choose to ignore, it is obvious that Ivinskaya— who was in no way involved in smuggling activities — is responsible for nothing more than having received certain sums of money that had already been converted to rubles, with the sole purpose, as the evidence has shown, of turning them over to Pasternak. Nor is Olga’s innocence disproved by the fact that she received a final sum of money on July 31, 1960 [it was actually the following day], after the writer had died, since that occurred at my initiative, and was not requested by anyone else. Although you have defined me as an “international swindler,” taking advantage of the fact that I cannot drag you into court for defamation of character, I was simply respecting what Pasternak had clearly indicated that he wished me do, rather than putting the money in my own

pocket.

You claim not to be too experienced in legal matters, but even if you were, you would not be able to convince any reasonable person who is aware of the above-mentioned letters that the conviction of Ivinskaya and her daughter is in conformity with the laws of your country.

Article 15, relating to crimes committed against the state, which was used to prosecute these women, carries a maximum sentence of ten years in prison for the offense of professional smuggling, including personally transporting “explosive materials, narcotics, poisons, arms and munitions” across the borders. It is therefore evident that the sentences of eight years of imprisonment for Ivinskaya and three years for her daughter (who for that matter had nothing to do with questions of money) were the result of a sham trial whose mechanism and purpose you yourself know better than anyone else.

Mr. Surkov, I understand only too well your way of thinking. You have always nurtured a hatred for Pasternak, and guided by this sentiment, you have committed a series of acts against him, in your position as First Secretary of the Writers’ Union, that have done a great disservice to your country. You initiated the campaign to prohibit the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* (once defined by you, in all your modesty, as “a novel that was written against me”), and you waged it in a petty and childishly ingenuous way, thereby turning a literary event, which the Soviet writers themselves could have expressed their opinions about, into an international scandal.

When Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize, and you completely lost your head, you committed acts that aroused universal indignation on the part of the public, and caused a good deal of concern within the Communist community as well. You were not still satisfied, however, when Pasternak was expelled from the Writer’s Union. Who knows how far you would have

been willing to go if the highest authorities in your country, as an act of patriotism, had not put an end to your activities, and relieved you of your responsibilities as First Secretary.

Your fury was not even placated by Pasternak's death. You then turned it against two defenseless women, both seriously ill, by accusing them of crimes they did not commit.

I have no illusions about the possibility that you might change your attitude, and show a sense of fairness and humanity. And you yourself should not harbor any illusions to the effect that you have liquidated the Ivinskaya case. The conscience of all good and honest people will not allow you to be free of it until justice has truly been served.

And now one final thing. You claim that among the documents from the trial there are numerous letters in which the publisher Feltrinelli and I urged Ivinskaya not to reveal our relationships to Pasternak's relatives (in Moscow and England), to Pasternak himself, and to his French literary agent, de Proyart. As far as I myself am concerned, this is nothing but a pack of lies. I requested nothing of the kind, I suggested nothing of the kind, and I invite you to publicly demonstrate the contrary.

Muster up whatever courage you might possess, and show us all the documents from the trial. It will be interesting to see which one of us then loses face.”(23)

Surkov, who does not respond, is also spared the disappointment of reading the documents from the trial, thanks to a November 30th memorandum from Polikarpov, the head of the CC Culture Section, and Trifonov, an “instructor,” in which they disapprove of his idea of requesting photocopies, citing the following arguments: “The campaign of attack against Soviet writers who travel to capitalist countries, and against Surkov A. A. in his capacity as one of the Secretaries of the Writers' Union of the USSR, with reference to the arrest of O. Ivinskaya in a

matter of currency smuggling, has been waged in a particularly relentless manner by the PEN Club International, Sergio d'Angelo, the former Communist renegade [which now seems to be my trademark], and other persons who are hostile to the USSR. Comrade Surkov has already replied to them both verbally and in writing concerning the arrest of O. Ivinskaya. As he knows the substantial the facts of the case, he may continue to do so. Through our own print media, there has been no news of any kind released on the Ivinskaya trial. The publication of the above-mentioned materials in the foreign press could give our adversaries the means to falsely portray our position as a willingness to make concessions. In light of these circumstances, we believe that photocopying the documents from the trial of Olga Ivinskaya is not in the best interest of the case. We are therefore requesting authorization to communicate this to comrade Surkov A. A.”(24)

With the countersignature of Suslov, this negative opinion is transmitted on December 10th to the interested party, who from then on, like all those of his ilk, will forever maintain his silence, even when I challenge him during an interview on RAI [Italian state television] by insisting on the written proof that exculpates Olga and her daughter.

This marks the end of the regime's attempt to “rehabilitate” Pasternak, and probably to publish a politically correct Russian version of *Doctor Zhivago*. Nothing is said about the author in his own country until January of 1967, when the literary journal *Novy Mir* publishes his autobiography, which is edited by his son, Yevgeny. What the editor cannot mention, however, is that at a certain point, Pasternak had also thought about making it the introduction to the foreign editions of his novel: “[This is] my principal work, the most important of all, the only one that I am not ashamed of, and that I can acknowledge without fear.” So read the last lines of the copy

of the autobiography that the author gave me under the title *Introductory Essay* in the summer of 1957. *Doctor Zhivago* itself will have to wait another twenty years and more to be published in its native land, during the Gorbachev era, when Soviet Communism is on the verge of collapse.

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After having described in all its phases the attempt to “rehabilitate” Pasternak post mortem, I think that the reader now has the necessary references to understand what I am about to write on the German journalist, Heinz Schewe.

Schewe, who arrived in Moscow in 1959 as a correspondent for the Hamburg newspaper, *Die Welt*, has been authorized by Feltrinelli to act as his personal go-between with regard to Pasternak and Olga. In this guise, he will pay many a visit to the apartment in Potapovsky Lane, where he will always be treated as their companion and confidant. As Olga recalls in her memoirs, one of his “delicate missions” is to persuade Pasternak to have “as little as possible to do with d’Angelo and his friends, and to maintain contact through himself alone.”(25)

As the first foreign journalist to learn how and when Olga was arrested, Schewe will relate the details during an interview with a correspondent from *Il Corriere della Sera*, in

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January, 1961,(26) where he will also cite me under the name of d’Annunzio. In the meantime, however, he will let the *Daily Telegraph* get the scoop some five months after her arrest, while he himself confides the information only to Feltrinelli, with the added comment that her sentence, from what he understands from the Soviet authorities, will soon be commuted to a prohibition from residing in Moscow.

As I have already mentioned, after Feltrinelli blurts out the news of Olga's arrest during the meeting that ends up with my being fired, he has one of his lawyers advise me not to provoke a scandal in the newspapers, since the Soviet authorities seem to be treating her fairly.

I would not have listened to this advice for one second if I had been sure of her arrest. I had not forgotten Pasternak's words to the effect that if such a thing should ever happen, all the bells must toll. In fact, the immediate revelation of this act of persecution almost certainly would have persuaded Moscow to abandon the idea of an absurd trial under the glare of world public opinion, and to resort to an "act of clemency" as soon as possible.

When Schewe states in his interview with the *Il Corriere della Sera* that "the court, on its part, had no other choice but to convict her [Olga] and her daughter Irina," he does not seem to recognize the fact that their conviction was planned down to the last detail by the KGB, starting with the interrogations at Lubyanka (a place where only dissidents and political opponents are detained), and proceeding to a trial that was conducted in absolute secrecy in a single day, without calling any witnesses for the defense or allowing for the possibility of an appeal.

He either does not know, or pretends not to know, that the same situation occurred in 1949, without the excuse of currency smuggling, when Olga was imprisoned at Lubyanka before being tried and convicted on the basis of false accusations, and then sent away to a concentration camp for a number of years.

In sum, he rejects a priori the validity of the tardy sentence that will be passed by the Supreme Court of the Soviet Russian Republic on November 2, 1988, during the Gorbachev era, which fully absolves both mother and daughter for "lack of evidence that a crime has been committed."

During the same interview, Schewe accuses me (again calling me d'Annunzio) in a not very subtle way of having irresponsibly caused Olga's misadventures by sending her too large a sum of money, which was in banknotes that should have been exchanged by the end of the year at the tellers' windows of the State Bank due to a monetary reform in the USSR.

I can answer these accusations easily enough. Apart from the fact that Feltrinelli wanted the entire fund of 100 thousand dollars to be delivered to the recipients as quickly as possible (cf. his quoted letter to Pasternak dated May 15th), I received the news of the monetary reform in the USSR when the operation that involved the delivery at the beginning of August was already under way.

As for Schewe himself, when the "Shavochka" ("little pug") of Potapovsky Lane learns about the arrival of the money immediately from Olga, why does he do nothing but exclaim, "Now we are really done for?"(27) Why does he, who is never done for, not tell Olga to throw away all the bundles of bills, which are supposed to be exchanged within five months, and ask me (since there is still plenty of money left in the remittance fund) to send her new banknotes instead? Above all, why does he not try to dissuade her from hiding part of the moneys received in the suitcase of clothes that she drops off at the dressmaker's apartment on the floor below, which the KGB will have no problem in locating immediately?

Despite his efforts to discredit me with Olga, whom he treats as if he were her tutelary deity, Schewe will only be partially successful in the end. On the one hand, she will allow herself to be convinced that she should have followed the instructions Feltrinelli gave her with regard to the remittance fund in the first postscript to his letter of July 8, 1960, which was exhibited by Adzhubei in Great Britain ("D'Angelo still has a lot of things here. My own opinion is that his

methods are too dangerous. I would suggest that you write me a letter requesting that he should return whatever is left to me. I will send it to you whenever and however you tell me to”)(28) On the other, knowing me as well as she does, she will never doubt my loyalty and good faith.

Things did not go so well, however, for my old friend, Pino Garritano, whom I mentioned earlier in the text. “When d’Angelo’s official appointment in Moscow came to an end,” Olga will recall at a much later date, “he had introduced us, before he left, to his successor, Garritano [who was not my successor, but rather the deputy correspondent for *l’Unità* and a correspondent for *Vie Nuove*]. I cannot say that we took an instant liking to Garritano. At a moment when Schewe was absent from Moscow, I had gone to see him on a peculiar errand from BL [Pasternak], namely to give him two blank pieces of paper with BL’s signature on them, as well as certain important documents and instructions which he wanted passed on to Feltrinelli. Garritano then left Moscow – not, as we later discovered, for Italy, but for the Caucasus. When he returned – which was after BL’s death – his wife Mirella told me that the basket in which they had put the documents had got soaking wet during one of the rainstorms for which the Caucasus is so famous, and had then disappeared.

I appealed to Heinz for help – he was by now back in Moscow. Whatever grievance he might have felt, he came straightaway. I also asked Garritano and his wife to come to the Potapov Street apartment, although the Italian, as a Communist, was at first reluctant to meet a West German. During the meeting I became hysterical and Heinz had to calm me down. After hearing the story about the basket and the rainstorm, he commented icily: ‘Even such things have been known to happen...’ Then, rubbing his fingers together, he asked politely: ‘And how is the weather in Rome?’”(29)

At this point, I need to add some details of my own to this account, which I learned about during my conversations with the Garritanos after they had resettled in Italy.

Pino – whom I introduced to Olga in the late autumn of 1957, a short time before leaving my job in the USSR, so that if necessary, he could help us to stay in touch by letter – received the package to be delivered to Feltrinelli in the spring of 1960, when he himself was about to return definitively to Italy. However, the Foreign Ministry had offered the couple a short vacation in the Caucasus before their final departure, which was a type of “bonus” given on similar occasions to the “non-bourgeois” correspondents.

The two of them, who were anything but “bourgeois,” were nonetheless very disillusioned with the Soviet system, and they could not exclude the possibility that their recent encounter with Olga might have attracted attention, and that the apartment where they lived might be “visited” in their absence. They therefore decided to put the package in a bag that Mirella would be taking with her on the trip.

During one of their days in the Caucasus, they took part in the excursion where they were caught in a sudden downpour, and that same evening, they also went to a local party, where there was eating, drinking and dancing. When they got back to the hotel, and Mirella discovered that the package was no longer in her bag, she assumed that it had fallen out while they were running for shelter from the storm.

Several days later, when they were back in Potapovsky Lane, Mirella mentioned this supposition. Pino himself, however, was convinced that someone had tipped off the secret police about the delivery of the documents, and that they were stolen during the party, when Mirella got up to dance, and left the bag on the sofa for half a minute or little more.

Although I have only a general description of what was in the missing documents from Olga, I do not think that as a whole, they carried any serious weight in a court that had no interest in documenting its verdict. As for the blank pieces of paper that Pasternak signed – which Surkov referred to in his last letter to Carver as proof that Feltrinelli and Olga had intended to falsify a publishing contract – there is nothing suspicious about them for those who are familiar with what has been published of the correspondence between the author and the Milanese publisher.

Let me recapitulate. For some time, Feltrinelli had been insisting on a “new contract,” as the original one, which he himself had written in some haste, was neither comprehensive nor precise enough to avoid numerous challenges on the part of other publishers of *Doctor Zhivago*. The author himself, however, was equally insistent about the fact that he could not sign any further documents in his current situation, as it would only give the Soviet authorities yet another reason to persecute him once they learned what he had done.

When Feltrinelli proposed the idea of backdating the “new contract” to 1956, the author again voiced his objections, as several of the clauses that the publisher wanted to include would have retroactively invalidated all the work that had been done by his former proxy, de Proyart. Therefore, the only possible solution to the problem, according to Pasternak, whose physical condition was rapidly deteriorating, was for him to sign several blank pieces of paper that could be used by Feltrinelli to draft the “new contract,” or revise the old one, after his death.

When Olga tried to send these blank pieces of paper to Feltrinelli, they were obviously not intended for any purpose that would go against the author’s wishes. In fact, they posed no potential threat to de Proyart, who had already released her power of attorney, and had ended her

professional relationship with the Milanese publisher. Nor had Olga thought of using them for herself, to the detriment of the Pasternak family, because otherwise she would simply have filled them out in Moscow in the form of a personal bequest from the author.

Nonetheless, as is clear from her memoirs, Olga let herself be persuaded by Schewe's insinuations that her arrest and subsequent conviction could be traced directly back to Pino Garritano's betrayal of her trust. Irochka was also convinced that Garritano was originally to blame for all their troubles, as she would confirm many years later in her own extraordinary memoirs.⁽³⁰⁾ Moreover, after reading these pages prior to their publication, she still believed that the German journalist, Heinz Schewe, was innocent of any wrongdoing.

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Several years later, on December 14, 1966, *Vita* would publish a several-page article attacking Feltrinelli, signed with the initials F. R., and accompanied by an editorial from the magazine's director, Luigi D'Amato, a member of parliament and professor of political science. Schewe, who was also mentioned in the article, was described in no uncertain terms as an informer for the spy network of Eastern Europe (an opinion, it added, that was shared by the director of *Die Welt*), and identified as the one who gave the tip-off that led to Olga's arrest.

Is it possible that the German journalist's total lack of reaction was due to the fact that he had not yet seen the article? At the very least, he would have been alerted by Feltrinelli, who avidly read all the articles in *Vita* that targeted him for his involvement with armed terrorist organizations.

In all fairness, I have to say that I myself do not agree with everything that was stated in this article, particularly with regard to the letter that Feltrinelli wrote in German, which was put

on display by Adzhubei during his trip to England. I do not believe that it was ever intended to compromise Olga, but was simply his way of making sure that she understood their business arrangements. Nor do I accept the idea that Feltrinelli appointed Schewe to act as his personal agent in Moscow, no matter who introduced the latter to him, with the intention of compromising Pasternak and Olga. Despite his various responsibilities and irresponsibilities, I personally do not think that Feltrinelli would have been capable of such duplicity.

However, I keep coming back to the fact that as a rule, “bourgeois” correspondents stationed in Moscow were expelled from the country within the space of forty-eight hours for having committed even a minor infringement, such as giving a copy of their newspaper to a Soviet citizen, or venturing beyond the city limits without permission from the authorities. How then did Schewe, who was identified (in the letter exhibited by Adzhubei) as the only principal intermediary in a case that involved serious criminal charges, manage to stay in the USSR for a number of years after Olga and Irochka were arrested and convicted?

Note

1. *Vita*, 22 June 1961
2. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 338.
3. Luca Pietromarchi, *Il mondo sovietico* (Milan: Bompiani, 1963).
4. Valerio Riva, *Oro da Mosca* (Milan: Mondadori, 2002), 226-232.
5. Aldo Grandi, *Feltrinelli: La dinastia e il rivoluzionario* (Milan: Baldini e Castoldi, 2002), 223.
6. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 133, L. 8-9.
7. *Ibid.*, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 133, L. 10-11.
8. V. Yu. Afiani and N.G. Tomilina, op. cit., 308.
9. David Floyd, "Concentration Camp for Pasternak's Friend," *Daily Telegraph* (London: 18 January 1961).
10. Robert Conquest, op. cit. (Appendix).
11. V. Yu. Afiani and N.G. Tomilina, op. cit., 313-314.
12. *Humanité* (Paris: 25 June 1961).
13. V. Yu. Afiani and N.G. Tomilina, op. cit., 322-323.
14. *Vita*, 22 May 1961.
15. V. Yu. Afiani and N.G. Tomilina, op. cit., 314-322.
16. *Ibid.*, 322-323.
17. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 343-344.
18. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 349.

19. Ibid., 352.
20. For accurate documentation on Khrushchev's attitude toward Pasternak (including the memoirs of Sergei Khrushchev and Adzhubei), see William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 385, 594, 682, 635 and 744.
21. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 133, L. 15.
22. E. Crankshaw, op. cit.
23. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 133, L. 16-32 (translation from Italian).
24. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 133, L. 33.
25. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 295.
26. Massimo Caputo, "Un giornalista tedesco rivela particolari sul caso Ivinskaia," *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milan: 7 January 1961).
27. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 339.
28. Ibid., 296.
29. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 296.
30. Irina Emelyanova, *Legendy Potapovskogo Pereulka* (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 1997).

Part Four

A Prize That Can Never Be Established

Stephen (Steve) House, who is the Rome correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, the

London newspaper that first carried the story on Olga and Irochka's conviction, is probably around fifty, with features and manners that are so typically English that he seems like a caricature of his co-nationals. One day in the spring of 1961, when we are sitting together in his office on Via delle Mercede, the news breaks about Gagarin's space flight, whereupon Steve ventures the opinion that "it's just one more step toward being able to build intercontinental ballistic missiles, which could eventually lead to a nuclear holocaust." If this were ever to come to pass, his main concern would be the possible extinction of the equine race. "Have you ever touched the chin of a horse?" he asks me wistfully. "Have you ever felt how soft it is?"

Steve's Anglo Saxon sensibilities, however, in no way diminish his effectiveness as a conscientious, intelligent journalist whose sources are always impeccable. At this point, he has been in Italy for a number of years. I even remember seeing him back in the '50's, when he appeared briefly in the film "Roman Holiday," with Audrey Hepburn as the little Central European princess who is just about to leave Rome with her family, and who invites all the foreign press of the "eternal city" to her palatial abode so that she can say good-bye to Gregory Peck, an American reporter that she enjoyed an innocent fling with.

I myself am much indebted to Steve, whom I have known for quite some time, not only for sharing certain confidential information with me, but also for organizing a meeting with his colleague, David Floyd, the expert in Communist affairs who initially reported on Olga and Irochka's plight. At Steve's suggestion, Floyd makes a special trip to Rome in order to discuss what I can do as a journalist to further the cause of the two women. As a threesome, we agree on a plan of action, which will include the criteria I will use in writing an article for the *Daily*

Telegraph, and a number of other European newspapers as well.

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Several months later, the higher-ups in Moscow are once again pondering the question of what to do about Pasternak's foreign royalties. In a letter dated August 19, 1961, Surkov informs Suslov that Zinaida and the writer's two sons have asked the government's permission to claim their rightful inheritance, with the exception of the royalties from *Doctor Zhivago*, which they will not accept "for moral and political reasons." He adds that he is personally in favor of approving their request, inasmuch as the widow herself, who is in very poor health as the result of a serious heart attack, is "a woman who is undoubtedly loyal to the Soviet state," and "who never approved of what her husband did with his last novel." (1)

Surkov then asks the CC Culture Section of the CPSU to give him their opinion on the matter. On September 20th, he receives a reply from Polikarpov, who tells him that he should advise Zinaida to renounce her claim to the inheritance so as to avoid provoking more anti-Soviet rhetoric on the part of the reactionary press, since most of the foreign royalties involve the "anti-Soviet book" *Doctor Zhivago*.

Having probably been contacted by Suslov, the KGB then sends the CC a "top secret" memorandum over Shelepin's signature, which states that according to unofficial data in their possession, the royalties from the "anti-Soviet novel" *Doctor Zhivago* include approximately eight million marks in various bank accounts in the Federal Republic of Germany, 100 thousand pounds sterling in banks in Great Britain, and 108 thousand Swedish kronas in the banks of other countries. The memorandum also mentions that in 1960, several Swedish banks approached Inyurkollegya about the possibility of transferring a part of the funds they were holding directly

to Pasternak, who refused to accept them. As the author died intestate, his heirs are his widow, Zinaida, and their two sons, Yevgeny and Leonid. Given these circumstances, the CC should ask Inyurkollegiya to take the necessary steps to allow the Pasternak family to claim the royalties, which would be held in an account at the State Bank of the USSR [without giving the heirs the estimated equivalent in rubles?](2)

Polikarpov, however, does not give in. In a memorandum dated October 6th, he informs the top-ranking officials of the CPSU that the Culture Section does not consider it appropriate to reopen the question of the inheritance. After reminding them that Pasternak himself had refused to receive the royalties through official channels, he proposes that the issue not be subjected to further discussion. The memorandum is then approved in the name of the entire Party Secretariat by M. Suslov, E. Furtseva, O. Kuusinen and N. Mukhitdinov.(3)

In conclusion, the powers that be have decided that the moneys from *Doctor Zhivago* are, and always will be, “Judas’ gold.” A few years later, however, they will reverse their decision, for reasons that are once again unforeseeable.

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On March 12, 1962, I finally decide to act on an idea that has been tempting me for quite some time, and I appeal directly to Khrushchev:

“Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

I am taking the liberty of writing this letter to you because I truly believe that an intervention on your part can resolve a painful situation – a situation in which I myself played a role, even if my intentions and actions were very different from those attributed to me by certain individuals.

I am referring to the case of Olga Ivinskaya and her daughter, Ira Emelyanova – both very dear to the late author, B. L. Pasternak – who were arrested in the second half of 1960, and sentenced respectively to eight and three years of imprisonment.

The reasons for these sentences were made public in two broadcasts of Radio Moscow (February 21 and 27, 1961), and more particularly in a letter that Mr. Surkov, who claimed to have read all the transcripts and documents from the trial, wrote a short time later to Mr. Carver, the representative of the English PEN Club.

According to these sources, with the complicity of her daughter, and probably without Pasternak's knowledge, Ivinskaya allegedly received a number of illegal payments of money from the West from the royalties of *Doctor Zhivago*, which she kept for herself, first depriving the author of them, and then his legitimate heirs.

Upon learning of this version of events, I realized that the Soviet court had not had all the elements it needed to reconstruct what actually occurred. I therefore felt obliged to publish several letters written by Pasternak in various newspapers and journals (such as the *London Sunday Telegraph* of May 7, 1961), along with my own personal recollections, as objectively and reasonably as possible in order to serve the cause of justice while attempting wherever possible to avoid the risk of causing damaging speculations.

I will not dwell any further on these recollections, which relate to the time when I obtained the manuscript of *Doctor Zhivago*, and when I had no way of knowing what the consequences of my actions would be. Instead, I would like call your attention to the fact that the above-mentioned provisions made by Pasternak are already adequate proof that the entire case can be seen in a different light. They demonstrate, in fact, that it was Pasternak himself who

authorized the deliveries of money through unofficial channels, and that therefore neither Ivinskaya nor her daughter committed any fraudulent acts with regard to the author.

While it is true that Ivinskaya received a sum of money after Pasternak's death, the payment was made based on specific instructions from the deceased, as is evidenced by documents in the possession of the publisher Feltrinelli, who made a statement to that effect in the press. It should also be noted that although the amount in question (whose delivery, for that matter, was absolutely not at Ivinskaya's behest) is fairly substantial, it represents but a very small part of the royalties that are still being held in trust by Mr. Feltrinelli for the author's rightful heirs.

There is, of course, the fact that Ivinskaya is liable for her involvement in a currency transfer that is prohibited by Soviet law (I do not know if her daughter is liable as well). In any case, the very minor role that Ivinskaya played in this transfer (the moneys that she received had already been exchanged for rubles) is not so serious an offense as to justify prolonging such a harsh sentence once the aggravating circumstances that were originally considered by the court have been disproved.

Unfortunately, however, I understand that the documentation and personal recollections that I provided have not been taken into consideration by the competent authorities of the Soviet legal system. It is for this reason, Mr. Prime Minister, that I am asking you, in the name of humanity and justice, to intervene personally so that freedom may be restored to Olga Ivinskaya and her daughter.

I am asking this of you because the two women have already paid enough, and because they paid too much during the Stalinist era, when Olga Ivinskaya, who was innocent of all

charges, suffered a number of years of imprisonment, and Ira Emelyanova, a young child who had never known her father, was also a victim of unjust persecution whose only comfort was the love and protection provided by Pasternak.

Finally, I am asking this of you because I remember that only a few years ago, Pasternak avoided being sent into exile thanks to your magnanimous gesture on his behalf, and because I am sure that if he were to come back to life again, the current plight of Ivinskaya and the young Emelyanova would be far more painful to him than exile.

Respectfully yours,

Sergio d'Angelo”(4)

I know perfectly well that I should not expect to receive a written reply. However, since Khrushchev has always been his own person, and often shown a good deal of common sense, I can at least hope that I have touched a sensitive nerve.

Two months later, in the absence of any further information about the fate of the two women, through Floyd's help, I establish contact with Max Hayward (a professor at St. Anthony's College, Oxford, and the English translator of *Doctor Zhivago*), who is part of a committee made up of other important figures from the academic and literary world who are trying to help Olga and her daughter in any way that they can.

My proposal to Hayward is that the committee secretly use the significant amount of money that is left in the remittance fund, which was assigned to me more than a year ago, to give the two women periodic financial assistance while they are detained in the concentration camp – providing, of course, that Soviet law allows it. Following an exchange of several letters,

however, the committee informs me (perhaps as a result of having made discrete inquiries) that it does not think that such a plan could actually be carried out.(5)

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In June of 1962, Irochka is released from prison after serving half of her sentence.(6) Whether or not Khrushchev himself was involved does not really matter. The news fills me with joy, and allows me to hope that her mother's sentence will be reduced as well. In Olga's case, however, even though her sentence is cut in half, her release will take place more than two years later, in November of 1964.(7)

For over two years prior to Olga's release, I did not written a single word on the Pasternak affair, nor did I take any other initiatives that could possibly interfere with an "act of clemency." At the same time, I kept asking myself what would eventually happen to the enormous sums of money that represented the author's royalties, which were still in Feltrinelli's hands.

Now, however, everything has changed. And since I have no illusions left regarding the possibility that Olga and her daughter, or Pasternak's widow and two sons, will be able to claim their inheritance at any time in the foreseeable future, I decide that the right thing to do would be to use a part of that patrimony to establish a literary prize in Pasternak's name, which would be awarded to talented writers who have championed the cause of freedom.

Through the attorney who tried to appease me after I was fired from the publishing house, I suggest to Feltrinelli that the prize be financed by honoring the terms of Pasternak's letter of December 25, 1957, in which the author stated that he wanted me to have "one half and even more" of his royalties. I also remind him that the "no" that I wrote in the margin is not a problem

in the legal sense, since it was predicated on the fact that Pasternak and his heirs would sooner or later be able to claim the moneys earned from *Doctor Zhivago*.

In an effort to stimulate Feltrinelli's interest, I also suggest that he play a primary role in organizing and administering the prize, based on precise guarantees, including statutes and a jury, which would reflect the values of the man for whom it was named. When the publisher wastes no time in telling me that he has no intention of doing anything of the kind, I cannot help wondering if perhaps he is so politically involved with the forces of the left that he feels a sense of guilt about the *Doctor Zhivago* affair. Perhaps he already considers Pasternak's royalties as "contingent assets" on his balance sheet. Or perhaps both reasons are involved. Whatever the case may be, I decide to pursue the project, and I initiate legal proceedings against the publishing house to lay claim to one half of the author's royalties. The first session in court takes place in September of 1965.

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In the meantime, I enlist the services of a group of individuals who are specialized in international publishing affairs to conduct a detailed investigation of just how much money is at stake (editions, cover prices, copies sold, and royalties received). At the end of 1965, I am given the information that the total earnings from *Doctor Zhivago* – including the sale of film, television and radio rights, and excluding all the Italian editions, as well as certain widely published foreign versions that are not easily quantified, such as those involving book clubs – amount to three and a half million dollars, half of which goes to the publisher, and the other half to the author under the terms of the contract. This means that Pasternak's share of the profits (minus gifts of money, the remittance fund, and other minor expenses) can be calculated at a

minimum of one and a half million dollars based on the value of the U.S. dollar in 1956. (According to the inflation indices published in the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, as well as official estimates for the past two years, this would be the equivalent of something like nine million dollars in the year 2004 – without counting, of course, the interest that has accrued.)

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Given the ever-changing balance of power at the publishing house as the owner himself fades into the “guerrilla” distance, I will refer to my opponent as the “defendant” while describing the course of the proceedings.

According to the defendant, Pasternak’s statement is invalid because it was not formalized by a notary public. My own position, as sustained by my lawyers, is that the money in question was not intended by Pasternak to be a gift to me, but primarily as compensation (in which case the law does not require notarization) for the critical role that I had played in the *Doctor Zhivago* affair, which the author repeated any number of times both verbally and in writing.

These legal arguments will go on for months until the defendant, who is not overly convinced of the plausibility of his own position (which basically blames Pasternak for not having used the services of the notary’s office at the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation), suddenly decides to resort to sleight of hand instead. In fact, assuming correctly that I did not make a photocopy of the December 15th letter, he denies that it ever existed. In its place, he presents the court with an earlier letter, dated November 25th, in which Pasternak asks Feltrinelli to deduct a sizeable amount from his royalties as compensation for my services, and then double it. Not surprisingly, some unknown hand has imitated the “no” that I had written on the other

piece of correspondence.

There is nothing strange about this situation, the defendant observes indulgently. I simply confused double with half – these things sometimes happen. But why, I then ask, would Pasternak have waited until the end of December, when I was about to leave the USSR for Italy, to give me a letter that he had written one month earlier? All the defendant can do at this point is ignore the question.

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Aside from Feltrinelli, my wife, and a small group of individuals whom I have asked for their professional advice on how to go about establishing the prize, I have not told a living soul about my plans. As far as the court officials themselves are concerned, they have no knowledge of how I intend to utilize the money I am claiming, since their final decision should not be influenced by such factors.

However, the Soviet authorities somehow manage to find out about the legal proceedings in Milan, and begin to move in perfect synchrony with the current course of events. In Moscow, they therefore decide to reopen discussion of the Pasternak inheritance, despite the fact that four years earlier, the top leadership of the CPSU had decreed that the subject was definitively closed.

On January 21, 1966, M. Kotov, Secretary of the Soviet Peace Committee, and A. Volchkov, Chairman of Inyurkollegya, send a secret letter to the members of the Central Committee of the CPSU informing them that Pasternak's royalties, most of which are being held in trust by Feltrinelli, amount to more than 500 thousand rubles in foreign currency [heavy

rubles, which are ten times as valuable as those that were in circulation until the end of 1960]. They also state that Pasternak's rightful heirs have offered to contribute fifty percent of the royalties to the Soviet Peace Fund if they are able to procure the moneys in question. Obviously, their conclusion is that the Soviet government should now give serious thought to assisting the heirs to claim the moneys that are owed to them.(8)

On April 21st, a joint communique from three sections of the CC (culture, international and planning/finance) is forwarded to the top party leadership, confirming that Pasternak's widow, Zinaida, and the writer's two sons, have asked the authorities to help them procure the author's foreign royalties, the bulk of which is currently being held in bank accounts in Italy and Switzerland. Although the Soviet authorities have yet to determine the details, there is no question about the fact that an enormous sum of money is involved. According to certain estimates, the total amount could be as much as 700 thousand rubles. The Pasternak family, however, believes that the figure is closer to five million [in old rubles?] Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that most of the royalties in question derive from the libelous *Doctor Zhivago*.

The memorandum also notes that the prevailing opinion among the Muscovite writers is that the royalties Zinaida received from those of Pasternak's works that were published in the USSR after his death were barely sufficient to cover the family's financial obligations toward Litfond. Furthermore, several of these writers, including I. Ehrenburg and K. Chukovsky, have sent a letter to the party's leadership indicating that they support Zinaida's request for a government pension. Finally, it mentions the fact that the Senegalese [sic!] Consul in Hamburg

recently paid a visit to Zinaida, in the name of the PEN Club, offering to expedite the transfer of royalties in the amount of 300 thousand marks from the Federal Republic of Germany.

They conclude the memorandum by proposing that Inyurkollegya be given authorization to determine the exact amount of the author's foreign royalties, and to make provisions for procuring these funds. Such an initiative would not only put an end to the rumors about Zinaida's economic straits, and her subsequent request for a pension, *but would also prevent certain circles in the West from using the late author's royalties as a basis for anti-Soviet activities*" [the italics are mine].

The proposal is then officially approved by A. Shelepin, P. Demichev, M. Suslov, B. Ponomarev and D. Ustinov.(9)

Two documents are also attached to this communication, the first being the secret letter of January 21st, and the second a memorandum dated March 3rd from the CC Planning/Finance Section to the party leadership, which consists of a list of the various percentages that are generally deducted from moneys inherited outside the USSR, including ten percent for Inyurkollegya's fees, another fifteen percent for expenses incurred by them, up to ten percent for notary fees, and ten to twenty percent for the services of a foreign lawyer. The inheritance tax, which was abolished in 1943, is no longer relevant. The memorandum also observes that the heirs to the Pasternak estate have already offered to donate half of whatever remains at their disposal to the Soviet Peace Fund.(10)

However, the authorities in Moscow are well aware of the fact that I am the only person in the West who has a solid legal basis for claiming half of Pasternak's royalties. They have also

been told that if and when I win my lawsuit, I intend to establish a literary prize in the author's name, which they consider an anti-Soviet machination on my part. Before making any further moves with regard to the inheritance, they therefore decide to wait and see how things turn out in Milan.

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The defendant's sleight of hand, which I had no possible way of foreseeing, leaves me little time before the next court session to procure the dozens of written statements that can challenge it, and to arrange for certain individuals to testify in my favor. One of the pieces of evidence that I am able to produce is a letter written by Sergio Scuderi, which should be the first step toward his appearing in court as a witness. Scuderi himself was not only a top-level employee at the publishing house, but Feltrinelli's personal friend and sailing partner as well. The following is an excerpt from his letter, which is dated April 24, 1966:

"I myself read a part of the correspondence that took place between him [the publisher] and Boris Pasternak. I still can see before my eyes that nineteenth-century cursive handwriting, and the soft violet ink that he used. I no longer remember exactly how many letters were involved – perhaps two or three or four – but I do remember advising Feltrinelli Giangiacomo to keep them in a safety deposit box, which he proceeded to do at the bank that was located on the ground floor of his office building on via Andegari.

I remember that one of these letters expressly stated that he was allotting you fifty percent of the royalties that he had earned from the novel's utilization. But what impressed me the most about Pasternak was the fact that in his secret message, he indicated that once this enormous debt

of gratitude to you had been absolved, he wanted all contractual issues with the publishing house to be forgotten. The important thing, he wrote, was that ‘ideas must not remain in a drawer. They must travel far and wide.’ And his own had made a rather difficult journey. These letters were read in the presence of one of Feltrinelli’s family members.”(11)

When court is once again in session following a lengthy holiday adjournment, the judge determines that Scuderi’s testimony is insufficient evidence to support my case, and abruptly ends the proceedings with a ruling against me, whereupon I immediately file an appeal.

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One thing that is certain at this point is that Moscow and the defendant have managed to gain some time. However, they are also cognizant of the fact that they have probably won a Pyrrhic victory. Accordingly, the Minister of Finance, V. Garbuzov, sends a secret memorandum to the CC of the CPSU on March 30th, some two months before the appeals proceedings are to begin, which clearly indicates that both sides have decided to collaborate on what steps should be taken next.

More specifically, Garbuzov’s memorandum states that at the direction of the party’s leadership, Inyurkollegya is now actively pursuing the question of Pasternak’s inheritance, having claimed the royalties from *Doctor Zhivago* and his *Autobiography* that are being held in trust by Feltrinelli. After an initial exchange of ideas, the publisher has proposed that they resolve the issue by means of a friendly agreement, in conformity with Italian copyright law, through a series of installment payments to the author’s heirs based on the following calculations: ten percent of the proceeds from those editions published in Italy, fifty percent from those published abroad

(*Doctor Zhivago* was printed in twenty-seven different languages), and twenty-five percent from the sale of film rights, etc., with the exception of the moneys that have already been paid to third parties at Pasternak's request.

In the opinion of A. Volchkov, the Chairman of Inyurkollegiya, and N. Ryzhov, the Soviet Ambassador to Rome, the terms of Feltrinelli's proposal should be accepted. The Minister of Finance of the USSR, realizing that initiating judicial proceedings against the publisher could lead to a lengthy court case whose outcome would be uncertain, also believes that it is in the government's best interest to go along with the friendly agreement, with the understanding that Feltrinelli provide them with a statement of assets, and that he transfer copyright ownership for any Soviet editions of *Doctor Zhivago* and the *Autobiography* that might be published in the future.(12)

With all due respect for the Soviet accounting system, I would venture to say that their bookkeeping methods in this particular case leave much to be desired. In fact, the powers that be in Moscow have no reason whatsoever for asking Feltrinelli (who himself is financing a lot of their friends) to turn over the author's inheritance down to the last red cent. Nor is there any reason to believe that they have mobilized so many of their top brass at home and abroad out of a sudden need to deal fairly with Pasternak's legal heirs, who will end up, when the smoke has cleared, with nothing but a handful of change (after "gifts," legal and notary fees, currency exchanges, etc.).

Their real objective, which is to prevent the establishment of the Pasternak Prize, is once again evidenced by an official memorandum to the party higher-ups, this time in the form of a joint communication, dated April 27th, from the same three CC sections (culture, international,

and planning/finance) that had dealt with the issue of Pasternak's inheritance the year before. The specifics of the memorandum, which are by and large repetitive, include a statement to the effect that the section heads support the opinions of the Minister of Finance and the Soviet Ambassador to Rome with regard to the necessity of reaching a reasonable agreement with Feltrinelli, and a final observation whose wording is almost identical to that which was used the previous year: "*Allowing Pasternak's sons to lay claim to their father's inheritance [his widow Zinaida had died in June of 1966] would prohibit certain circles from utilizing the late author's royalties for anti-Soviet purposes*" [the italics are mine].(13)

This time, however, the party leadership takes immediate action on the memorandum, which is approved by P. Demichev, B. Ponomarev, M. Suslov, F. Kulakov and A. Shelepin in the form of an official resolution, thereby decreeing that there is no longer any "Judas' gold" at stake, but simply gold and nothing more.

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Among the most important declarations that I present, or plan to present, to the Court of Appeals regarding Pasternak's letter of December 25, 1957, there is one from Renata Cambiaghi, the long-time secretary of the publishing house's editorial office, who is not only respected by all her colleagues for her dedication and professionalism, but who is also Feltrinelli's trusted confidante in terms of his personal problems.(14) Part of her testimony reads as follows:

"Feltrinelli spoke to me (but you probably know that he also spoke to others) about the letter from Pasternak that you gave him when you returned from the USSR. He told me, while singing your praises, that Pasternak had wanted you to have half of the royalties that he would

earn from *Doctor Zhivago*, but that you had refused to accept his offer.”(15)

At this point, however, I need to go back in time in order to explain a series of events that would have a profound and unexpected effect on the course of the trial.

In the mid-1960's, I received a telephone call from a young woman named Galina Oborina, whom I had met twice while I was living in Moscow when I attended several lectures at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, where she was then employed. (One of the lectures had been given by the famous Hungarian-born economist, E. Varga, who had struck me not only by his curious accent in Russian, but even more by his prediction that capitalism was on the verge of a total collapse.)

I remembered Oborina as an attractive young woman with aristocratic nostrils who was very sure of herself, and who was always quite formal with me. In any case, she called me in Rome to let me know that she had moved there several years earlier, together with her mother, Klavdya, after having married an Italian that she had met in Moscow. She then apologized for not having contacted me sooner, and said that she had been going through some bad times.

When we finally got together, she told me that as soon as she arrived in Rome, she discovered that her husband was a secret agent, and that he had married her because he thought he could use her as an informant. After he realized that he had been sadly mistaken, he walked out on her, leaving her in a tiny apartment on the edge of town, and giving her almost no alimony. In order to make ends meet, she had begun translating a business newsletter for Montedison. She was still in economic straits, however, and she asked me for my professional advice on how to word a petition to the President of the Republic seeking reparations.

While waiting for an official reply (in the end, she received a large settlement, which was officially from her husband), she also asked me if I would get in touch with the journalist Enzo Biagi, who was then in charge of public relations for Montedison, to see if he could be of any assistance in getting her translation contract renewed. Finally, she asked me to contact a close friend of mine who was a professor of Slavic literature to explore the possibility of her working at the university institute where he was the director.

I was more than willing to give her a helping hand, and eventually I invited her home to meet my wife and children. As we got to know each other better, I also told her about the circumstances of my lawsuit, and the various ploys that the defendant had used against me. (I did not, however, mention anything about my idea of establishing the Pasternak Prize.) As far as the court case was concerned, she said that she might be able to provide some assistance.

She then explained that in the spring of 1960, as she was getting ready to leave for Rome, she had gone to say good-bye to Pasternak, whom she had been friendly with for quite some time. Although he was extremely weak, and more or less bedridden, he had been delighted to see her again, and had even taken advantage of the occasion to dictate a letter to Feltrinelli. As best she could remember, he had mentioned something in the letter about compensating me for my services. After her arrival in Rome a short time later, she had mailed the letter to the publisher in Milan. However, she had also made a photocopy of it, which she had left behind in Moscow. She then assured me that the next time she visited the Soviet Union, she would bring the copy back to Rome for me.

About a year and a half later, Oborina gave me a photocopy of a letter dated May 15, 1960, in which Pasternak once again told Feltrinelli that “S. d’A. must absolutely be

given half of what is owed to me.” Not knowing if she would stay in Rome indefinitely, I asked her to make a sworn statement in front of a notary concerning the legitimacy of the document in question, which she had no problem with doing. After she had attested to its authenticity on August 27, 1967, I immediately filed it with the Court of Appeals.

A third party certainly has the right to doubt the veracity of a sworn statement, or to question a photocopy’s authenticity. Since the content of Pasternak’s letter does not appear to contain any blatant inconsistencies, the logical way to determine whether or not the photocopy is legitimate would be to have the paper scientifically dated, or hire a handwriting expert to examine Pasternak’s signature. Without the benefit of any such evidence, however, the defendant brings charges against me for having presented a forged document as soon as the court reconvenes in November of 1967, with the obvious intent of postponing the settling of accounts for at least a few more years.

Rather than resorting to scientific testing, the defendant has come up with an entirely different strategy. On September 15th, two Soviet physicians – Professor V. Giller, the head of Litfond’s central polyclinic, and Dr. A. Golodets, a female doctor who provided home medical care for Pasternak for a period of time – make sworn statements to the official notary of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation to the effect that from May 9th until his death, the author was so ill that he could no longer have outside visitors, nor could he dictate or sign any correspondence.

This version of the facts anticipates the moment when Pasternak was in his death throes by almost three weeks. It also states that the first diagnosis of cancer was made on May 18th,

when it actually occurred ten days later (and approximately two years after the onset of the disease itself, according to the medical report).

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In 1940, at the tender age of twenty, the famous Polish-born writer and literary critic Gustavo Herling was arrested by the Soviets while he was trying to escape to Lithuania, and then interned in a terrible lager near Arkhanghelsk. Unlike most of his fellow prisoners, however, he managed to survive his ordeal thanks to his physical and moral fortitude. He described these dramatic events in a book entitled *A World Apart*, which was characterized by Bertrand Russell as the most disturbing and best written book on the Soviet concentration camps when it was first published in Great Britain in 1951. After settling permanently in Naples, where he married one of Benedetto Croce's daughters, he issued an Italian edition of the book (*Un mondo a parte*), which was published by Laterza in 1958, and which my wife and I received an autographed copy of when it was hot off the press one evening when he was a guest at our home.

Why am I referring to Herling at this point in the text? Because this literary talent, who was one of the few individuals that I told about the Pasternak Prize, wrote an essay entitled "The Seven Deaths of Maxim Gorky," which outlined the different versions of Gorky's demise that were given by the GPU, the illustrious predecessor of the KGB, each one of which involved a number of doctors who played the part of the accusers in order to advance their own careers, and an equal number who played the part of the assassins, and who ended up in the lagers.(16)

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Pasternak's death, on the other hand, had only two different versions: the one based on the testimony of the doctors unearthed by the KGB, and the one based on all the other sources.

I have already mentioned that on May 15th, Olga arranged for a leading cardiologist named Professor Dolgopolossk to visit Peredelkino, and that after examining Pasternak, he assured her in the most encouraging of tones that the patient had all but gotten over his heart attack. In fact, Pasternak seemed to be feeling much better, and there was every reason to believe that he would make a full recovery. About a week later, however, he suffered an acute respiratory attack. According to Olga's memoirs, the presence of lung cancer, which was diagnosed by a portable x-ray machine that had been brought to the house, was only discovered a few days before his death. She also added that immediately after the diagnosis was made, a very young nurse named Marina Rassokhina arrived at her nearby cottage to tell her that Pasternak had asked to see her.(17)

Perhaps Olga was mistaken? Perhaps the writer Yuri Krotkov, a future émigré, was mistaken when he said that until the final days of May, among the individuals who had access to the patient there were not only close relatives, but also dear friends such as V. Asmus, Nina Tabidze, and possibly N. Williams-Velmond?(18) Then there were the foreign correspondents who waited in the dacha's garden for a daily update on the patient's condition from the author's brother, Aleksandr Pasternak. Were they all mistaken when on June 1, 1960, they broke the news in scores of important Western newspapers, such as *Le Monde* and *France Soir*, that Pasternak's condition had worsened at the end of May, and that he had been diagnosed with cancer on the 28th of the month?

These are obviously rhetorical questions. However, where the law itself it is concerned, supporting documentation is an absolute necessity. The first of the sworn statements that I will

eventually use in the forgery case, which is dated October 19, 1967, is written by Vero Roberti, a correspondent for *Il Corriere della Sera* who worked in Moscow from June, 1956 to July, 1960, and who is now stationed in London. It reads as follows:

“I originally met the author Boris Leonidovich Pasternak at his dacha in Peredelkino (Moscow) in October of 1958, after which I went to see him on a regular basis. During those times, I would have long conversations not only with him, but also with his wife and brother. As I have indicated in my newspaper articles, I had many occasions to observe the events that were taking place in his life for the year and a half that preceded his death.

I knew that B. L. Pasternak had begun to suffer from heart trouble after the terrible misfortunes that occurred as a result of the Nobel Prize, and that his condition had deteriorated in April of 1960, which had forced him to spend most of his time in bed.

Until the final days of May, however, there was nothing that would lead me to believe that he was nearing the end of his life. In fact, on the afternoon of May 23, 1960, when I was visiting Peredelkino, Mrs. Pasternak, whom I was chatting with on the ground floor of the dacha, told me that her husband was sleeping in his bedroom upstairs; that his condition was stable; that nothing particularly alarming had been observed by the physician that came to see him from time to time; and that even though the patient was bedridden, he spent his days quietly reading books and newspapers, answering letters that continued to arrive from every corner of the world, and even conversing with relatives and friends that had come to see him.

I stayed for about half an hour, during which time I did not notice anyone else in the house, and then, because I had to get back to Moscow for my work, I said good-bye to

Mrs. Pasternak without waiting for her husband to wake up. I told her that as soon as I had some free time, I would stop by to say hello to the author, and keep him company for a little while.

Several days thereafter, however, my colleagues and I received the news that B. L. Pasternak's condition had suddenly deteriorated, and that serious complications had set in. A couple of days later, shortly before midnight, we were alerted by telephone that the author was dying...

At B. L. Pasternak's funeral, which I filmed as a documentary for Italian television, the author's widow confirmed that incredibly, everything had come to a head in the space of just a few days. It was only on May 28th that a specialist who had come from Moscow to examine the patient had first discovered that he had cancer – or more precisely, a tumor on one of his lungs.”(19)

However, I will not be able to make use of this declaration until the forgery case (in which the defendant now becomes the plaintiff) is initiated once the Court of Appeals has expressly suspended its own judgment in January of 1969 in accordance with the Civil Procedures Code. As of that time, I will go about procuring a number of other sworn statements, all of which contradict the written testimony of the two Soviet physicians that I mentioned earlier in the text.

One of these is from Valery Tarsis, a well-known author who was exiled from the USSR after suffering years of persecution. Today he lives near Frankfurt, West Germany, with his young wife, Hanni. As the reader will see, his declaration also contains some very interesting facts about his own personal experiences with members of the medical profession in the Soviet Union.

“I was born in Russia in 1906, and I spent my entire life in Russia, until my citizenship was revoked, and I was prohibited from repatriating, because of my anti-conformist attitude as a writer. These actions were brought against me while I was in Great Britain for a series of lectures.

In 1960, when I was still living in Russia, and I was very much a part of the literary world, I had occasion to observe at close hand the various events that were taking place in the life of Boris Pasternak, who was my friend. I am therefore able to confirm that the state of Pasternak’s health (he had been suffering from heart trouble for at least two years) gave no cause for alarm until a few days before his death, which occurred on May 30, 1960. In other words, until a few days before his death, Pasternak was most certainly able to receive friends and write letters. In fact, his mental condition was totally lucid, and he was capable of carrying out all those activities that were not precluded by his being bedridden.

I was persecuted for many years in the Soviet Union. Among other things – as I have described in my autobiography, *Ward 7*, which was published in Germany under the title *Botschaft aus einem Irrenhaus*, and in many other countries as well, including Italy – I was confined to a mental institution for seven months on the basis of false diagnoses that the political authorities had demanded of a group of physicians. Many other individuals, whose only “illness” consisted of the fact that they did not adhere to the politics of the Soviet regime, also fell victim to the complicity or compliance of various doctors. Among these were the noted philosopher, mathematician and poet, Aleksandr Esenin-Volpin, and the former general Grigorenko, who was persecuted by the authorities because he had come out in support of Daniel, Sinyavsky and other

non-conformist writers and men of letters who had been deported to concentration camps. The list goes on ad infinitum.

Based on my own sad personal experiences, as well as my direct knowledge of a large number of cases in which honest citizens were unjustly accused of a wide range of crimes or irresponsible statements for purely political reasons, I can affirm that verbal and written declarations made by persons who have been subjected to acts of intimidation and retaliation on the part of the Soviet authorities are totally unfounded.”(20)

In the meantime, the months of 1969 are passing by. As far as the forgery case is concerned, the plaintiff continues to rely heavily on the statements made by the two Soviet physicians who had moved back the clock – or better yet, the calendar – in terms of the moment when Pasternak was actually dying. In fact, they neither present additional documentation, nor do they ever ask for scientific testing of the photocopy in question.

In the second half of the year, the Soviet Consul General in Rome, Ivan Yudkin, who will soon become the number two person at the Soviet Embassy, decides that it is time to make his move. And he makes it diplomatically. Through a lawyer who takes care of the Soviet Union’s legal affairs in Italy, he lets me know that he would like to have a meeting with me.

When I arrive at the villa that houses the Consulate on Via Nomentana, no one is so undiplomatic as to ask me to show some identification. Instead, a familiar face appears in the doorway of an office for half a second, just long enough to make sure that it is really me. The face belongs to Lolly (Zamoisky), who was the Soviet journalist that accompanied me on my trip to

the middle Volga many years before. Now he is working in Italy both as a correspondent for *Izvestya*, and a frequent contributor to an important Roman magazine under an assumed name. Later on, he will go to France as a correspondent for *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, where he will make contact with the Parisian intelligentsia.

He is also an agent of the KGB, which is a role that he will continue to play, while rising rapidly through the ranks to the grade of colonel, until the fall of the Iron Curtain.(21) For the rest of his career, he will make his living as a general essayist, writing about everything from masonic lodges to UFOs.

After my identity check, the Consul General sits down with me in private. Without making any references to the literary prize itself, he proceeds to inform me that if I do not give up my claim to Pasternak's royalties, the author's legal heirs (who now include Olga as well) intend to come to Rome to testify in person. Although I do not believe a word that he is saying, I am too polite to tell him so. I simply point out that in this country, those who testify on their own behalf are not taken very seriously. In any case, I will refer this information to my lawyer. When the meeting is over, Yudkin escorts me with great ceremony to the gate of the villa, all the while chatting pleasantly about this and that.

A short time later, Andrei Korobov, the Vice Chairman of Inyurkollegya, shows up in Rome in the company of an individual who looks more like a police agent than another lawyer. Once again, I am summoned to the Consulate, and this time there are six of us involved: Yudkin, the Soviet attorneys, my own legal advisors, and myself. In the most elegant legal jargon

possible,

Korobov then reiterates what the Consul General told me in much simpler terms when I met with him before. He is followed by his assistant, who expresses his amazement at the fact that I am contesting Olga's inheritance when I am supposedly so fond of her.

I then ask both of them if they really believe that the heirs will receive the moneys they are owed if I decide to drop the lawsuit. Without batting an eyelash, Korobov assures me that this is indeed the case. However, since the tone of my voice indicates that I personally have some doubts about the matter, his assistant goes on the offensive. "Let's try not to get off the track," he says, as his own voice gets louder and louder. "We're here today to decide whether we're going to part company as enemies or friends." On the contrary, nothing at all will be decided today, I reply with the greatest assurance, as I still need some time to think things over. At this point, there is nothing left to do but adjourn the meeting.

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A few minutes later, I am back in the car with my lawyers. They and I are convinced that while the plaintiff and the Soviets do not have a winning hand between them, they do have their ways of extending for years to come the various legal proceedings, including the final one, which should establish the actual dollar amount that is due to me as half of the royalties from the novel. I myself add that apart from postponing indefinitely the Pasternak Prize, my adversaries' delaying tactics would convince the author's heirs (whom their "protectors" have deceived, and whom I cannot explain things to personally) that I have in fact become their enemy. More than anything else, I cannot bear the thought that Olga and Irochka would have feelings of resentment toward me. I then make the decision, right there in the car, to give up my claim to the money.

My attorneys advise me, however, not to let my opponents know about this decision immediately. In their opinion, they should be kept in suspense for a little while longer. At the moment, the most important thing is to concentrate on the best way for me to come out even in terms of the extremely costly “judicial iter.” In the end, as we shall see, it will take eight years to close the case, at which point it will have eaten up not only what was left in the remittance fund, but also a good part of my personal savings.

Meanwhile, between endless and inconclusive hearings, the forgery case will go on until May of 1971, when the court issues the first of many orders to the effect that the heirs must appear in person.

I myself would be willing to swear that the rightful heirs will never show up in court. That much at least is for certain. What does take me by surprise, however, is Oborina’s violent reaction when I tell her about my meeting with Yudkin and the lawyers from Inyurkollegya. In fact, she seems both alarmed and indignant when she accuses me of not having foreseen that my action against Feltrinelli would eventually involve the Soviet state, and forewarned her to that effect. She also maintains that my including her in the list of witnesses to testify on my behalf will make it very difficult for her and her mother to go back to Moscow, thus putting an end to their unfortunate Italian experience. She then insists that I drop the legal proceedings immediately (since she herself has no intention of testifying), and that I also compensate her handsomely for the damage that has been done.

To tell the truth, I do not feel even remotely responsible for her current plight, particularly as I recently learned that she has bought herself a house in one of the city’s better neighborhoods with the compensation that she received as a result of her petition to the President of the

Republic, which would seem to indicate that she has no intention of going back to the USSR in the near future.

In any case, I try to make amends by telling her that I had no idea when I first went to court that the Soviets would interfere, and that I have already told my lawyers to end the proceedings, even though technically speaking, it will take some time to do so. I conclude our conversation by assuring her that I will see what I can do for her within the limits of my own possibilities.

In order to tell the rest of Oborina's tale, however, I need to move the clock ahead to October 6, 1995, when Rome receives a file from the British Secret Service's "Impedian Dossier" (containing revelations by the well-known Mitrokhin), which indicates that the lady in question, who is still a resident of the city, was once an agent of the KGB's Second Chief Directorate. Since I have already come across many of her colleagues at one point or another, I am not at all shocked by the news. Perhaps when she was working for IMEMO at the Academy of Sciences, she provided the KGB with information on the Italian economy by simply reading the newspapers – as often happens in this secret, and equally bureaucratic world – rather than resorting to daring feats of valor.

Whatever the case may be, I doubt very much that she played an active role in the KGB after relocating to Italy, or that she got involved in my legal affairs because she was then in their employ. Otherwise, why would she have given me a photocopy of a letter that my adversaries had not been able to seriously invalidate? Why would she have agreed to sign a sworn statement attesting to its authenticity, which she would then have to confirm in open court? And why would

she have let me know in advance that she had no intention of testifying when her decision would be interpreted by the court as the result of intimidation that she had suffered at the hands of the Soviet authorities, which would work to my advantage?

Apart from these considerations, there is no denying the fact that from the time she arrived in Italy, Oborina never used any of the official KGB covers (diplomat, journalist or Soviet Trade Commission employee) that agents generally benefit from. Furthermore, everything she did indicated that she wanted desperately to put the past behind her and make a better life for herself. As opposed to Mata Hari, who was faithful to the cause until the bitter end, several of her female counterparts would seize the right occasion to give up their profession and go off on their own. I was even told that one of these ladies, who was more clever or fortunate than Oborina, actually succeeded in making the leap from relative obscurity to a life of luxury, which just goes to prove that even spies can be Cinderellas.

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On March 5, 1969 – while the plaintiff in the forgery case is still waiting to see the results of the Soviet intervention – Feltrinelli receives an office visit from Zdenek Frybort, who is representing Československý Spisovatel , the publishing house (of Writers' Union) in Prague that has been interested for some time in acquiring the publication rights for *Doctor Zhivago*. Frybort himself, who is one of the Czechoslovak intellectuals that managed to survive the Soviet repression of the year before, and who is still fighting for the country's independence, has come to Milan to negotiate a contract with Feltrinelli. And what is the publisher's reaction?

“After dispensing with the usual amenities, he proceeded to blame my humble self for the

recent political events that had taken place in my country, after which he asked me, ‘When are you people going to stop all this nonsense?’ Then he told me that his dedication to the most basic revolutionary principles would never allow him to agree to our publishing *Doctor Zhivago*, since the book would be used in Czechoslovakia for the purposes of anti-Soviet propaganda. He also warned me that if *Československý Spisovatel* ever came out with a pirated version of the book, he would make sure that all hell broke loose in Czechoslovakia (Feltrinelli’s actual words were considerably more picturesque)...I simply do not understand how Feltrinelli can be so dead set against us, when it was he himself who mounted such a gigantic anti-Soviet campaign, and who made enormous profits from selling the rights to *Doctor Zhivago*.” (22)

Notwithstanding Feltrinelli’s ideological and political transformation, his scruples with regard to the Czechoslovak case are a notable exception to the rule. In fact, he will never express any regrets whatsoever for having allowed *Doctor Zhivago* to be published all over the world, despite his dedication to “the most basic revolutionary principles.” Nor does he have any qualms about finally signing the “new contract” with the Pasternak heirs on March 1, 1970, which he then proudly announces to the public at large. This agreement, which he has wanted in the worst way for over a decade, can also be included in the package of anti-prize materials:

“The party of the first part, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Publishing Company, doing business at Via Andegari, 6, Milan, and the parties of the second part, Yevgeny Borisovich Pasternak, Leonid Borisovich Pasternak and Olga Vsevolodvna Ivinskaya, residing in Moscow, who are represented by Andrei Korobov of Moscow..., wish to make the following joint statement:

‘As is well known, some time ago, the writer Boris Pasternak authorized the publisher Feltrinelli to publish and promulgate on a world-wide basis *Doctor Zhivago* and his

Autobiography, granting him total authority to make use of these works both directly and indirectly, not only in print form, but through other media as well. [This is somewhat of an exaggeration in terms of what the author actually said.] The writer's sons, and his faithful companion, Olga Ivinskaya, who became the proprietors of the copyrights following the death of Boris Pasternak, have recently signed a full consent agreement with the publisher, at the conclusion of negotiations that were begun some time ago, with regard to all matters pertaining to their mutual interests, including financial arrangements. The agreement will go into effect immediately with the request for authorization to release the moneys that have been stipulated on behalf of Messrs. Pasternak and Mrs. Ivinskaya.”(23)

The statement is immediately picked up by a number of important newspapers around the globe, several of which comment on the fact that the matter of Pasternak's inheritance has yet to be settled. In the words of the *Sunday Times*, “While the agreement indicates that the three main parties to the dispute (the Pasternak family, his mistress, and his publisher) have now resolved their differences, it may not be the end of the story. Other claims on the money – held in trust by a Swiss Bank - are still pending. Sergio d'Angelo, the man who originally smuggled the *Zhivago* manuscript out of Russia and passed it to Feltrinelli, has launched an action in Italy for part of the money.”(24)

At this point, the forgery case is right where it was several years earlier, and there it will stay until Feltrinelli's death. In the meantime, from New York City, where I have been living since June of 1971, I will keep in touch with my lawyers, who remind my adversaries that I will not even consider their suggestion that both sides agree to drop the lawsuit until they give me written assurances that I will be reimbursed in full for the legal fees that I have had to pay out of

my own pocket.

Even before Feltrinelli's death, the Soviets issue a rather curious statement to the press to the effect that Pasternak's heirs – whom they name as his sons, Leonid and Yevgeny, and his daughter, Katya (Olga is not mentioned at all) – were supposed to appear in court in Milan on January 19th to testify about their knowledge of my relationship with their father, as well as the photocopy in question, but that they sent a telegram asking for a new court date, which has now been scheduled for March 24th.(25) Since I myself am absolutely certain that Pasternak never had a daughter called Katya or by any other name, I begin to wonder if she is an impostor who has been hired by the KGB to state that she has given up her rights to the inheritance, and that she is therefore the only one of the three siblings that can testify as a disinterested party. Or am I giving the KGB too much credit when it comes to their imagination?

Ten days before the hearing that Pasternak's children are expected to attend, however, Feltrinelli dies under mysterious circumstances, and the complicated legal issues involving his huge estate – which makes the royalties from *Doctor Zhivago* look like a mere pittance – will involve two of his former mates: the German woman that he married in Mexico, who was not recognized as his wife under Italian law, but whose son Feltrinelli legitimized, and who still has an important job at the publishing house; and his much younger Italian widow, who did not have the time to bear the son that she wanted from her husband, and who now lives with the fear (which is probably groundless) of being accused of complicity in his various terrorist activities. In any case, my adversaries now have far more important things to think about, and they finally agree to accept my terms in order to put an end to our dispute.

Shortly after Feltrinelli's death, I also receive a phone call from the director of *Vita*, who wants to know how the Americans have reacted to the news. This interview is the first time that I make a public statement about the reasons that led me to bring a lawsuit against the Milanese publisher: "I told Feltrinelli at the beginning of '58 that I would not accept a penny of Pasternak's royalties as long as there was any chance that the author would leave the Soviet Union for the West, and claim the moneys that were owed to him. When I realized that such a thing would never happen, I asked Feltrinelli to release the funds that the author had wanted me to have. As you already know, it was my intention then, and it is my intention now, to establish a Pasternak Prize or a Pasternak Foundation."(26)

The truth of the matter is, however, that I no longer plan to do so. But before I make my decision known, I will wait for my adversaries to sign on the dotted line, as my lawyers have advised me to. This will finally occur at the end of 1972.

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The Pasternak affair, with its lasting repercussions, has now drawn to a close. As for its large cast of characters, it would have a profound effect on the lives of certain individuals, including Feltrinelli, who otherwise would probably have spent the rest of his days as a wealthy publisher and book dealer, having overcome the emotional insecurity and ingenuousness that ultimately led to his tragic end.

There are three heroes in this story: Pasternak himself, who painted such a marvelous picture of eternal Russia, interpreting the hopes and dreams of its great people; Olga, who inspired him with her love, and who always supported him in a spirit of total self-sacrifice; and

Irochka, whose youthful enthusiasm and extraordinary personality were so much a part of the charming atmosphere of Potapovsky Lane. Unfortunately, these same heroes were also the ones who would pay the highest price. We owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude for having given the world one of the great masterpieces of literature.

As for the characters in this tale who tried to diminish the value of this great gift by creating an absurd and unnecessary political scandal, they acted out of total blindness, like all those who are doomed to perdition. For the Soviet regime, the Pasternak affair was not merely a humiliating defeat. In the words of Solzhenitsyn, it was also the first brick to be torn from the dike.

Notes

1. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 136, L. 183
2. RGANI, F. 5, Op. 36, D. 133, L. 184.
3. Ibid., F. 5, Op. 36, D. 133, L. 186.
4. The draft of the letter is among this author's private papers. The original might possibly be found in the archive of the former KGB.
5. The correspondence on this subject (including the original letters from Floyd and Hayward) is among this author's private papers.
6. *The Times* (London: 19 June 1961).
7. *The Times* (London: 21 November 1964).
8. This letter is attached to the memorandum that is documented in footnote 128.
9. RGANI, F. 4, Op. 20, D. 864, L. 48-54.
10. Ibid.
11. The original document is part of the official court records.
12. RGANI, F. 4, Op. 20, D. 932, L. 106-107.
13. RGANI, F. 4, Op. 20, D. 932, L. 105.
14. A. Grandi, op. cit., 224.
15. A copy of the letter, in her own hand, is among this author's personal papers.
16. Gustavo Herling, "Da Gorki a Pasternak: Considerazioni sulla letteratura sovietica" (Rome: Opere Nuove, 1958).

17. O. Ivinskaya, op. cit., 322-323.
18. Y. Krotkov, op. cit.
19. The statement in question was authenticated by the Consulate General of Italy in London on October 19, 1967. A copy of it is among this author's personal papers.
20. The original statement, which was written in German, was authenticated by a notary public in Dieburg, West Germany, on April 9, 1969. A copy of it is among the personal papers of this author.
21. Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 21.
22. "Pasternak vietato ai cechi" (Milan: *Avvenire*, 7 March 1969).
23. *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milan: 1 March 1970).
24. *The Sunday Times* (London: 1 March 1970).
25. *Il Corriere della Sera* (Milan: 20 January 1972). *The New York Times* also printed a more concise version of the story on the same day. While it failed to indicate the dates that Boris Pasternak's children were scheduled to appear in court, it did refer to them as Leonid, Yevgeny and Katya.
26. *Vita*, 25 March 1972.