

Alexander Zinoviev

**THE RADIANT
FUTURE**

Translated from the Russian by Gordon Clough

Once I happened to overhear a conversation between two Moscow intellectuals. One was a famous sociologist who had devoted titanic efforts to the development of Soviet sociology for the benefit of the party, the state and the people. Yet despite that, his group had been completely destroyed in the name of that same party, that same state and that same people. And he was left with nothing to do, grateful merely that they kept on paying him. The other was a famous painter who had put no less effort than the former into the task of raising the Soviet visual arts to a world-class level, but who in the course of twenty odd years had not been allowed to stage even a small one-man show. I set down their conversation in full.

'What a bloody awful life it is!'

'Oh, f— it all!'

There can be no more definitive comment on the life we lead. And yet in that life we sometimes see some vague hints at something different. And those hints merit at least a moment's consideration.

Moscow
1976

Long live communism

Where the Avenue of Marxism-Leninism meets Cosmonaut Square, a great permanent slogan was erected reading: 'Long Live Communism—The Radiant Future of All Mankind!' The Slogan was erected at the request of the workers. It was a long time in the building, mainly in winter, when costs are higher. A huge amount of money was poured into it—no less (it is rumoured) than was invested in the whole of our agriculture during the first five-year plan. But today we are very rich, and such expenses are a mere nothing. We have spent even more on the Arabs without breaking ourselves. What we spent on the Arabs was a complete waste, while the Slogan is a source of undoubted benefit.

As might have been expected, the Slogan was of very shoddy construction. The paint began to peel even before the Slogan was put to use. The individual letters became progressively covered in a sort of grey grime, and fell to bits. Therefore the Slogan had to be completely repaired at least three times a year: once for the May-day celebrations, once for the November celebrations, and on every occasion when Moscow entered for the Ail-Union contest for the model communist city, and the multi-million army of Moscow office workers was driven out on to the streets to clean up the rubbish. As a result the maintenance of the Slogan cost the State several times more than its initial construction. And to judge by the vulgar graffiti which adorn the supports of the letters, the educational effect of the Slogan has not yet achieved even the half of its planned potential.

As the 25th Congress of the CP S U drew near, it was decided to put an end to this outrage. New letters for the Slogan were cast in stainless steel at the Brewery named in honour of the 21 st Congress of the C P S U (formerly the Marshal Budyonny Brewery). They were cast by the shock-workers of communist labour in their overtime. The letters were made of bee. . ., forgive me, metal, which had been specially saved up by the workers in honour of the forthcoming Congress. The letters were mounted

on a mighty concrete pedestal. The concrete itself had been saved up by the construction workers of Moscow in honour of the forthcoming Congress. So, on this occasion, not only was nothing spent on the Slogan, there was even a profit, as the builders of the Slogan had saved up more than ten million roubles in honour of the forthcoming Congress. It was decided to spend these carefully garnered resources on the construction of permanent reinforced concrete frames to carry the portraits of the members of the Politburo, thus putting the crowning glory (as the newspapers said) to the splendid architectural ensemble of Cosmonaut Square and the wasteground adjoining it. Defending his idea about the portraits to the Central Committee, the chief city architect asserted frankly that by this means we would be able to conceal the ugliness of the wasteground from the eyes of the foreigners. For after all, we cannot rid ourselves completely of foreigners at the present time!

The official opening of the Slogan was a most solemn occasion. The Avenue was resurfaced. There were many foreign journalists and diplomatic representatives. Countless guests came from the friendly parties of Africa and South America, and there were also delegations from all the countries of the Socialist camp. There were also guests of honour from the lands of capitalism—the Italian actress Sophia Bordobrigida, that personal friend of the Soviet Union the American millionaire Hamson, the farmer Zdrast, the French singer Georges Ivanov, and many others. The ceremony was filmed. To the accompaniment of tempestuous applause from the representatives of the workers who crammed the Avenue, the Square and the wasteground, an Honorary Presidium was elected consisting of . . . and a telegram of greetings was sent to comrade . . . in person. A major speech was delivered by one of the secretaries of the City Committee of the party, Comrade Tsvetikov, who had recently replaced Yagoditsyn, who had been down-graded to some minor ministry on account of his boundless arrogance. Yagoditsyn had grown so insolent that without any reference to Mitrofan Lukich he had published an article in a magazine which Mitrofan Lukich himself had wanted to publish, and had thus completely discredited himself. So as not to fall flat on his face in the mud, Comrade Tsvetikov had learnt his speech by

heart and delivered it almost without error (if we leave aside mistakes in pronunciation). Then it was the turn of the cosmonaut Khabibulin, who said that from out in space Earth looks as it should look under communism: very round, and a kind of pinkish-blue. Then there was a speech from the representative of the freedom-fighting peoples of Africa. Dazzling the whole Square with his flashing, powerful white teeth, he said 'Tank yo' very moch!', which threw the workers' representatives into a frenzy. When the applause had finally died down and the well rehearsed spontaneous slogans had been shouted, Academician Kanareikin mounted the rostrum.

Kanareikin is the director of our Institute. In its time our Institute was in charge of the building of the Slogan. Members of the Institute delivered more than a hundred lectures on the theory of scientific communism for the builders of the Slogan, which won for them the challenge trophy of the Red Banner of the Regional Committee of the party. That was why Kanareikin was allowed to speak. Otherwise he would in no way have been permitted to mount the rostrum, since he should have gone out of print long ago and cleared the stage for young, talented and literate scientists (and most of all for Vladilen Makarovich Eropkin, a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, and son-in-law of Mitrofan Lukich himself). It was a great personal triumph for Kanareikin to be allowed to speak. The newspapers would report it. There would be a rumour that Kanareikin still wielded power. And his removal from office would be further postponed to some unspecified time in the future. And once he had got to the rostrum, Kanareikin knew better than anyone else how to exploit his opportunity. He rolled out a penetrating speech which consisted mainly of exclamation marks.

The malicious enemies of communism and the so-called writer, the anti-Sovietchik Solzhenitsyn, expelled at the demands of the workers beyond the frontiers of our fair Motherland for his slanderous inventions, to find shelter under the wing of the worldwide imperialist bourgeoisie and its lackeys, who . . . Where was I? Ah, yes! And also that self-styled Academician, the renegade Sakharov, for whom too there is no place in our ranks, who gambles on the long-

suffering and humanity of our beloved government and all our people . . . Just ask yourselves what more could this man want! The government had given him everything! A seat in the Academy. Praise. Awards. But it seems that all this is not enough! Now, what was I saying? Ah! So, they allege that the faith of the Soviet people in communism is on the ebb. What a vile slander!!! If they could only see with what love, with what enthusiasm, the workers of our region have built this magnificent Slogan!!! Completely without payment!!! Is not this an example of the new, communist approach to labour!!!? Does not this bear witness to the fact that, with every year, with every decade, our faith in communism strengthens and widens??!! The freedom-loving peoples of Africa . . . We have already heard what our comrade here has had to say about that . . . ' When the fountain of Kanareikin's eloquence had finally, with some difficulty, been turned off, Comrade Tsvetikov yelled all the appropriate 'long lives . . . ' and 'glory to . . . ' and cut the ribbon. An avalanche of automobiles, from which could clearly be heard curses directed at the idiots who had organised this spectacle, poured on to the Avenue of Marxism-Leninism, heading directly for the yellow building which housed the Human Sciences Institute of the Academy of Sciences. Kanareikin tore off in his personal automobile. And I . . . Why the devil, I ask myself, have I been hanging about here if I haven't been allowed to say a single word! And I'm obliged to drag myself home on public transport, and what's more, with two changes.

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Two changes! And I'm not just anyone, I'm the Head of the Department of Theoretical Problems of the Methodology of Scientific Communism, i.e. the Head of a department of the Institute whose director is still, for the moment, Kanareikin. I am a doctor of philosophy, a professor, a member of the editorial board of our leading philosophical journal, a member of countless Scientific Councils, committees, commissions,

societies, the author of six monographs and a hundred articles. My textbook has been translated into all the semi-Western languages—Polish, Bulgarian, Czech, German, Hungarian. It's even about to be translated into Rumanian. It's generally accepted that at the next Academy elections I shall surely become a corresponding member. Even that scum Vaskin from the Higher Party School (HPS) is reconciled to this fact which is so disagreeable for him. Yet—two changes! No one would believe me if I told them. I could take a taxi, of course. But taxis cost a fortune. And prices are soaring every day. And what's more, you have to give the driver a tip, which is extremely humiliating. After all, no one gives us any tips! Again, I could walk. It's not very far. But that would be against my principles. A professor, almost a corresponding member—and walking home! It's ruled out by my rank.

Our institute and the department

Our Institute occupies the upper floors of the Yellow House. If you look from the Centre, our department is in the right-hand wing of the top storey. In the past, when the arrival of communism was expected from day to day, and the fall in prices of one kopeck per annum raised the hopes of even the unbelievers that it would happen any time (well, I'll be damned, they are going to build communism after all), our Institute was very small. In the days of Nikita, when the onset of communism was pushed a little further back into the somewhat ill-defined future of the 'present generation', the Institute doubled in size. And after Nikita was toppled, when prices began to rise irresistibly, and the promises of cost-free benefits came to be regarded by all as a mere joke, the Institute quadrupled in size. As a result of events which were well known to all, the sectors dealing with the struggle against anti-communism and revisionism, and with the development of Marxism by the brotherly parties of the West, East, South and North, were first established and then strengthened. And now, our Institute, in terms of the size of its staff (there are more than a hundred graduate students from the

non-Russian Republics alone!) has become one of the most powerful scientific organisations in the country. Five hundred quires of 40,000 characters each every year! If you reckon 20 quires to the average book, that means 25 fat volumes a year. Two hundred and fifty books in ten years!

'Now I understand why we've got such a paper shortage,' said Sashka, my son by my first (but, alas, not my last) wife, when he heard about this. 'You publish all this shit, and there's no paper left for anything decent.'

'You're just naive, Sashka,' said Tamurka (that's my present wife, Tamara). 'If you only knew how much paper is used for editions of the classics of Marxism and the speeches of our leaders, you wouldn't worry about a triviality like twenty-five books a year.'

'But it's just waste paper!'

'Of course it's waste paper. And we plan it ahead as waste paper.'

'So why spoil all that paper?' said Lenka, in astonishment. Lenka is my daughter by my second wife (by Tamurka, that is).

'Don't be silly! What about those obligatory minimum print-runs?'

'Well, why not say you are producing big editions, and print fewer? What difference would that make?'

'You'd lose your job for a start, and might even land in jail. Once anyone makes a speech, it's got to be a work of genius. Therefore you must print twenty million. And it's got to be put on sale. And its balance sheet has got to check out.'

'Surely no one buys these things?'

'Of course they do. The political education classes. The evening courses in Marxism-Leninism. Libraries, study circles. And look at all the students we've got. They've all got to be able to regurgitate this stuff in their exams.'

After a conversation like that, one could easily begin to feel pessimistic about the size of our Institute. And what can one say about the size of our department?! No more than fifty people altogether. But that does depend on your point of view. The department, one could say, is like my own child to me. I have spent almost twenty years of my life on its creation. When I first came to the Institute as a young Ph.D. candidate, the only

people working on the methodology of the theory of scientific communism were three cretinous Stalinist yesmen in the Scientific Communism section. This section immediately grew into a department, but something a long way short of our department. With great difficulty I managed to get rid of one of these imbeciles, (catching him red-handed in immoral activity). The other two turned out to be quite bright lads and were easy enough to re-educate. Indeed, one of them went so far to the left that I constantly had to restrain him. I more than once had to tell him straight out that the criticism of Stalin wasn't to be taken seriously, but he didn't take my advice. Later he got rapped very sharply over the knuckles for his concessions to the Yugoslav revisionists. He was slung out of the Institute on the pretext of some injudicious remark about the Chinese. And then all trace of him disappeared. The rumour was that he'd been put into a psychiatric hospital. Today there are as many people in our department as there were in the whole Institute when I first went there. There's even talk about up-grading the department to an independent institute. But I'm in no hurry. I'm afraid that the same thing might happen to us as happened to the sociologists: as soon as the Department of Sociology inflated itself to eighty people, and then, when it split off from us as an independent institute, to five hundred, there was a massive pogrom against the sociologists. You've got to be careful. The business is far too serious to take unnecessary risks. But on the other hand you mustn't delay too much either. According to some certain unwritten laws of our life, if you want to hang on to what you achieve you've got to keep on pressing forward, i.e. ask for wage rises, plan new publications, get new sections set up, and so on. Otherwise you'll be accused of inaction and backwardness. How can one define the moment when one can say the time has come to make a move?

Many people confuse our department with the Department of Scientific Communism. But in fact there is a great difference between us. They have gathered together the most sombre figures of our national philosophy. The old ones are the 'escaped' Stalinists (that may sound rather comical, since the Stalinists were never victims of anything; the worst thing that happened to them was to be mocked a little in the wall news-

paper). The young ones are cynical careerists who are prepared to do anything. And every one of them is completely, crassly ignorant. On the other hand, in our department we have the brightest and most capable representatives of our philosophy. Stupak, Nikiforov, Novikov, Tormoshilkina, Bulygin, and so on. There isn't a comparable constellation of names in any other philosophy establishment in the Union. It's no mere chance that we are so hated in the Academy of Social Sciences (A S S), in the HPS and in many other places. In comparison with us they feel themselves to be mere provincials and they accuse us of trying to turn Marxist theory into something elitist. But who stops them from writing good books themselves?!

The director of our competitor, the Department of Scientific Communism, is the most disgusting creature in our philosophy—that bitch, Tvarzhinskaya. For more than fifteen years she was the butt of all the sarcasm of the progressive young people of our Institute, but that is now all in the past. For some years now Tvarzhinskaya has been regarded as one of our leading lights! She used to be a close associate of Beria and an active agent of the secret police. Today she regularly travels abroad, and there's never been a single case when she's been refused an entry visa. Even prominent Western sociologists treat her as a colleague.

At home

When I got home I gave them a detailed account of the opening of the Slogan. My mother-in-law said that it was splendid. Sashka fell about on the divan clutching his sides. Lenka, without batting an eyelid, remarked that she would organise a trip from school to visit this remarkable monument of our culture.

'Nikita promised that communism would come within the lifetime of the present generation,' said Sashka. 'Who did he mean? His contemporaries, or newborn babies? Anyway, this promise has turned into a dirty joke. Now the date's been pushed back to some vague time in the future. That's easier to

cope with. Anyone can always say that communism will come, and that we won't see any more of the scandals and outrages we see today. And for the meantime just hang on, because for the time being we've only reached a lower level. It may be the upper step of the lower level, but it's the lower level just the same.'

'Since the letters are cast in stainless steel,' said Lenka, 'your Slogan will stand there for ever. Shall I tell you a story? The President of the United States asked God when there would be an end to unemployment and inflation. "After you've gone," God replied. Our General Secretary asked God when communism would be built. "After I've gone," God replied.'

'It's easy enough for you to laugh,' I said. 'But I've got to earn your bread and butter at this business. Where do you think all this comes from—the apartment, the dacha, holidays, your transistor radios? Maybe we'll be able to buy a car soon.'

I need a car. I finally came to this conclusion on my way back from Cosmonaut Square. Close contact with the masses, who are particularly noticeable in public transport, causes me great irritation, and becomes offensive. Some old cow rammed her elbow in my side and then bawled me out on top of it. And I was so taken aback that I didn't even manage to pay her back in her own coin. Why are so many people unpleasant?

'Your father's right,' said Tamurka. 'Even a black sheep is worth fleecing. You get to be a corresponding member as quick as you can. I'm fed up with fighting my way through queues. And anyway, there's nothing decent in the shops these days.'

'Who are you calling a black sheep?' asked my mother-in-law.

'The Academy of Sciences,' said Lenka. 'Do you want a bet? They'll give the people who built the Slogan the Lenin Prize. It's as good as done.'

'Don't put yourself out on their behalf,' said Tamurka, who reckons that I should have been awarded at least a State prize long ago.

'Why shouldn't they get the prize?' said my mother-in-law. 'Building something like that isn't just writing some tatty little book. You need talent for that.'

The burden of glory

Dima Gurevich telephoned.

'Congratulations, old man! I have just seen your mug on television. It's true you were only one of a crowd, and you were only there for about a hundredth of a second, but it's something for a start. Now you've got it made—just let them try getting out of electing you.'

Then there were calls from Novikov, Nikiforov, Stupak, Korytov, Ivanov, Svetka, and the rest. The whole evening was ruined. The worst of it was that I didn't see myself at all: my mother-in-law was watching ice-hockey on the other channel. But on the whole it's a good thing that I've been seen on television. The news'll be round all Moscow by this evening, and it'll have its effect.

The last to phone was my old friend Anton Zimin. He said that he saw nothing at all funny in the story of the Slogan. Communism had been built here long ago, and it achieved its most classic form under Stalin. Today it had become somewhat less well defined under the influence of enforced contacts with the West. So the words: 'Long Live Communism' may be interpreted in the same sense as when we say 'Long Live the Soviet People', 'Long Live the CPSU', and so on. As far as the second part of the Slogan is concerned, it reflects an equally real phenomenon: this radiant future does indeed threaten all mankind. And it is no mere chance that the letters are made of steel: once installed, communism is here for ever.

'Certainly I congratulate you,' Anton concluded. 'But I must warn you: excessive glory gives birth to hatred and envy.'

Anton

Anton and I have a strange relationship. There is no single question on which we agree. But I find Anton's disagreement less irritating than the praises of others. My children adore him. All I ever hear is Uncle Anton thinks, Uncle Anton said,

What will Uncle Anton feel about that? Anton is the only one of my friends whom Tamurka does not despise. And she's got a remarkable flair for people. She even likes Natashka, Anton's wife, because Natashka doesn't make herself out to be an omniscient intellectual who understands everything; she considers her the ultimate authority on questions of food and fashion because Natashka manages to produce good meals and turn herself out well on Anton's miserable salary and her own even more miserable earnings.

Anton was arrested in 1945 and spent almost twelve years in the camps. When he came out I found him a job in the evening-class section of the philosophical faculty, and later as a junior research assistant in my own department. He was quite a bright lad, but a little bit cracked. He never managed to finish his thesis. He's submitted several articles to journals or symposia, but they have either been rejected or they've kept him hanging on (in other words, the pieces have been accepted but postponed from number to number and gradually 'forgotten'). So in the end he gave up. Then there was talk of firing him from the Institute. So I transferred him to a technical job consisting of preparing manuscripts for the press. Here he turned out to be irreplaceable. He re-worked the most stupid papers so that they became better than the best. Anton gained the reputation of being a first-class editor. The vice-president of the Academy himself tried to get him into his own editorial group, but he refused. He also refused to become assistant to the scientific secretary, even though his salary would have been almost doubled if he had accepted.

At the time when war veterans were given all sorts of awards, Anton became a central figure in the Institute: he has more military decorations than all the other Institute 'veterans' put together. Our 'veterans' almost all used to work in the political departments, on newspapers, magazines, special departments, 'smersh', and so on. But Anton never wore his medals, which always aroused Tvarzhinskaya's sincere distaste.

On one occasion the lads from the editorial board of our wall newspaper 'For a Leninist style' asked Anton to write an article for a special jubilee number. Anton described in detail the system of decorations which really existed during the war.

Then he told how one of the pilots in his regiment had become a Hero of the Soviet Union. According to him, it happened quite by accident. The deputy political commissar of the division, when he was censoring a report in the army newspaper, had tried to cross out the name of the man who was later to become a hero. But it looked as if, instead of striking the name out, the commissar had underlined it. And so the reporter who'd written the piece strengthened the passage in question by adding the number of missions the pilot had flown. As a result, the regimental and divisional authorities got excited and proposed the pilot for the decoration of Hero. Of course Anton's article was not published in the paper.

I've told Anton more than once that he is a cretin not to take advantage of all his possibilities. He merely shrugs his shoulders. I think that in the camps he must have gone off his head a bit. My hypothesis is clearly confirmed by the fact that Anton always brings any conversation on any subject back to the same theme: the way we live and who we really are. He gives the impression that he is pursuing some objective which only he can perceive, and that he doesn't give a rap for all our little cares and anxieties.

New times

The Institute brought out a special number of the wall newspaper on the opening of the Slogan. The front page had a portrait of the Leader, copied from the magazine 'Ogonyok'. The portrait turned out very funny. Beneath it appeared these lines by Tvarzhinskaya:

Throughout the planet, the universe overall,
Casting a chill fear on imperialism,
Our deathless slogan propagates the call
Long live communism!
The freedom loving nations of the earth
March on to communism cheek by cheek,
Under the direction of our Central Committee of such
great worth, Which will be elected again at the
Congress next week.

The entire Institute held its sides laughing. Novikov congratulated Tvarzhinskaya on her outstanding artistic success and advised her to send her verses to one of the major literary magazines. But Stupak said that the literary journals were all run by conservatives and that they would never publish verses of such bold poetic form. Tvarzhinskaya, who genuinely believed herself to be a true revolutionary in everything she undertook, grasped Stupak's hand with real feeling. When Kanareikin read the poem, there and then, standing in front of the newspaper, he held forth for an hour on the multi-faceted development of personality under communism. He ended his tearful improvisation with a quotation from another great poet:

Sometimes tills the fertile loam,
Sometimes writes a little poem.

Today it seems incredible that a mere five years ago this same wall newspaper published a 'philosophical poem'.

Come, my sweetheart, come outside,
Let's debate, my dearie. Everything can
be explained By our Marxist theory.

You've had your say, so now shut up. It's
my turn now to natter. There's nothing in
this world of ours, —Nothing, only
matter.

Come my sweeting, come my heart,
Cease your girlish laughter.
Existence came alone the first,
Consciousness came after.

Autumn nights are drawing in,
The leaves are turning brown.
The ideologue can grasp it all,
Even upside down.

The nightingale no longer sings In
grove or bosky wood. Everything,
both broad and long, Can be
understood.

The faithful hound stands in the road,
And wags his faithful tail. All agnostics
must be crushed, Rebutted without fail.

Do not kick me up the arse, That
tactic's had its day. We must now
approach the truth The asymptotic
way.

There's no way to get a drink, It
drives me up the wall. Even the
electron, so minute, Does not
reveal its all.

If I have to live with you, I
know that I'll be sorry. Every
intellectual step Has its
category.

Water from the dripping tap
Falls in an endless flow. What
is true and what is false
Practice will surely show.

In a side street t'other night Some
ruffians smashed my face. The
world exists in actual time And,
too, in actual space.

In the fields the gentle breeze
Sways the crimson flowers.
All is always on the move In
this world of ours.

No, my darling, do not err,
Nor yet doze off in dreams.
The only thing that moves the world
Is the conflict of extremes.

I simply can't get through your clothes
Your body's so encased. Everything
that's in the world Is wholly interlaced.

If I ask for a fur coat, It shouldn't
give you pause. There is not the
slightest thing Happens without
cause.

Slow down, my little driver dear,
Speed is unavailing. Quality can
never come If quantity is failing.

Beneath my window please restrain
Your fervent declarations. One
negation's followed fast By yet
more negations.

Give yourself a bath, my dear, You
don't smell too divine. The world
pursues a spiral course, And not a
direct line.

Take your hand from up my skirt
Your mind's always on sex. Natural
progress always leads From simple
to complex.

And will you leave my bra alone,
Stop fiddling with the thing. All
superstructures, every one, From
infrastructures spring.

I'm getting tired of all this crap I
babble as I sing. It's class warfare,
hard and sharp, Keeps history on
the wing.

Do not make me laugh, old girl,
With jokes of such inanity.
Individuals only thrive As part of
mass humanity.

Leave our girls alone, my friend, Or
else you'd best watch out. The
proletariat always leads All
progress without doubt.

What a load of crap you spout,
You're drunk out of your mind. The
proletariat always leads, The
peasants march behind.

Why do you roll your eyes to heav'n
Why wrinkle up your nose? Leading on
to victory The workers' party goes.

My old woman's in a state
With anal embolism Now
Africa is haunted by The
ghost of communism.

No kisses now for me, my dear?
Don't stand stiff as a tree. Papuans
soon will make a leap To the
supreme degree.

Will you leave ny tits alone?
Don't dare to slap my face.
According to our abilities We'll
soon proclaim our case.

Don't push me on the bed, you brute,
You know I'm wearing shoes. When
communism comes along We'll scoff just
what we choose.

Sit down, don't be in such a rush. Don't
take your boots off yet. We'll gorge
ourselves on powdered milk, And eat all
we can get.

You really are a funny girl, You
make me hoot with glee. Every
day we'll volunteer, To work
without a fee.

And your buxom figure, too,
Stands looking at, my love.
Every day we'll listen to
Directives from above.

In the fields the rampant weeds Have
still not turned to wheat. But soon, my
brothers, we will shit Through a golden
toilet seat.

That's my lot, I'll end my song, My
bladder's feeling sore. The study of our
theory Will be our nightly chore.

It was that same Tvarzhinskaya, who had been dumped on our Institute from the KGB because she was useless to them, who declaimed from the rostrum of a party meeting her praise of the wall newspaper's editorial board for that 'philosophical poem'. The poem had made such a strong impression on her that it set her writing poetry herself. At this time it was I who was in charge of the wall newspaper on behalf of the party bureau. It was up to me whether I should allow her to go ahead or not. I gave her permission. Indeed, I could not have refused even if I had wanted to. Three years later the entire editorial board of the wall newspaper was dismissed for a completely anodyne edition. Again I was a member of the party bureau, and like all the rest voted for the censure of the editor. What else could I do? The editor himself was very happy to have escaped with a reprimand. At the party meeting the decision of the party bureau was unanimously approved, although there was a good deal of angry muttering in the corridors. And at the general meeting of the Institute, when a new editorial board was elected (which this time included Tvarzhinskaya), no one so much as raised a murmur of protest. And if someone had done so, what would have happened? Nothing special. The one who dared to protest would have suffered personally, and that's all. There would certainly have been no echo of public sympathy. So certainly we can be accused of cowardice. But does the problem lie there? I think not. Our problem is that in our circumstances it is completely nonsensical to exercise courage over trivia. And very few of us have access to genuinely important matters.