

**Uzkoye,
April 8, 1993**

E. D. We are in the Uzkoe Hotel in Moscow with Volodya Tikhomirov, Erik Vinberg, Nikita Vvedenskaya, Sasha Kirillov, and Eugene Dynkin.

N. V. ... also known as Evgeniy Borisovich.

E. D. ... also known as Zhenya Dynkin. But when I first met you none of you were old enough to call me Zhenya, except for Nikita.

Let me share with you some of my sociological observations on the change of mentality in the Soviet Union. When I visited here three years ago, I was well received. For the most part this was due to the fact that I was a guest of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union and a member of the National Academy of Sciences in the U.S. It was also important that I brought with me a supply of gifts – little trinkets, perfume etc. The combination of the two guaranteed me an excellent service almost anywhere. Now, however, I can see that academic titles mean absolutely nothing. I have been told that there are about ten different academies in Russia today, and anyone can call themselves academicians if they want to. I have also realized that there is no point in bringing gifts. They may have some effect on custodians but not on maîtres d'hôtel who expect only cash. What do they care about a three-dollar trinket? They would rather take three dollars in cash, or better yet ten.

On the other hand, some remains of the old bureaucratic command system survive and coexist with the new style market economy. Why do I say that? Let's take this hotel for example. The old bureaucracy reflects itself in that, in order to book a room here, the director of the academic institution first has to submit an application to the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences.

This application needs to be signed there and then sent to the hotel. Olya Kuznetsova helped me with this process. She went to the Presidium, had the paper signed, but told me that she wouldn't take me to the hotel right away but would first go there alone to make sure that everything was all right. "All kinds of problems may occur," she explained. So she goes to the hotel and the manager in the department of "Distribution and Check-Ins," whatever that means, tells her that there are no rooms available, although in the Presidium she had been told the opposite. Also I called this hotel little earlier and was told that there were plenty of vacant rooms, provided I had the paper from the Presidium. So Olya asks me to talk to this manager in person. I start our conversation by saying that when we host members of the Russian Academy in the U.S. we always try to help them in every way possible. "Well, it's easy for you there in the U.S.," she says. "Unfortunately, we don't have anything right now. Wait until 3pm and maybe we'll find a spot for you in a room for two. And, by the way", she adds, "only thirty percent of our rooms have phone service." Then a brilliant idea occurs to me. I tell her, "How about we settle this issue on a commercial basis?" She glows with a smile and says, "Okay, I'll do my best. But come here before 3pm because my shift ends". When I arrive at the hotel, she is courtesy incarnate. I get to choose any room I like. When I finally find one, she offers me a discount price and charges a twenty dollar "fee". Moreover, she gives me her card with her home number underlined and says, "Next time you need a room, just give me a call."