





STANISLAV  
KONDRASHOV

# Journey of the Americanist

Moscow

Soviet Writer

1986

**Kondrashov S. P.**

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In his new artistic-documentary book, the renowned internationalist S. Kondrashov once again delves into the theme that has become central to him: we and the Americans, living in a world overshadowed by the threat of nuclear war. His protagonist, the Americanist, has devoted over twenty years to studying the USA. In our times, he embarks on a new journey to this country. Fresh impressions from travels and encounters with Americans—from an unemployed miner and a mid-level farmer to prominent businessmen and the President of the United States—are presented against the backdrop of reflections on our era, which commands nations to live in peace.

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There are two kinds of journeys...

A. Tvardovsky

... the alien, boundless elements,  
striving to scoop up at least a drop.

A. Fet

This time the States began with Canada. Perhaps, the narrative should have started with Canada as well, but it only passed through the consciousness of our protagonist in transit, just as he transited along the edge of Montreal, from Mirabel Airport to Dorval Airport. Outside the shaded window of the shuttle bus, like on a wide cinema screen, colorful images unfolded of a beautiful late autumn in the Land of Maple Leaves. Along the road, single-story industrial buildings lay like large matchboxes, and on the road, cars silently and smoothly glided—all of them of foreign makes.

The cinematic narrative was accompanied by a young voice behind, loud, not yet fully awakened on the ground, still overcoming the hum of the plane, clear and resonant. It was evident that the owner of the voice had crossed the ocean for the first time. Like a young child naming all passing objects from his stroller, excitedly discovering a new world, the voice owner marveled at the multitude of Japanese cars, guessed the purpose of the booths blocking the road, from which men and women in uniform reached out to the drivers, taking money or special coupons as payment for passage. He marveled at the smoothness and width of the highway and, again loudly and openly, commented on the imperfections of the homeland roads.

Our hero half-eyed looked at the foreign land passing by the window, and half-attended as the strong, ironic voice of a young compatriot revealed what had long been discovered by him. He conserved his strength, experiencing fatigue from the long flight and the impatience of a person eager to reach his goal and unwilling to be distracted by anything along the way.

That short and gray October day, which began for the bus passengers early in the morning at Sheremetyevo Airport, was already extinguished at home. However, here, on the eastern edge of another continent, lagging behind Moscow by eight hours, it still burned and

lingered. Yet, evening and night were approaching here as well. He did not count on a direct flight to Washington but knew that in this part of the North American continent, the most populous Canadian city, Montreal, was in the transport orbit of the most populous American city, New York. He aimed to reach New York earlier and then proceed to Washington without an overnight stay—that was his goal. From there, he knew, shuttle flights (that's what they are called) operated every hour by the "Eastern" airline. However, his Aeroflot ticket had a Montreal–New York flight on the same "Eastern" airline, but it was late, scheduled for seven in the evening, threatening an overnight stay in New York. And on the bus, where a carefree fellow passenger behind him shared his discoveries aloud, our tired hero was anxiously dreaming of an earlier flight.

When the bus pulled up to the glass doors of the airport terminal, he tried to be one of the first to retrieve his yellow old briefcase and a new, rough-black suitcase of Indian production with shiny metallic letters saying Classic V.I.P., which roughly translated into Russian meant Classic Item for Very Important Persons.

The suitcase was heavy and wheeled—in the style of the era of long airport corridors, but its four wheels followed separately, in the briefcase. They had to be sought, pulled out, and attached. And besides, the owner of the wheeled Indian suitcase hesitated to look too modern.

Without taking out or attaching the wheels, leaving his fellow travelers near a young Canadian speaking Russian, representing Aeroflot at Dorval Airport, he manually carried the suitcase and briefcase into the airport building through the open light doors. He quickly glanced with nervous eyes at the narrow space between the glass wall and the endless row of ticket counters with the trademark signs of various airlines, and they immediately surfaced in his memory, which now automatically reconstructed a once well-known but now erased reality that was no longer needed. He looked around for nickel-plated luggage carts. But there were none available. Then, leaving the luggage by the wall and occasionally looking back, he swiftly walked, almost ran through the long hall, searching for the needed cart in the side corridors.

His intuition, acquired during many years of American living, had weakened due to infrequent trips abroad, and he was wasting precious

time in vain. The ticket counter of the "Eastern" company was just ten steps from the doors, and there, without a cart, he could find out that its shuttle planes almost hourly operated between New York and Montreal. They could have changed his ticket to the desired, earlier flight, and he would have marveled once again at how quickly and effortlessly this trivial operation was performed. He would have immediately been relieved of his heavy suitcase there.

Well, two charmingly courteous employees of "Eastern" changed his flight, and he truly marveled at the easy speed and agility with which they, as if even enjoying their work, performed their tasks. They even took care of their passenger in front of the young American customs officer, who was right there, behind their counter. The customs officer, seemingly infected with his haste, only asked about the amount of alcohol being carried, forgetting about meat products and thereby missing the most precious of the prohibited items—an indigenous boiled and smoked sausage. The customs officer didn't even demand to open the black suitcase. And everything seemed to be shaping up perfectly for our passenger, but, unfortunately, some moments were lost, and this loss did not take long to manifest. There were only fifteen minutes left before the departure of the plane; the baggage conveyor belt had stopped, and the worker placing suitcases and travel bags on it shrugged his shoulders: order is order, and he wouldn't violate it—the baggage reception was over.

He had to check the baggage directly onto the plane. This option was suggested to him. All that was left was to run and push the unfortunate cart in the direction of the air gates, where passengers who had managed to do everything on time were already boarding the New York flight. And our hero ran, a tired, not-so-young man, in the eternal Russian hope for a miracle. He ran, pushing the awkward, three-wheeled cart in front of him, adjusting the suitcase that had slipped off it, holding the briefcase, and also a cellophane (we forgot to mention it) bag—wrapped in a pink paper towel, the bag contained, unable to fit in the suitcase and briefcase, three loaves of Moscow black bread, inexpensive but the most precious gift; when placed on the table of compatriots overseas, black bread acquires extraordinary value as a connection to the homeland. Glancing at the signs under the ceiling, through the corridors that seemed endless, past colorful stalls, he ran

pushing the clumsy cart, maneuvering among the unhurried, casually dressed foreigners, opening the coat that suddenly became thick and heavy, and the first drops of sweat appeared on his forehead and trickled down his neck, and he felt sorry for himself. At the same time, he felt that with this suffering look of a latecomer, he could count on the sympathy and understanding of all these strangers, polite and decent-looking people.

So he continued to run until he stumbled upon a barricade in a hall flooded with even artificial light. In the barricade, there were narrow passages guarded by men, mostly middle-aged, in dark blue uniform suits.

It was an immigration checkpoint, which in the United States takes on the entry and exit control functions of border guards. The checkpoint was extended beyond the American territory, far into Canadian territory, essentially pushing back the border between the two countries as an act of expansion. It was both surprising and perhaps upsetting, but ultimately, it was their bilateral matter; let them sort it out themselves. Frankly, our hero had no time for criticism of another manifestation of American assertiveness at that moment. He swiftly pulled out his Soviet citizen's service passport from his jacket pocket and, on the go, presented it to the immigration inspector, relieving the cart of baggage at the barrier. Along with the passport, he presented his disheveled appearance, secretly hoping to infect the inspector with his impatience as a tired and latecomer.

The slender man, around fifty years old, with a clean pale face and a neat side part in dark hair, meanwhile flipped through the passport of the young bearded man in jeans and a black sports jacket. He seemed to be one of those young foreign bearded men who, for some reason, don't stay at home. He looked up and glanced briefly at our hero. The hero expected but found no sympathy. His disheveled appearance made no impression on the inspector. The inspector made a short hand gesture and spoke a few words in English. The gesture seemed to push our compatriot back, and the words instructed him to wait behind the red line. He didn't immediately grasp the literal meaning of the command. There even seemed to be some innuendo in the red line for him. Then came another cautioning look, another short pushing gesture, the same words about the red line were repeated, and our hero slightly stepped

back, kicking the suitcase with the briefcase. However, the inspector, not satisfied with this concession, persisted: "Wait behind the red line!" And then, looking down at his feet, our hero finally understood that there was no metaphorical meaning; there was a very real red line boldly and distinctly drawn on the floor. It was meant for waiting in line for the inspector without breathing excitement into his face.

When the bearded guy picked up his light bag and moved on with the carefree gait of someone traveling without travel permits or even visas, the dry inspector efficiently and politely said, "Next, please." And our man approached his counter with his passport and luggage, wiping his face with a handkerchief, still perspiring from the effects of the long stay in the hermetically sealed airplane and even the difference in temperatures and humidity between two remote points on Earth's hemispheres.

Inspector Hayes – the name was displayed on the metal strip attached to the jacket's breast pocket – perhaps he had seen it, but he didn't want to notice any of it. Sympathizing with a Soviet citizen, even one who was tired and in a hurry, was not part of his duties. Professionally rustling through the dense bluish-red pages of the passport, on which the letters USSR were visible through watermarks, finding the large intricate visa stamp placed at the American embassy in Moscow, and verifying its authenticity, Inspector Hayes pulled out from under his counter a non-immigrant entry form for the United States on a limited term. (For American immigration authorities, foreigners are divided into two main categories: immigrants who come to stay and become Americans, and non-immigrants who, after visiting America, return home.) In this country, our hero was always classified as a non-immigrant, and he was familiar with this form because over the years, he had to fill it out at least fifteen times in American airports. Other men and women in the immigration service uniform vaguely emerged in his consciousness as soon as he saw the gridded white sheet the size of a passport and the questions about the first, middle, and last name (which roughly corresponds to our full name), citizenship, gender, addresses in the country of permanent residence and in the USA, mode of transportation, place, and date of arrival in the USA, etc.



The white sheet dashed hope for a miracle, indicating a delay for the flight. Nevertheless, he had to fill out the sheet under the bored but stoically calm gaze of Inspector Hayes. Making corrections here and there to the flaws in the excited handwriting with his ballpoint pen, the American clipped the sheet with a metal clip to the passport page entirely occupied by the comfortable American visa. Then, he stamped the shiny nickel machine on the form, slapped the top of the machine with his palm, and the familiar clear stamp "Admitted to the U.S." appeared on the form.

Having obtained this admission and covering another two hundred meters of the corridor without the cart, our compatriot finally reached the required boarding gate. However, the gate was already closed, and behind the large glass panels, the New York plane receded from his sight, teasing with its unattainable proximity, smoothly moving away and turning its round transparent nose, in which the self-assured, somewhat flashy pilots were seated in their workstations, talking about something and joking, unaware of him.

He had to wait for the next flight—the one that had been wisely arranged by the Aeroflot staff in Moscow. The flight was scheduled to depart in three hours. In the waiting room, our hero collapsed into a plastic chair of charcoal color. He threw his coat on the adjacent chair so that it covered the cellophane-wrapped package with three loaves of black bread (for some reason, he felt embarrassed about this simple gift prepared for his compatriots in front of foreigners). He placed his worn, but still foreign, briefcase by his feet. The suitcase, the cause of the delay, was immediately checked in and disappeared into the mysterious depths of the airport's service area. The waiting room, or accumulator (in the strange technical language that did not recognize the difference between people and inanimate objects), was empty. Transitioning from a state of bustling movement to an equally involuntary complete calm, the solitary transit passenger sat, still wiping his cooling forehead with a handkerchief. The accumulator gradually accumulated men and women with their travel belongings in hand. Outside, the expansive sky of the airfield anxiously swelled with the hues of sunset. The sunset reminded him of the years spent in New York. Their home was on the left bank of the Hudson, and almost every evening, on the opposite side of the river,

a beautiful and poignant sunset flared up just as freely and openly—a biblical spectacle—a bridge from the vanished centuries to our day, aging and dying before our eyes to join the bygone time. He couldn't find his own words to describe such a sunset, and, feeling powerless in the face of the beauty of the world, he, out of long habit, borrowed words from the great Russian poets.

The Montreal sunset reminded him of Blok: "...there it beckons with crimson fingers and needlessly agitates the summer residents over the dusty stations, the unattainable dawn...".

However, now, stuck on the road, he was too agitated to revel in the sunset and the beauty of a poetic line. Let's leave him temporarily in a state of forced rest. Let him recover, getting used to the idea that he won't make it to Washington without an overnight stay. As for us, let's calmly and dispassionately figure out where and how he erred in his first steps abroad, despite all his declared experience. The mistakes are minor for now and quite forgivable, but they are annoying, especially since they could have been easily avoided. Was it necessary to hurry, make unnecessary movements, and generally get carried away, breaking away from fellow travelers who stuck together and believed in the wisdom of Aeroflot and its representatives, even foreign ones on the spot? Should he have rushed with the cart and luggage through the corridors, sweating in front of strangers and foreign people? And what foolish hopes did he have regarding Inspector Hayes?

Certainly, he did not expect the representative of the U.S. immigration service to let him skip the line without a form, even if he was a Soviet citizen, albeit breathless and tardy. But, on the other hand, subconsciously, didn't he expect the inspector to be accommodating? There it is, an unspeakable folly: to be accommodating... So many years abroad, and he forgot almost the most important thing again. And the most important thing is not that the climate changes, homes, roads, cars, clothes, and people themselves change—everything changes, even the earthly hemisphere is different. The main thing is that you cross not only the state border but also the border of personal relations with each other, that you enter the realm of interstate relations, that is, not just between people but between states. No longer are you just on a Moscow or some other street, in your apartment, or even in an institution. You are not a

person with another person, but merely a particle, an atom in a certain ether, in an atmosphere that is constantly being shaped and reshaped by two huge entities, two states. In his haste and excitement, our hero overlooked this, apparently, and Inspector Hayes remembered it, so he had to wipe the sweat in front of an American. Will he be accommodating? Oh, these eternal searches for exceptions to the rule: be, say, a brother, a person. But what kind of brother, Inspector Hayes? What kind of person? He is a function, behind his polished counter, the strictest and most unyielding function guarding the border of his state.

Try to mentally put yourself in his place, on his side of that quite elegant counter, polished around the clock by the elbows of passing citizens from various countries. Try to look at this small episode through his eyes. What do you see? Not a rushing person with a persistent idea of flying from Moscow to Washington in one nature- and aviation-elongated day. The American official saw before him a meeting of Function with Function. He did not see a private, personal, self-representing foreigner from Spain or Japan; he saw a citizen from a country where, from his point of view—and from the perspective of those who lead him, who direct him—there are no private individuals traveling abroad.

No matter from which angle you delve into the essence of the matter, there is no avoiding the conclusion: behind the red line, in the U.S. immigration hall, boldly extending its outpost into Canada, a meeting between two states—and two socio-political systems—occurred at the level of their individual representatives. The function operating under the name Hayes could not help but harbor suspicion toward any Soviet citizen, and the disheveled appearance of this particular citizen could rightfully be considered a staged act, that soft foundation on which a shot sparrow cannot be led.

Have you, dear reader, ever found yourself in the situation of our traveler? If you have, the author hopes for your understanding. Indeed, haven't you, as well, reflected on the remarkable changes that take place with each of us in the United States of America? After all, Americans view each of us from a different perspective and therefore see each person differently. We are no longer the same as we are in the eyes of our compatriots back home who know us. In their American

eyes, we are different. In your own country, after many years of life and work, you somehow established yourself, solidified, classified, and perhaps, this is the most significant and cherished interim result of your life. It certainly remains with you when you cross their border for an international assignment. Everything remains—and yet, everything disappears, as in their environment, you are, at the very least, a clean slate and more often not just an unknown but automatically a suspicious entity. No matter what you may think, how optimistic your hopes and reasoning may be, the world is indeed sharply and harshly divided along this line. At the border of two states in our era, another value system automatically comes into effect, leading to an instant automatic reassessment of the personality of everyone crossing that border.

On the subject of instant transformations, reassessments, and the perpetual sense of the unfamiliar, we will revisit this theme directly or indirectly. Not only at the moment of crossing the border will it emerge, but now — isn't it time to introduce our hero and, by the way, endow him with a name? By profession, he is a journalist, and, to be honest, the author has much in common with him. Like the author, his character writes about the United States of America for his newspaper. Is it true that it's a strange way to make a living? Although the occupation has become quite familiar, the question of strangeness still occasionally crosses his mind. Nevertheless, predominantly for this occupation, he receives a salary and fees, which, to the extent of his abilities, provides for his family. Moreover, by writing about America, he realizes himself as an individual, which, you must agree, is even more peculiar. Especially strange when you consider that in recent years, he has been writing about America while living in Moscow. He peers into another life and politics from a distance, and attempts to capture this life on paper almost entirely consume his working hours and even encroach upon his free time, taking him away from the life close by that surrounds him on all sides, known as his own life.

The narrow spaces of such a strange self-realization are known to the author no less than to his character because, frankly, the author is an "Amerikanist" himself. However, life cannot be changed late in the game, and a profession cannot be swapped. In yet another attempt to describe



the strange profession, the author departs from his usual first-person narrative, introduces a third-person perspective, shares part of his biography, an American visa, an old portfolio, a new suitcase, and three loaves of black bread. He places his character on a shuttle bus running from one airport to another on the outskirts of Montreal, sending him for an initial encounter with Inspector Hayes.

However, here arises a difficulty that should have been anticipated. Separating and distancing himself from the author, the character demands his own name. But the choice of a name, the author suddenly realized, is also a choice of genre: what does he himself want—mainly a documentary or a fictional narrative?

In a fictional narrative, with characters like Ivanov, Petrov, Sidorov, the author would tread on unfamiliar ground of imagination. He would have to inhabit and populate it, inventing other characters, their circumstances, positions, and even fates. Needless to say, in such a case, enviable expanses of artistic creativity would unfold before him, whimsical opportunities to delve into life, higher forms of truth. Alas, the author — as a journalist — is not ready for such creative freedom. The profession has become nature, or nature has become the profession — it doesn't matter. What matters is that it clipped the wings of imagination, taught to hover and trained to hold on and grasp at facts, setting more modest tasks. Although this time the author separates himself from his own self, he is simultaneously afraid to let his character go too far. Let him remain close at hand, even in the third person, and even in his name, let there be a functional hint of the field that compels a person, even when at home, to describe current events abroad. What name should be suggested for him?

By the way, the choice of a name — with a functional hint — turned out to be a challenging task. The author considered no fewer than a dozen options before finally settling on the simplest one — Amerikanist. Amerikanist?! Yes, Amerikanist! Without any allusions, straight to the point. And notice, dear reader, if you raised your eyebrows in surprise that this word is neither invented nor fabricated but taken from life, believe me, the author did not consult a dictionary in this case. It was taken from life, from the life that a small fraction of our compatriots lives. Amerikanists are our people who deal with Americans and America, both theorists and practitioners. And there is nothing surprising here: in our

complex and troubled age, these professionals professionally scrutinize another superpower — and they cannot help but look, even though they sometimes feel nauseous from this long, tense scrutiny.

And so, one of the Amerikanists, a journalist with considerable experience and a load of memories, the author sends on another trip to America.

For over two decades, the Amerikanist has filled out the non-immigrant visa application more than a dozen times, as mentioned before, and an equal number of times, immigration inspectors have stamped "Admitted to the United States" in the lower right corner. In the language of our checkpoint, it sounds shorter and firmer — entry. On no fewer than a dozen occasions, in international airports in New York and Washington, as well as Montreal and once in Puerto Rico, the Amerikanist was admitted within the borders of the overseas state. However, if we consider his long past life as a foreign correspondent, it can be divided into three periods — Cairo, New York, and Washington. In each of these three posts (or substations), the Amerikanist worked as a correspondent for several years before — after a fifteen-year hiatus — resuming his life in Moscow.

Whether abroad or at home, he did not keep a diary. The nature of newspaper work, which had become a way of life from morning till evening, until the late broadcast of television news, kept the Amerikanist captive in the stream of the world's latest events. Before sleep, he did not find the strength, after emerging from the stream onto the shore, to dry off and cool down, to sit down as an unhurried chronicler Nestor. Nevertheless, a kind of archive had accumulated. Like every writing person, over the years, he had grown with paper clutter. The lion's share of the clutter consisted of clippings from American newspapers.

Less paper was left from the three-year Cairo period. Newspapers in Egypt, unlike American ones, were thin, the country was smaller and somewhat more local, and the information was much scarcer. The Amerikanist, who was almost becoming an Arabist at that time, younger and more restless, had not yet become entangled as a professional in the business of paper clutter and paper collecting.

Clippings from the abundant New York period were thematically sorted into large yellow packages, once glossy but now faded and worn. The later Washington period was stored in open and better-preserved folders, also pleasantly glossy, of a light purple color. Once these folders looked even better on special holders in the drawers of metal office cabinets, and by pulling out the necessary drawer with an elegant rustle and click, the Amerikanist could instantly find any of them. But the cabinets remained in the Washington substation, and the folders, having moved to Moscow, lay haphazardly in bookcases made by publishing carpenters.

He didn't even think about these packages and folders. In thousands of newspaper and magazine clippings, his thoughts and facts were underlined by his hand, which once seemed important and interesting to him, which concerned countless events in American life. He did not spare the gray matter of his brain for reflection and hurried newspaper reflection of these events. But now neither clippings, nor thoughts, nor events interested him almost at all, at least he had no time to return to them. As a journalist, he worked with today's news.

Yet he still did not part with the paper clutter. A person feels sorry not only for the fruits but also for the traces of his labor. His hands did not reach this archive. And did not rise to throw it away.

When, on occasion, for some work-related necessity, he reread his and others' old articles, he thought with a smirk that there is no more reliable way to become outdated than to abandon oneself day by day to the demands of the day and that, on the other hand, for all those running the newspaper way, nostril to nostril with time, the only way to escape from this vindictive truth is precisely to continue running and running without looking back.

Among the pounds of paper clippings in the chaotic archive of the Amerikanist, there were only a few pounds of notebooks and notepads filled with his handwritten travel diaries. He usually brought them back from trips when his soul was filled with vivid impressions. He cherished these notes as bookish people cherish knowledge about life, acquired not only from books or newspapers but also firsthand. He was drawn to these notebooks and notepads, keeping them in a sacred place, rereading them, sometimes ironically smiling at himself, but sometimes

suddenly feeling proud. In those moments, he felt the desire to summarize some literary achievements. Outside the newspaper.

He was tormented by the fear typical of people over fifty. "I will leave this world," he thought, "without telling what no one will tell for you, for the sake of which, perhaps, you were born and lived your life just like this and not otherwise." In these notebooks and notepads, his own long-forgotten words, born on days of strong shocks when the ordinary course of time was tragically interrupted, and he buried his mother and father, unexpectedly departed friends, suddenly burned him. These were words about the bitterness of loss, and every time again about the fact that dear people left without expressing themselves. Inexpressiveness tormented him in those days and immediately after — their inexpressiveness and his own. Shaken, he seemed to listen and ponder their eternal silence, trying to understand it. There was a lesson and a reproach in the silence. But new days, new worries came rushing in, and the shock subsided. Until new losses forced him to think not about everyday life but about existence, about the mystery, meaning, and outcomes of life. From time to time, taking a break from his newspaper articles and essays, he tried to express himself, and among his papers were several attempts at an autobiographical narrative.

"Beyond the Frame" was one of such attempts. In a heavy steel frame on a steel table, a newspaper strip is being laid out. Everything that does not fit into the frame, what the newspaper does not need, is ruthlessly discarded as unnecessary, surplus metal, remaining beyond the frame. In his youth, there were no problems; everything fit into the frame. But now he took on a theme that never left the newspaper pages in the chronicle of world events and criminal incidents but in its secret, philosophical sense, always remained beyond the frame — the theme of life and death, or, as one modern writer aptly defined it, the theme of life-death. After fifty, even in peacetime, life becomes life-death, those who remain alive more and more often bury their peers, and together with them, they bury a part of their life, piece by piece, preparing for the inevitable.

"...I have been walking across this square for thirty years — to work, from work, and during work, as well as on weekends and holidays," he wrote, referring to the famous Moscow square where the impressive complex of his newspaper buildings was located. "How many



of them have already left, old acquaintances who walked along this driveway and this square day by day, turned around the corner onto this street, and it seemed that we would meet here forever. But now there is no old stuffy cinema, no neighboring old, Famusovsky house, no beer bar and pharmacy across the square, no shashlik place that could be reached directly from the beer bar, which turned into a milk bar before its demise. And familiar faces have unrecognizably aged or walk along other streets and squares or have gone for years and years. Or disappeared forever. Yes, they died. And it's time for us to annoy the young with the saying: when we were young... When we were young, and the editorial office was located in a constructivist building made of gray concrete with round windows-illuminators on the top floor, we were boys at recess, and we were sometimes assigned the duties of a burial team — the deceased veterans, breathless, were brought by us to the conference hall on the sixth floor, and then, after the requiem, after the speeches that we did not listen to, on young and healthy shoulders, the coffin was lowered down to the bus, down the wide white marble staircase. On ordinary days, we jumped through three or four steps of this staircase, ran down in a leap, slid down the railings with elastic young buttocks in wrinkled, polished, single pants. We were cheerful and worked at night, and the newspaper came out in the dead of night, and in summer, it was already dawning, and after duty, German trophy curved BMWs drove us home..."

About Apartments? The clarification of today. There wasn't even a corner in the first weeks of work at the editorial office. A graduate of a prestigious international institute was homeless in Moscow, spent nights in a dormitory on Stremyanny Pereulok, where he lived for three years—it was August, vacation time, the dormitory was empty, a familiar warden let in yesterday's student, but didn't provide bedding, so he slept on a bare mattress, dreaming of a new life, alone in a room on the second floor, where there were sixteen iron beds in two rows...

So, we lived carefree and undemanding; they still didn't send us on foreign business trips, but we quickly became versatile handymen and connoisseurs of all countries. Strangely, it was precisely during that time that the genre of advanced articles came easily to us. The young feeling of immortality was in us when we carried the deceased veterans on our shoulders down from the top floor in black and red coffins. How quickly

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