

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter and your proposal to send ~~it~~ ^{a story} to B. Hunter. Yes! I've just come from Tambov where my father killed rebellious peasants in 1919 and Sasha was elected to the Supreme Soviet as a first democratic M.P. ~~Sasha~~ A good company: a first rate poet close to Solzenizin, 10 years in emigration, with a beautiful actress from Maly Theatre, and a famous sculptor. Sasha provided us with a minibus & TV-team to make something about cultural life in province. Most interesting is that it's a real life in a very clean, very Russian town, with cars now three-fold. Everybody complains but nearly no tramps, people walking (and kissing) long after midnight the most expensive meal like grilled salmon in the most expensive restaurant costs ~ \$5 (!) (in Moscow \$60-100). Chateau Margaux at \$50 still. The bars are full of beauties, drinking coca-cola & smoking. You're right! I've decided they are whores and invited one for a drink. Surprise & refusal. Sometimes I'm self-critical and thinking I'm an old goat, asked my younger friends to follow suit. The same reaction. No prostitution in its real sense, they just have fun. The local intelligentsia (including one granddaughter of Pushkin) celebrates every year the birthday of Pushkin's friend Baratynsky, who lived nearby. The "spiritual father" of Puskin, a poet Gavril Derzavin

was the Governor of Tambov (a good idea for you: why not to become Governor of Cornwall?). After 95 year old distant relative of mine (and still a pearl of Tambov) ^{a babushka} was reading by heart (!) "Tambov female & treasurer" by M. Lermontov we all collapsed in our love for mother Russia. How do they live?

~~But~~ Pensions and salaries come with great delay and are meagre. At a ceramic factory beautiful ~~paint~~ sculptresses do wonderful things and their eyes are full of life & fire. Our impressions were completely different from ones ~~of~~ ^{from} the press. I think you have to replace your barbed wire fence as I left it's ~~dis~~ description in the RYB and they will create troubles for your cars.

You and Jane are welcome here as well as all your friends. I think I definitely stay here until the end of September as books are out. Recently I was publicly called "enfant terrible of intell. service" and "People's spy of Russia" Great, for my masochistic nature!

Hugs & kisses to Jane from Tanya and me.

Yours sincerely
Michael 11.08.99