

DREAMS ABOUT THE PAST
Erkin, Son of Alimjan Ishanjan-uly Joldasov

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Foreword

As mysterious are Your movements and deeds, o God, so whimsical are both your paths and fates, o Man! I understand how and why the people run about the world, how and why the grandson of a Kiev nobleman and the grandson of an ishan¹ from the Kazakh steppe met in a small oasis in the Central Asian desert. But I cannot understand who dropped a spark into them to burn down their lives for serving their mission? Perhaps the one who can answer this question will answer the question about the sense of a human being...

Me, Eruslan and Ilia (both are children of uncle Magjan) visited Erkin's grave in 2011. On the way from the cemetery, Ilia thought aloud:

– His life seems to resemble the fates of anchorites Van Gogh and Savitsky.

Yes, she was right. Creators' fates are similar in following their single divine design of God but their lives of ordinary people are different.

That is what Erkin said by himself, "August 30, 1979. «One must not identify his life with others and try to achieve their harmony. This is the way to the dead end. My life will not resemble anybody's. It will be my own life with its takeoffs and falls, love, enthusiasm, dedication, embarrassments and disappointments»".

V. S. Podgurskiy, the artist and the first Erkin's teacher was inspiring him from childhood that the Artisan's fate was given by the God to those selected for the hard work without any mundane vanity. Evil be to him that is tempted by the vanity

From Erkin's diaries, «*The difficult decision to become an artist has been taken, and I will not back down. Sometime later it will bring its beautiful fruits although bitter ones as I suppose. (What a mysterious phrase has crept from under my pen...)*»".

Common vanity was trying to catch Erkin, but he ran away from it into creation of his paintings, drawings, diaries, to the works of his favorite writers, composers and into Prophets' teachings.

Erkin thoroughly studied those teachings, attended meetings of the believers, met pastors and discussed the Holy Scriptures with them. He studied the Qour'an, Hadiths², and Sufi³ Scriptures, read recited Fatihah⁴. He studied the Orthodox Christianity original Scriptures, their interpretations, went to the church and was baptized, as well as he studied Hindu scriptures like Bhagavad-Gita, and explored history of arts, literature and philosophy of the Orient.

He did not so much believe in God as was looking in these scriptures of Prophets for the reconciliation with himself and the world in the desperate strive for bemata of the Spirit and for the deep humbling of mind and body. Most likely I. V. Savitsky steered him to study of Scriptures when under the night stars shining over the ruins of ancient Khorezm he said that there is no God, as there is no eternity of the Spirit that someday will change all for the ashes and disappear. But it is necessary to study religion, its traditions and rituals as they make up the basis of culture of the peoples.

Erkin thought himself to be the son of different nations. Both as a Kazakh (by his father and Jeti-ata⁴ ancestors that he grouped for memory; and a Karakalpak (he dreamt in his diaries, "I will become one of the voices of Karakalpakstan"); and as a Russian by thinking in Russian and being concerned with the state that his son had left for; and as an Uzbek - when he was

¹ A Spiritual leader of a Muslim group. When commonly used – a devotee, a holy man.

² The corpus of the reports of the deeds and sayings of the Islamic prophet Muhammad

³ A concept in Islam, defined by scholars as the inner, mystical dimension of Islam

⁴ The first verse in the Quran

earning a bit on the side at sociological centers by interviewing his countrymen about their life in the remote mountainous and desert villages of his Motherland.

Erkin shared with his people the hardships of those years that appeared to be difficult for multiple artists who lost support of the museums, exhibition funds and etc. He did not want to sell his works for the private collections “cemetery” dreaming of keeping his creativity for the descendants as an integral collection of pictures and diaries.

He wrote about his diaries, *“A diary is a way to self-cognition, apprehension of the past way. It is a creative act that lets me fix my life within the text. Perhaps, it is graphomania like a kind of the melancholic and harmless insanity, but this affords me consolation. My diaries look like a document of the person whose soul has been turned inside out. Very lonely people write diaries as if they are looking at themselves from the prison of their Selves that do not let them run away. In my diaries and memoirs I am dreaming of the past not of the future. All that I am writing about in the diaries seems to be a played tragicomedy scenario of my life with the set-up of the plot, with sad and funny interludes, and, of course, with a curtain».*

Erkin was keeping his diaries from 1976 to 2011. They reflect multiple details concerned with his life, lives of the famous and infamous artists, relatives and friends including those who are called «poor people» and «the insulted and humiliated» in the Russian literature. When rereading his diaries, Erkin wrote, *«I thought of a novel tentatively containing the following chapters: "Father, Mother and Stepfather", "School, Podgurskiy, Faina Mikhailovna Perova, Dubrovin and others", "Institute, Kokotkin, Chernyshov", "Artist", "Nukus, Savitsky and the Museum", "Archaeology", "Family – Luda, Alim and Azime", "Olga, Arslan and Vitya", "Tukov, Kvon, Krishnait Sasha" and so on". But diaries should be undoubtedly continued as the material for this novel».*

His diaries seem to mention too many names that can say nothing to some readers but tell something new and important to others including historians, philosophers, psychologists and arts sociologists.

In art, Erkin was searching after sincerity and honesty in the attitude to the world and to the people; he wrote about this in his diaries, *«My mistakes, tossing, mess, tumult of thoughts are sincere that is why I believe myself when in this sincerity I am moving towards cognition of the world, nature and people. Indeed, people are wonderful because of their sincerity and naturalness. Moreover, greatness of philosophers and prophets has been created by the deepest naturalness, simplicity and sincerity of their remorse to people and, thus, touch the people. The same with art, it can touch hearts of people only in sincere remorse and love to them».*

Perhaps, it was such attitude to the world, people and arts that at 14 brought him into service of I.V. Savitsky who became the example of serving arts for Erkin. This is evidenced by the thousands of paintings and drawings that Erkin has left after him; of them about 250 have been purchased by Savitsky and the Nukus Museum.

Erkin was not only painting pictures, he also took many photos stopping in them the time passing through the people. He writes about this, *«Once the old photos will recall the past, distant meetings, people, and their faces from the memory. Somebody's smile or glance will wake up the nostalgia, something that would never happen again. Perhaps, the row of these photos presents the contemplation of the slow flow of time from past to present that would also turn out to become the past one day in future».*

Hereafter are the pages from the diaries and memoirs⁵ of Erkin himself, edited and collected by me with my notes and references at the bottom of the pages⁵.

Arustan Joldasov

5 A cutdown version of this text was published in the journal 'Zvesda Vostoka' ('The Star of the Orient'). №2, 2013.

THIS IS ME, O LORD! I STAND AND THIRST.

Sorrow Would Have Still Remained

«Sorrow would have still remained». Vincent Van Gogh (from parting with Theo).

Today is November 15, 2011. No more delays. I can hardly breathe. My disease is like a breast pang that took away artist Valentin Alexandrovich Serov, like the last disease of Savitsky, like diseases of Alimjan, my Father and Alexei Kvon, my elder friend. I have no idea how long I will manage to live but I would like to live this remaining part honestly and with dignity, as well as describe in the diaries my own life and life of those whom I am bearing in myself and in whom I am looking for myself.

My memoirs and diaries are like self-portrait in painting: an attempt to embody yourself in a text perhaps only as an attempt of cognition yourself as thinking matter even for the sake of your own self. The result is not important – what will happen to my memoirs. Will they be published and make me famous? It does not matter. It is necessary for me – to pass along the path of my memory, and once again experience the life within the context of the decades of 1950s - 2000s

I am not writing for History, it is overwhelmed with the lives of the people like me. But the part of life that was in contact with my close people, particularly with the life of Igor Vitalyevich Savitsky and in the shade of his genius, at least can be interesting for my son. I hope that through my destiny my son will see the life of the country and of my generation. Through the centuries haze, he will be able to make out the illusive ways of his forefathers. He must understand that we continue to live the lives of our righteous ancestors and must be worthy of them for self-respect. Indeed, to turn a man into a beast, it is enough to deprive him of Memory and Word.

And of course, it is very important to leave the memory about contemporaries. It is not important how you are earning daily bread if you cherish and leave the memory about those who deserve cherished Memory, and leave the same memory of yourself. There is no death if there is the memory of generations. Saint Vincent van Gogh wrote the only poem: «Do not believe that the dead are dead. As long as the alive exist, those who died will live». These lines spread melancholy and obscure fanaticism of early Vincent, of his missionary preparation period. (I believe that his pictures and drawings are the same sermons but in paints on the canvas and paper).

Surely, one should rather follow chronology in the memoirs. But we will have to move from one time to another one, from one event to another one, from one face to another one. Indeed, time keeps jogging on steadily and immediately, while the memory is all doubling the events when the antediluvian can be much closer to his childhood than in his youth. Probably the life circle closes like that, when the anility hugs the childhood memories on the supposition of death.

Birth and death. One great non-existence is contacting another, and the flashed life, like something dear and ephemeral, seems to be just a miracle of dreaming in the routine succession of ordinary days when the time grinds the life of any man into the 'chest' of his memories unless the 'chest' disappears in the endless space of non-existence or in somebody's closet. Is there any sense in this 'chest' full of melancholy, fear and dead-level? Perhaps, there is. Otherwise, What makes me fix memory in my diaries?

Having got over the 50-year-old point, I am looking back into my life and with the heartsick consciousness see that it has flown so quickly and vain. Many mistakes have been made, so much valuable time has been wasted for mere trifles, but the house has not been built,

there is no strong and large family, my art has not been recognized. Accumulated knowledge and works have not done well either for me or for anyone else. And therefore, if the world does not need me, I will leave the world for myself and into recollections showing how easily I have made a muddle of my only life by drunkenness, laziness, doubtfulness, cowardice, have lost my friends, did not acquire new ones, failed to grow rich and famous; I am lingering out my life now like Job distracted. Therefore, I was often close to a suicide. But it was awful to think that the world will exist without me, and my momentary recognition of the past will trackless disappear into thin air.

Reflexion seems to be too developed in me. Most likely all these feelings are surface tears of the soul suppressed by outliving in the constrained vanity due to the absence of people sympathetic to me and seesawing. Now I am getting used to myself with greater self-control than ever before having survived a wreck and continuing my voyage but changed the course. Now I do not need my paintings, money or people. I am leaving for the beautiful world of images, thoughts and feelings of Bach, Pushkin, Vallejo and other similar geniuses. They are more real, more valuable and closer to me than the desert surrounding me. I am meditating together with them, cheering about and mourning, sometimes shedding tears. What about relatives and friends – they are already the past like the dead. Of course, it is possible to mourn about them like about the late. But I would rather talk with them and about them in my diaries where neither they nor I will hurt each other as it happens among the alive.

And what a childhood I had, what a beautiful dream to make people better and kinder by my revolutionary monumental art! Smashing at one stroke! In my youth I was an enthusiastic idealist, full of sanguine hopes, believed in a great mission of an artist, in the force of his spirituality. I was running away from the world of greed but had not noticed to rush slap-bang into a room⁶ of laughter. Inside I was struggling against funfair mirrors and against the ones like me. When I saw myself and them as monsters, I closed my eyes and looked into myself to find support in self-cognition, bring back the spiritual equilibrium when describing my life. In this description I saw how the good and the bad struggle in the abyss of my soul like a boat with the stormy sea.

But now I know that the sea will calm down, and then I will find sanctuary for my heart. All will be forgiven and all will be forgotten, and I believe, that my fate and my soul lodged in the texts, drawings and paintings will remain in that little great and light that I was looking for and has found in my life.

Roots and Branches

It is a great happiness to come into the world being a man. When a child, you think that the birth was inevitable, and with the increase of years you understand that it was simply a chance among the endless tangles of generations of your ancestors on the Land. You try to leave the memory of yourself without the memory of them – to reject their merit of my appearance to life as the continuation of their lives. Therefore, if to digest one's personal way, then only like the continuation of the ways of his ancestors, from the source to the orifice.

6 A room with funfair mirrors.



In the photo – Vitya in Mama's arms, I am in Father's hands, and Arslan is behind us.

From the very early childhood I remember how my Mother took me to her bed under the warm blanket. A little later, I was making a shelter for myself from the blanket and pillows, preserving there the same feeling of peace and cosines. It is probably connected with fetus's memories about its presence in mother's womb.

I do not remember Soldatskoye village where I was born. I do not remember my Father either. I was three years old when he died at 37. But I vividly remember the smell of his motorcycle «Dnieper». I remember how my Father actuated the motorcycle, how he was driving me in the side-car; and now when I smell the motorcycle, I recollect my Father.

I remember how I ran with a mug across the big (as it seemed to me) yard to my Mum who was milking the cow. I remember how my Mum, leaving home for a while, tied me to a table or a bed; and I was quietly sitting near them until her return. But when the aircraft flew low, I got frightened and cried under the table.

Childhood in Nukus. I remembered the film 'Tom Thumb' in the summer cinema 'Motherland' - film about a woodcutter, children and a cannibal – and in a fearful place I suddenly screamed at the top of my voice. Somehow, all around me burst into laughter. When a child and even an adult, I was shy and, particularly, feared the death in all its manifestations. Perhaps that is why he did not go to dying Savitsky to Moscow and did not visit his dying Stepfather. Only after I became an old man I had overcome this fear only when I was feeding and washing my dying Mother.

When I was a child, the day seemed to be endless, and the way to school was a real travel. To say nothing about a real hike! – to the Kyzketken canal where we, brothers and friends, bathed or fished. I had friends born in the same year along the entire street. One of them was P. Arslan and I still blame ourselves. Once, his younger three-year-old brother tallied with us to bathe in the Kyzketken canal with its insidious banks and fast current. When we started back, we found only his T-shirt and decided that he had gone home just forgetting about it. (We did not understand that he has drowned). We came back and acted meanly asking our younger brother Vitya to return it. He was also about three years old and did not understand what he had to do. Some minutes later, cries and shouts were heard at the end of the street. Vitya was running back pale and frightened. I was four that time, and Arslan was six. Despite the occurrence, P.

continued to be my friend. But when he became somebody like a chief, he stopped “greeting” and did not notice me.

During school years, we were sitting with the friends at the ditch in front of the house, looked into the night skies and dreamt about star travels. I liked to retell to my friends science fiction books that I borrowed from the library of the Pedagogical Institute to which my Father subscribed me.

Once I read 'Timur and his Team' by Gaidar. This book affected me and my friends. We organized Timur's Team in our street, and then at school. Now, when we meet with the age mates, with the sad gladness they recollect this team. We ran to poor lonely old women and helped them. We climbed up to the roof of a four-storied house in the Nukus 'Cheremushky' and used binocular to look for those to help. But we forgot about our relatives as we did not understand that first of all one must help the close relatives. Then there would be no need to help the old women that would have had their own and native 'Timur-fellows'.

Indeed, there was always what to do at home. Mother had been working from morning to morning, and I had to do housekeeping. I had even the byname – «zavhoz-domhoz»⁷. I remember cosines of winter evenings near charcoal-burner in which I burnt the coal. This 'charcoal' experience appeared to be useful for me when I burnt stoves in the Nukus Museum. At the age of six-seven, I could cook even pilav, went to bazaar, and did all necessary household shopping – iron, tailor's thimbles, meat and bread. House 'cash' was with me. It is like I spent all my childhood queuing for foods. For instance, I was lining up for meat at 1 rouble 80 kopecks; in the bazaar the price was 2 roubles. The saved 20 kopecks were enough for the whole loaf of bread that was also lined up for in the long queues, even for the tough 'Khrushchev' pone⁸ with a strange after-taste. But I liked it. I hardly knew the taste of the non-store-bought bread, my Mother seldom baked bread, but this bread was the tastiest bread that I have ever tried in my life.

Mother

My Mum was differently called depending on the place where she lived: Khanie Kurtseitova in the Crimea; Hanna in Germany; Anna Joldasova in Samarkand; Khadicha Dauletbaeva in Nukus. A «Crimean Tatar» was written in Mama's passport. But my cousin sister Iliya that saw her documents when lived with us in Soldatskoye village said that time the due-in entry in the documents was: «Nationality – Jew». The note the «Crimean Tatar» was made in the last Mama's passport. Probably she indeed was “a Crimean Tatar” or my Father, at the beginning of the 50s, after the anti-Semitic chase started with the «Cosmopolitan-doctors» case, managed to «arrange» and rewrote her for the «Crimean Tatar». He was a respected person, front-line soldier, head veterinary doctor in the Nizhne-Chirchik district of the Tashkent Region and the deputy of the district council of two convocations.

Here follows what I have written from Mama's reminiscences.

«I was born in 1927, in Yalta, where she lived with her Mother and Father in the house on the embankment opposite the 'Oreanda' Hotel. My father coddled me very much and carried me on the shoulders. I liked singing and dancing; for these I was getting gifts from the neighbors and awards at children's competitions. We had our own garden and a wheat field. At the end of the 20s, our relatives called Father to escape from the Bolsheviks together with them to Turkey. He refused, remained in the Crimea and, perhaps, regretted about this very much. He had to surrender to the new power, first, the separator, a chariot and a horse and then the cow. He was distressed for being unable to feed me and my Mother and died in 1931, if I am not mistaken.

⁷ Householder - house manager.

⁸ Bread made of corn during Khrushchev's times.

After his death, we starved even more. We went around the Crimean village to change worn out clothes for food. I remember how I once went asleep having put my head on her knees while she, tired, was sitting on the roadside rock. Once, I climbed up a tree in someone's garden, the furious owner asked me what I was doing there? I honestly answered that I was eating not stealing. First, he got disappointed than said that I should not climb in anymore, but did not send me away.

Aishe, my Mother worked at the collective-farm. When the war started, she left me with my aunt saying that she was summoned up into the mountains in the partisan brigade. There she seemed to miss during the war.

I do not remember how I appeared at the orphanage. There were children of all ages from 2 to 17. When the German troops approached the Crimea, there was an attempt to evacuate the children's home from the Crimea but our train was bombed. We rushed to the forest stabbing to the corpses of adults and children. Hungry, we wandered in the forest between two fronts, ate roots of grasses and berries. Very often we appeared between two fronts. Many children perished from wounds and hunger. First, their dead bodies frightened us, but then I learned «to ignore» them. I do not remember how we came back to Yalta.

People asked me after the war why I knew German which I taught officers in Samarkand and schoolchildren in Nukus. I answered that the German neighbor taught me it in Yalta. Throughout my life, I had been disguising from you my being in Germany, Brussels and Paris. I knew if you wrote in the forms that your mother was abroad, you would be thought the children of a German spy. Only after the collapse of the KGB⁹, I could tell you everything.

In fact, I studied the German language in Germany, to where the Germans repatriated our children's house probably in 1942. That time, I was 15 years old, but I looked like a small 10-year old girl. In Germany, we were detained near the settlement called Alt Holtz¹⁰ not far from Leipzig. The Germans came up to us to select whom to take. We sat embraced with a Russian girl with whom we became friends on the way. We hoped that somebody would have taken us together.

One of those who selected the Russian girl was an SS man. He was stringent, railed at his wife, beat her and made my friend work much and did not allow me to communicate with her.

The man that selected me was called Alfred. He owned the jewelry workshops in that village and in Berlin. I do not remember either his surname or name of his wife. As I understood now, she was a Jew and seldom appeared in the village because Alfred was hiding her from the police. She loved me and called me a daughter.

Alfred had the mother, I called her Umma. When I started speaking German, I was telling her about the Crimea and about my parents. Umma and I lived in a quiet village, in a thick pine-tree forest where the houses were not seen behind the trees. I rode bicycle in the village and in the forest, could leave the bicycle near the cinema and watch a film. Nobody sent me away from the cinema although everyone knew who and what I was. Sometimes I washed linen together with Umma. She had large bucks with linen, and she gave a small basin to me. A dog, Moorhen, lived with us. I ran into the forest with Moorhen, he played hide-and-seek with me, ran away from me. His head was appearing from behind the tree only when I started crying and disappearing again if I stopped doing that.

Alfred had the twenty-year-old daughter Gisela that greatly resembled her father. Gisela had the groom that was at the front. Alfred also had a niece, Teya, his sister's daughter, a fair-haired girl. Both loved me and when they arrived from Berlin, they played with me like with a little sister, combed and tress plaited my hair, put different dresses on me like on a doll. Once or

⁹ Thus, she called the collapse of the USSR.

¹⁰ My Mum pronounced it like that.

twice a month I was taken to Berlin where sisters took me for walks taking by the hand, but allowed only whispering not to disclose that I was not a German. I was not allowed to go alone into the street in Berlin, but once I disobeyed and started asking passers-by how to find my house. Some man seized me by the hand started calling for a policeman. Alfred went out into the street and freed me from him.

In Berlin, in the Opera House, I saw the ballet for the first time; women danced with the open legs, I had never seen this in the Crimea and was so much astonished that could hardly restrained from amazement. Teya and Gisela managed to cover my mouth. During another performance the evil was creeping towards the good character of the play to kill him and I again cried giving him a warning. After these they did not take me to the theatre but sometimes went shopping with me. When I pointed to a liked object and said – «Es ist shon», I was getting a gift. During the New Year holidays, the largest heap of gifts was awaiting me under the New-Year Tree.

The war was coming to an end. The army men took me to the plant which already needed workers. When I was taken away, we all wept. I worked in the underground workshop in Troimblitsen where we packed cartridges. The foreman, a German woman, called me «meine Tochter» and saved me from the hard work. Moreover, I could not do such work as I was too weak.

Older girls and women guessed that the plant could be exploded together with us, but the Russian tank was in time to break the gates of the plant and freed us. Two Latvian girls suggested that I should run to Europe not to return to the Bolshevist Russia, but I wanted to return to my Mother.

The troop train to Russia was formed in Paris; Alfred's family saw me off providing me with a suitcase, clothes, photographs and gave the address of their relatives in Brussels for me to visit them on the way. Alfred's family relatives turned out to be a miraculously survived young Jewish family that had a six-month-old baby. Before the war, the wife's father owned an atelier making raincoats. He and all his relatives were killed by the fascists.

I walked with the child in the park and waited for the formation of the troop train to Russia. Child's father asked me to stay with them saying that I very much resembled his perished sister. But I greatly wanted to find my Mother. I went to Paris, where I got the documents, and from there I arrived in Moscow.

I fell ill in Moscow, ran a high temperature, and had no strength to carry the suitcase. I asked my neighbors in the Kazansky railway station to look after it and went to get my ticket punched; when I came back, the neighbors disappeared together with the suitcase and, what was more offensive, with the photographs. Probably, the suitcase was too large, beautiful and made of leather.

I reached Yalta and found nobody, all neighbors and relatives disappeared. I came up to my house, but it was occupied by a policeman or by a military man. I spent some nights under my house staircase, went to gorispolcom¹¹, requested housing or a room until I was taken to the police station. I was disgusted, said the war ended and I returned to my house. I do not know why the policemen laughed. I did not know that all people, including my relatives and neighbors had been deported from the Crimea at the order of Stalin. One policewoman persuaded me not to keep stiff an upper lip and go to Uzbekistan, as the Uzbeks were the akin people, besides there were many fruits there. Otherwise, she said, I would be taken to the Urals or Siberia under police escort and perish there. When I came to under the staircase after weeping, I came to the police

11 City executive committee

station for the order myself. I arrived in Tashkent only a half year later. I often fell ill on the way. After staying in the next hospital, I was again put on the train.

I was directed from Tashkent to Samarkand where I was much frightened at first by the females in hijabs.

Once, I went to the bath-house; after leaving it, I did not find the bread-tickets in the dress pocket; they were stolen. It was difficult and starving, but I lived in Samarkand as in the native land. Townsmen helped me, fixed up for a job of a lab assistant at the Agricultural Institute where I washed floors and dishes.

One of the townsmen, Abdurahman-aga,¹² was a prosecutor in Simferopol before the war. He said, «When people were expelled from the Crimea, 20 minutes were given for all packing. The soldiers hurried up, pushed with the guns; children and women were crying and shouting, cows were mooing, dogs were barking, sheep were baaing – boom and howl was hanging over the Crimea. Many people died on the way. The soldiers threw died bodies from the carriages without permitting to bury them». Probably for these talks, Abdurahman-aga was six times arrested. He was taken away in a cage to Tashkent for investigations. Every time he parted forever. In the 50-s, he was justified and lived only for two years after that.

His daughter Urie lived under Samarkand together with her daughter. We were friends, but then she quarreled with me as she was displeased by my marrying the Kazakh and not her cousin Ablyaziz. I named my younger daughter's son Ablyaziz, perhaps to mitigate my fault before her; she had not known about this. Ablyaziz, Urie's brother studied at the Agricultural Institute together with your father. He became the candidate of sciences, developed his party line career in Tashkent, and married to a Russian. His wife Tanya disguised visits home to her relatives whom Ablyaziz's relatives did not communicate because they were Russians.

After your father's death, I lost the will; otherwise I would have not gone to Nukus. Father's elder brother came to Soldatskoye for the funeral, sold the house, sold all that could be sold and took us to Nukus. When I left the plane, I got frightened by a ghastly dust storm, which I had never seen; the sand was beating at the face and eyes; I closed Vitya's face with the raincoat collar; he was in my hands; you and Arslan hid under my mackintosh spreads. Thus we came to uncle's house crowded with the people that came to the funeral feast of your father.

Following the Kazakh tradition, they wanted to marry me to your father's relative, but I refused as I could not imagine anybody instead of your father next to me. I offended father's relatives by my refusal and they let me know about this. After this I requested the money from the sale of the house in Soldatskoye and bought the house number 2 in Mayakovsky Street.

After moving into our house, I caught the tuberculosis. Probably I caught it from your eldest uncle's sister when we lived at his house. I spent much time at the tuberculosis dispensary. You lived in the family of your late uncle Magjan. God bless his children and grandchildren with health for their assistance, although that time they also lived in misery after the death of the husband and father.

When you three, barefooted wearing only the boxes, visited me at the hospital, you stood under the window and cried calling me for yourselves. That time I made up my mind to outlive by all means. I was taking not only my pills but also collected and took those that other patients refused to take. I was choking but ate the curative food made of snakes or dogs that the patients shared with me. Tuberculosis was added with the heart disease. I was saved by the professor from Tashkent who happened to come to Nukus – he made cardiac surgery on my heart. Later on when I worked as a sick-nurse at the same tuberculosis dispensary, its doctors, sisters and cooks helped me to feed you.

12 Aga – respectful address or “elder brother” if translated word by word.

I became a medical sister after your father's friend, surgeon Berzhan Nurov, helped me to enter the medical school after the illness. It was necessary to feed you, and between the classes at school, I worked as a nurse at the maternity house, taught German at school, and replaced other medical nurses at night duties to earn more money. I could hardly see you. You ran around the neighbors borrowing bread or sugar – they nourished you. Particular help was rendered by the Korean neighbors that lived behind the wall; I remember their children - Roza, Sergei and Sveta.

We sold the house that I bought in early 70s as we could not pay for your studies at the Tashkent boarding school. Thanks to Emberghen's friends¹³ by the work at the Pedagogical Institute who became big men and helped me to get a three-roomed flat on the fourth floor of «khrushchevka»¹⁴ in «Cheremushky» quarter. How we suffered in this «khrushchevskaya stove» in summer when it heated up and failed to cool even at night!

God gave me 6 children, 11 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. I have had and am having anything I expected from life. The only thing I wish now is to find my rescuers in Germany and Belgium. Only now I understood that they had saved me from dying during that war. And the saddest thing that is left undone in my life is that I failed to find my Mother and I do not know where the graves of my parents are.

Father Alimjan

My Father, Alimjan, was born in 1920 in the Tamdy district in Karakalpakstan, to where his father Ishanjan-ata¹⁵ ran from Kazakhstan. In childhood, he indulged Alimjan as his younger son. He did not allow offending him whatever he did.

Where Ishanjan-ata was educated and learned Russian - is unknown, but it has helped their children receive a good education. He took Alimjan when he was 9 years old, from a distant village at the Kyzyl Kum desert to study in Bukhara school, then in Tashkent Kazakh Pedagogical College.



My Grandfather and Father

After studying at the Kazakh Pedagogical School, Alimjan was called up into the army in 1939 and returned in 1945. He served for seven years and passed through the war in heavy artillery falling back to Stalingrad and then reached as far as Budapest. He was wounded twice.

13 Erkin's stepfather whom his mother married.

14 A type of multistoried houses; its construction was initiated by Khrushchev, the General Secretary of the CPSU.

15 Ata- Grandfather.

Alimjan was 11 years younger than his brother, Magjan-aga, who was very happy that Alimjan returned alive from the war.

Next year, Magjan-aga, himself, took Alimjan to Samarkand Institute of Agriculture to learn the profession of a veterinary doctor. Magjan-aga was a veterinary doctor himself, and was highly respected in Karakalpakstan.

Magjan-aga, send him to study in Samarkand and provided with money. But Alimjan was greatly missing his father who was arrested and sent to KarLag¹⁶ while Alimjan was at war. Instead of going to study Alimjan used this money to go to look for his father or his grave. Magjan-aga scolded Alimjan as he could be arrested for searches of his father – a political prisoner¹⁷.

Next year Magjan-aga himself took him to Samarkand Agricultural Institute to study veterinary. Magjan-aga also was a respected veterinary doctor in Karakalpakstan. Ishanjan-ata sent him in 1932 to study veterinary in Alma-Ata Veterinary Institute. After graduation and working in Karakalpakstan, Magjan-aga was on advanced training in the Leningrad Veterinary Institute, where he was not only a student, but he lectured as an experienced doctor.

Old men in the Tamdy District, where many sheep were died due to the epidemic, remembered Magjan-aga, who saved many chairmen of collective farms from prison. Investigators blamed these chairmen that sheeps were died due the negligence of chairmen, from lack of fodder, from exhaustion. Magjan-aga ordered to slaughter one sheep and held a piece of meat over the fire. From the piece dripped the fat. Magjan-aga told investigators that in the emaciated sheep's meat cannot be the fat.

Mother said:

“Alimjan lived in Samarkand in the same house with me, only on its other side. We got acquainted during the election campaign when visited houses as the electioneers. Then we started visiting cinema together. Once he got me in a tight corner and said but not asked, «You will marry me! ». He was tall, two meters and four centimeters high, and my height was 1.5 meters. Perhaps that is why I agreed (mother stopped speaking, she smiles). We rented a small room with the earthen floor; there was a charcoal stove¹² and an iron soldier's bed.

When Magjan-aga arrived from Nukus, father and I slept on the floor, and Magjan-aga added a stool for his legs to the grid of a 2-meter soldier's bed. He was even taller than your father. Magjan-aga brought money and kaurdak¹⁸. This meat could be kept and eaten for a long time, adding 2-3 spoons of it to food.

Once we lined up at the canteen. I was pregnant, it was difficult to stand. The father left the queue of the students and joined the teachers' queue as he was an adult and a front-line soldier. On teacher started scolding him pushing out to the student's queue. The fathers strongly stroke him and called him a rear Hebe. He flew off and fell down. When my father was let from the police station, he cried from the insult. He, a front-line soldier with the war decorations was forced to sweep the streets».

Sanim, Magjan-aga's daughter, told us that one of her father's fellow-countrymen, Kolhosov, was attending Collective Farm Chairpersons Training Course in Samarkand at that time. They say that he did something to help Alimjan-aga to avoid being convicted. When Kolhosov came back to Karakalpakstan, he visited Minasar-zhenshe¹⁹, Magjan-aga's wife

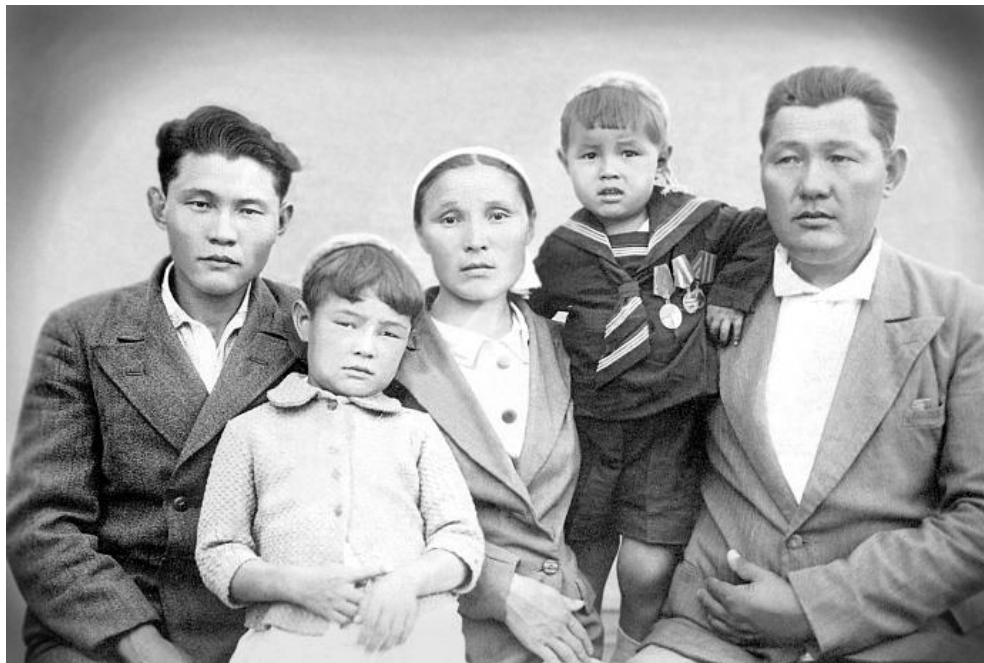
16 Karaganda branch of the Department of the State Concentration Camps.

17 Before that, they were together looking for his father, but to no avail.

18 Mutton fried in its own fat

19 The wife of the elder brother.

(Alimjan-aga himself was away on a leave) and told her how he managed to help Alimjan. Minasar-zhenshe, without giving it a thought, gave him her cow as a sign of appreciation. Sanim also told us that Alimjan asked Magjan-aga name his first son²⁰. Magjan-aga named him 'Arystan', and Minasar-zhenshe gave me the name of Erkin.



Alimjan, Ilia, Minasara –Ilia’s mother and Ruslan (on her right), Magjan-aga

I reminded that Sanim, Magjan-aga's daughter told that when the relatives had matched Alimjan the Kazakh girl from Karauzyak, he refused to marry her, and Magjan-aga supported him.

Mother continued:

«I cried so much that time. And he did not leave us with his first son saying - «I will not leave you while I am alive».

When Arslan fell ill with choking whooping-cough, Alimjan and I were spending nights near the canal where the air was humid and eased breathing. Several times, father elevated Arslan on a sharply ascending and descending plane. The doctor advised this. When during the next coughing attack, we thought that our first child was at death's door, the father cried out in tears, «If you, Allah, so much need somebody’s life, take mine. But leave my son to live! » Perhaps Allah heard him and Alimjan had lived a little longer after these words, only for 6 years.

In 1951, Alimjan received the diploma of the veterinary doctor, but we were not let into Nukus where his relatives lived. That time Nukus was a forbidden town.²¹ Probably they also did not let us in because of me, as the KGB was aware of my presence abroad. My father was sent to Soldatskoye village under Tashkent. You and Vitya were also born there. When the students, countrymen and relatives from Nukus town, studying in Tashkent visited him in Soldatskoye, he arranged feasts for them with food, home-made wine, provided them with money.

Magjan-aga died at the beginning of the 50-s. Sometimes I woke up at nights because Alimjan was sitting at the table, crying and howling being sick for his brother.

20 According to the custom of the Kazakhs, Alimjan was to ask his father to give a name to his first son. He could not ask his father since he was dead by that time.

21 The town had troops, which tested chemical and biological weapons in an island of the Aral sea.

When I was at the hospital after appendectomy and was waiting for you, Erkin, birth, Stalin died. All patients, nurses and doctors wept. When Alimjan came I rushed to him, wept and wailed, “Whom we had lost, and Stalin died! ». He calmly said to me, «May damnation, take him! I thought something happened to the baby».

In 1957, Alimjan fell ill after motorcycling in rain and snow to the farms; he was treated in Tashkent but vain.

Almost twenty years later after father’s funeral in Soldatskoye village, I went together with my boarding-school mate, Sergey Makarik, to look for father’s grave. Decision to find it came to me spontaneously after blind drunk tears about my orphan fatherlessness. It took us about two hours by Sergey’s motorcycle. Rain was beating against the face, we got wet and cold. We found the cemetery on the hill divided by the hollows into Kazakh, Tatar and Korean parts. In the pouring rain, knee-deep in the wet grass red of autumn, we were looking for the grave. We failed to find it. We stood among the metal railings – epitaphs on somebody’s graves around. Makarik said that we would all also die one day. And he soon perished in the fight where he defended his brother.

Perhaps, visits to the cemeteries are needed both to refresh the memory of the late relatives and to hear about inevitability of death not in the accidental whisper of the wind of time but in the roar of the trumpets of Jericho.

Once, my senior friend and colleague by the Nukus Museum Alexei Kvon gently laughed at me, as he thought, artificial “orphanage”, and said, “You are pitiful to yourself as to an orphan although you yourself became a father long ago. The man that had become a father cannot consider himself the orphan any more”.

Before my searching, Arslan tried to find his Father’s grave several times; he raked over the archives, consulted to the old people and cemetery wardens in Soldatskoye. The old people pointed out to three uncared graves and marked one of them with a rusty beveled fence made of the flat metal bars of the 50s. Just on this grave Arslan erected the monument, on that slope of the hill where he chased the snake together with other children while his father was entombed. He told about the erected monument to his mother and me. We wept. We still do not know if this is the father’s grave? Maybe we needed to put the monument on any place of the hill and not on the unknown grave. The hope that the monument is yet on father’s burial place brings consolation. (Recently I saw a dream that we had found our father’s grave, opened it, Mum untied the winding-sheet, and we saw the father lying as if he had just expired...)

How similar the fates of the ascendants and descendants happen to be! Indeed, both the mother and father failed to know where their parents were buried. And our Father, when we were born, although he did not already go on searching of his father, was spending nights in writing inquiries to various organizations asking to inform him how and where his father died, and where he was buried. Recently I received from Ilia the copy of the reference from Kazakhstan prosecutor’s office saying that our grandfather died at the seek-ward of the Burmin department in Karlag, and was buried there in the unknown common grave.

Grandfather Ishanjan

My Grandfather's name was Ishanjan Joldasov, a Kazakh from the Tabyn tribe, Ajim's kin. It was he who was the ishan. They say our Grandfather had a good command of the Russian language and thus he was called "Ivan"-Ishan.

His father, our grand-grandfather Joldas, made 2 hadjs on foot. He couldn't complete his third hadj because he got sick on the way, and came back. He built a mosque in the place called Aksai in Bargain district of Kazakhstan, and dug a well there. This well still has water in it. His descendants visited his place once in five years. Cars and other organizational issues were the responsibility of his grandson, Eruslan. One car would accommodate a kazan, a lamb and food, and another one - all the relatives.

Eruslan, Magjan-aga's son told that one of our grandfather ancestors served some Russian officer in the Orenburg Province; this ancestor together with his kin quieted Bashkir tribes at which this officer set up the Kazakh tribes playing off the Bashkirs and Kazakhs to «divide and rule». After the agreed upon period our ancestor refused the invasions to Bashkir auls and decided to wander away together with his people. He and other kin leaders were whipped and ordered to continue their service. At night, he ran away together with his kin, and the morning, that officer was found slaughtered.

In summer 1990, the KGB archives were open for two-three months for the relatives of the political prisoners, and when Arslan got access to the archive file of his Grandfather, he managed to copy out some things. It became known from the protocols of the file that during the collectivization years, his Grandfather was «dispossessed» and sentenced to spend three years at the concentration camp under Almaty and in the town of Gordievka in the Novosibirsk region. After the concentration camps and while waiting for the next detention, he escaped to his relatives from the Tabyn district (now Baygany district of the Aktubinsk region) to Karakalpakstan, first to Kungrad, then to the Tamdy district in the center of the remote sands of the Kyzyl Kum where he was itemized as a sovhos²² saddler. It was highlighted in the case that following the wardens' report, Ishanjan met the famous Karakul-ishan²³ in Karaguy²⁴.

But his Grandfather was detained for the fact that after the beginning of war with Germany, he was discussing with the old men who would win – «the red» or «the white» horse? Someone informed the authorities on them. All were arrested and transported to the concentration camp. Whether it is a legend or a fact, but the informer was said to disappear and the investigation showed horse's steps led to his house and from the house, horse's and informer's steps led to the hole in ice in the Amu-Darya. On the way back to the house, there were only the horse's steps.

When Arslan was reading the file, the KGB archive officer said there was no use to read protocols of interrogation of all participants as all cast the blame on each other. Arslan bent head over the pages of the file, asked for three minutes, finished reading, straightened the back and proudly said, «Just check. They do cast blame on my Grandfather, and he does not on anybody.» The officer looked through the protocols of interrogations and said with respect, «This rarely happens». After that, Arslan asked for Grandfather's photo from the file saying that we, descendants, did not have his photo. The officer refused. Then slowed and said he would leave for smoking. Arslan understood. That is how this photo appeared to be with us; one of the children cut off the plywood number so much humiliating Grandfather.

22 Large state farm

23 Spiritual Leader of the rebellion against the Bolsheviks in the Khorezm territory.

24 Karaguy – the branch of the KarLag (Karaganda State Concentration Camp).

As follows from the documents, our Grandfather was arrested in Nukus on 21 April 1942, condemned on 24 February 1943, arrived in Karlag on 30 April and died on 23 November of the same year. What Grandfather's sufferings and thoughts back up these dry figures if they raise cold horror in me even now?



Ishanjan Joldasov. My Grandfather.

In the 90s, we received the reference on Grandfather's rehabilitation but we acknowledged it not as Grandfather's justification by the State but as the State's recognition of its unpunished delinquency.

Dad Embergen

Our stepfather (he deserved this «Dad» from us). By marrying my Mother with three little children, Embergen Dauletbaev went against the unwritten patrimonial and career laws stating that if you want to develop your career and become rich, marry a female-relative of an influential and rich man whose kin can get access to the official stamp and account with the bank i.e. become a boss. Dad acted on the contrary.



Embergen Dauletbaev (in the photo the second on the left) with my brother Vitya and his colleagues from the Pedagogical Institute).

Dad told me:

«We lived with Grandpa in Shabbaz²⁵ adorned with a very beautiful tomb of Sheih Abbas Vali. In 1939, this tomb was destroyed.

My Grandpa Dauletbay-ata raised me. Bazargul, Grandpa's wife, was 19 years younger than her husband. They got a child, Nazira, my Mother, that died from bleeding during childbirth at the beginning of the 30s. My Father, Nurymbet, rarely visited me but brought sweets”.

As I heard from Father's relatives, Dauletbay-ata had his children – son Janabay and a daughter. Janabay-aga was father's uncle. When in the 50s, he received a plot of land in Nukus as an institute teacher; he built the house and brought there Janabay-aga from the remote aul which had no doctors so that Janabay could treat his legs at the city doctors. Doctors could not help him, and when the legs were very much aching from rheumatism, he was warming them up in the yard in the sand red-hot from the sun. Burying his legs in the sand, children asked him, “Ata, why do your legs ache?” He answered jokingly, “Because during 5 years I walked on them from the Karauzyak aul to the city of Berlin” and showed on the map from the school textbook on geography how far Berlin from Karauzyak was. Children got surprised, “Why was it necessary to go so far to Berlin?”, and he also joking answered, “When I served in the army, the commander ordered to put the signature on the wall of the major building in Berlin.” From the films children knew what the “commander” and “order” meant. Children lost Janabay-aga's orders and medals when they were playing with them. Mother tried to take them away from children but Janabay-aga let the children play with his awards, children did not have other toys.

Dad told, “Until the second half of 1920, Dauletbay-ata worked as a farm hand in the wheat and cotton fields. During the NEP²⁶ times after the years of “military communism” from 1925 to 1929, he worked in the town of Beruni at a slaughter-house. He built a house with a veranda, ceishana²⁷; he had his own orchard and a big loft. He also had an inn for collective-farmers coming to the bazaar.

Famous Shoinshi-palvan²⁸ was equal in fights with the Khiva wrestlers. Shoinshi-palvan's son, Zaripbay-wild was also a wrestler. They say that once a wrestler from Fergana defeated him in the presence of Usman Yusupov²⁹. Zaripbay swore at the wrestler and referees, “Sarts cheated”. Usman Yusupov got angry with the offensive by-name of the Uzbeks – “sart”, but was persuaded to forgive Zaripbay.

We were neighbors with Nurjan-aga, a raifinotdel³⁰ inspector. He monitored that all paid at least the part of taxes to be paid and concealed this from the authorities so that the neighbors were not arrested for the incomplete payment of taxes. Therefore, as we saw all carried to him “gifts” of foods and sheep. He reasonably decided that neither the state nor he receive anything if all were arrested.

Mumin-usta also lived in the aul. He shaved the entire aul free of charge as “sauat ys”³¹. He had manuscripts, dastans³², and Sufi Allayar's verses that he recited at the tois³³. Mumin-

25 Beruni town now.

26 New Economic Policy of the communists that replaced the policy of military communism and partially allowed free trading.

27 A cattle yard.

28 A strong man.

29 State and political leader of Uzbekistan in 1930-1940s.

30 District Department of the Ministry of Finance.

31 Good deed

32 Eposes

33 Feasts.

usta's son perished at the front, only three months he had lived with his young wife. After the war, he returned from the front footless; he moved in a cart, brawled, cried that he freed Europe but could not find work at home. He was fixed up for a job to the invalid's cooperative, the wage was small there, and he lost himself in drinking.

In the 30s, after winding up NEP, we crashed by the exorbitant taxes and collectivization moved to aul Shok-Torangyl located on the way between Halkabad and Takhtakupyr. In the Beruni district all gardens were cut over for cotton. And what apricots have been there before! After movement, our Shabbaz house decayed, pigeons got wild and flew apart.

In the new village, the tribesmen helped by keusen³⁴. Nurjan-aga gave an old yurt³⁵ and we warmed it up with "shiy" – cane mats with the same cane floss. Our neighbors - Aisary gave wheat for food and seeds; Kosbergen gave felt; Aitym, Sambet, Shylman, Alniyaz gave grain". (I quote all names because my Dad who that time was less 10 gratefully recollected these names half century later.)

And he shucked deviating from the sad topic was telling us how at all tois, Grandfather requested my, grandson's share of delicacy and was bringing them to me. They used to sing impish songs at these tois; Grandfather remembered one – this was a Turkmenian song in which a woman boasts that the head of her husband's "kutak" (cock) is five fingers thick.

Laughing, he told us how already not in the early childhood he was placed on the goat hair blanket between two women; he was turning in bed for a long time and they told him, "Stop turning!" But it is easy to say "Don't turn" if you are pressed between two enormous female asses and if you do not give sleep a song about the "five fingers".

My Father was a good student, an active Komsomol³⁶ member, he received the training assignment to the Pedagogical Institute. In the 50-60s, he taught history and atheism there. He passed for an honest and principle man. I remember how he sent off the people that used to come to our yard asking to "help" their children to pass entrance examinations and were bringing bribes for cooperation – money and sheep, and he sent them off the yard.

40 years later, Dad's father Nurymbet, found him, repented for leaving father in childhood alone and suggested purifying fault by "sut-khaky"³⁷ promising to bring a cow. The second time he came for my Dad to help Nurymbet's children to enter the institute. Dad refused and said that he had entered the institute without "cows" and wished the same to his children. Since then, Nurymbet had never come.

For some time, he used to be a Communist Party organizer at the institute. Somebody feared but provoked my Dad for the "excess" critics of some Tashkent official. And my Dad was "exiled" to the Academy of Sciences where he worked until retirement.

He traveled much over Karakalpakstan presenting the "Knowledge" society, studying the religious situation for the reports to the regional party committee and lecturing on atheism with the communist ardor. When I traveled over the villages in Karakalpakstan turning a penny as an interviewer for the social centers, I happened to come to the village where Embergen spent his childhood, and where the people remembered his grandfather. There I concealed my relation to my Dad, and I was told that in his atheistic rage, he ordered to bring down gumbez³⁸ of my Grandfather as a religious symbol inappropriate for a "true" communist. Perhaps, when Dad

34 A custom to share with the poor.

35 A nomad's felt tent

36 Young Communist League.

37 Word by word it is "payment for milk". Here – compensation for non-execution of parent's duties.

38 The burial vault.

became a Muslim, he suffered from his deed. Probably my Dad suffered from this shameful action and, therefore, never spoke about it.

To become a professional propagator of atheism, Dad studied the Quran, Hadiths, Sufi scriptures, and particularly verses of the existential content of Sufi Allayar popular in the lower reaches of the Amu-Darya. As well as his verses of the existential content.

Dad wrote down into my pad two amazing Sufi proverbs that Dauletbay-ata taught him to:

- «*Shariat izlesen – oltyr jylandy, Khakiikat izleceen kyinama janyndy*». (If you are looking for Justice, kill a snake inside yourself; and if you are looking for the Truth, do not torture your soul.)

- «*Teniz tubi tungyik – tusersen de ketersen, tauekel tubi kayiktyk – minersen de otersen*.” (Purport of the life) sea is the black abyss; if you fall into it, you will disappear. Purport of tavakkul (asceticism in Sufism) is a boat, sit in it and you will swim over the abyss of the sea».

Dauletbay-ata told my Dad a wonderful parable on how Allah created Adam from the clay and created the Soul to transfuse it into him. The Soul resisted going into the clay. Then Allah made the Music sound from the Adam's clay body ... and the Soul has settled in the Adam's body by itself and resides in his descendants only while the Music sounds from them.

Throughout his life, Dad so thoroughly studied Islam that had inevitably become the Muslim, although he did not adhere to five Ibadan. He might have come to Islam after the next event that had shaken him. Imam of the Turtkul mosque happened to get the letter of an old man addressed to the President of the country (why not to the Mufti of that time SADUM³⁹). In this letter, the old man revealed hypocrites, those mullahs and common Muslims that forgot true norms of Islam, got involved in lawlessness, acquisitiveness and moneymaking. Mosque's elders resented and required to place the denunciator into Takhiatash asylum. A 76-year a tall white-bearded righteous man stately retired calling the faithful for the Truth. (I told my Dad that if the Prophet himself turned up to that imam and to the old man pursuers, they would have sent him to the asylum either).

In the 89s, when the CPCU obcom⁴⁰ consulted with him, my Dad supported Muslim's initiative on the construction of the first mosque in Nukus and for this imam of the mosque presented my Dad with one of the first copies of the Quran sent from Saudi Arabia.

By the way, my Dad emphasized that the foreign theologians considered Soviet imams to be untrue Muslims, shadow communists and KGBists, Dad himself rejected this and praised the enviable knowledge of Islam of many unofficial imams, who had university degrees in such sciences as history, biology, engineering, similar sciences and themselves studied Islam.

.My Dad had a very large library containing works of almost all classical philosophers, many historical monographs, albums of almost all world famous museums and artists, all Western and Russian classical literature, large selection of records with classical music. Partially, all these, including drawing and photography that Dad taught me to, had created us.

39 Middle Asian Muslim Board

40 Province Committee.

Younger Brother Victor

As our relatives said our younger brother Victor (Vitya) still remained a «shala-muslim» (semi-muslim) as he had not gone through Sunnat⁴¹. When Sunnat was to be made on us, three brothers, Vitya ran away. He was very naughty and ignored his stepfather and Mum including the time when they were convincing him to get Sunnat. Perhaps that is why some relatives were telling him that his father was not his blood father and thus badly treated Vitya, and Mother seemed to love his stepfather more than him. By this they set his back up against both stepfather and mother.

If our Father or Magjan-aga had been alive, they would have not allowed Victor, ishan's grandson, spending his life to a greater extent in detention.

Vitya appeared to be in children's colony for the first time after he with his friends robbed a newspaper stand and carjacked somebody's "Gazik"⁴². It was discovered during the investigation that he was also a crime accomplice of the "housebreakers" involving children in the thievery of the affluent "serpents" and "butter-stealers"²⁵. Children stole in the window through a window leaf and opened the door for the adult thieves. They were headed by an adult mafia boss. Once, this thief ordered Vitya to hide a sawn-off gun at home assuming that the illegal gun would not be searched for in the house of the leader of the Communist's organization at the Pedagogical Institute. Vitya hid it, but Dad found it, beat Vitya and handed in the sawn-off gun to the police. Mother begged Vitya to put up with those "friends", and he tried to tell them he was leaving them. After that he came home all in blood – "friends" beat him and promised to kill next time. Then he said to his Mother, "It is all over, I won't be able to leave them".

After the trial, when he was in the Pup zone, camp officers promised release on parole for bribe. Vitya knew that Mother had no money and refused the release. As revenge he flooded the rubbers warehouse⁴³ with glue and put it on fire. Later on he mentioned about this to a court prisoner like he. That one informed on him. Instead of release, he got a few more years in prison. Then he deliberately caught tuberculosis from his co-prisoners to get grounds for the refusal to work at the plant.

After the release, Vitya married, stopped stealing but hooked the drugs to mitigate the wrench of his life. He was once again sentenced for drugs. His last place of detainment was the building of the tuberculosis hospital of the Tashkent prison. Being there, he asked Arslan for 200 roubles as he had gambled away. Instead of passing the money over to him, Arslan applied to MIA asking to protect Vitya from those whom he handed in the cards and wrote to Vitya, "I need money to feed children and not for your gambling". Later on Arslan understood that he acted like a weak-brained "Komsomol member" from the Soviet films and gave me money that I threw over the jail's fence to Vitya. Since then, Arslan had been tortured by the untimely deed: money could have resolved something important in Vitya's life; the latter had never more, neither before nor after this incident, asked for money.

Arslan loved Vitya more than me and defended him during our children's fighting. I think Vitya forgave Arslan; when the jailbirds who respected Vitya wanted "to punish" Arslan for something, Vitya just said, "He is my brother". And it was enough.

When Vitya was released for the last time, he asked me to take him to Father's grave. That was the first time when we went to Soldatskoye together. He went there for the second time alone before his death; he went there and painted letters bronze on Father's gravestone.

41 Rite of circumcision.

42 Soviet style of Jeep.

43 Production of the zone plant

In the 80s, several years before Vitya's decease, Arslan told me that he met him in Nukus. Although Vitya was stout and looked sound, Arslan suddenly noticed the seal of death in his grey face and started crying.

Vitya was dying with difficulty. He desiccated, got mere skin and bones. He begged to save him. They say he failed to endure sufferings and made himself a fatal dose of opium – blood appeared on the hollow breast – he exhaled a sigh of relief and died. He was 39; it was almost the age of our common father.

I wish we had had wise male-relatives next to us that would have not left Alimjan's grave forgotten and secured Vitya from his fate. What could we, children with brains "washed" by Gaidar's books, have done, and what could have done by the stepfather that blindly followed the "socialistic legality"? And Mother was completely bound up in feeding six children.

Of course, one can find many excuses, but ...

In the Boarding School

In September 1966, I woke up early and heard Mother's talk with the stepfather: my first teacher Aya Imanovna appeared to tell them that I was capable of drawing. Parents decided to send me to Tashkent, to the boarding school where Arslan was already studying. I listened to this conversation lying in bed with closed eyes, excited with the changes awaiting me in future. I was happy to go to Tashkent from where Arslan was bringing bundles of so tasty cracknels.

I have flown to Tashkent. Arslan and Sasha Karpunin met me at the gangway. Sasha came from Chimkent: his drawing capabilities were discovered at the Chimkent school and he was sent to study at the Tashkent Arts and Musical Boarding School.

Our classroom rejoined the arts college building named after Benkov. While jumping from the roof of our classroom onto school's roof, one could come to its garret. And there!.. There were many canvasses of student's diploma works that I was turning over and admired. On that roof I sketched and painted on Sundays. Our literature teacher being on duty called me for lunch and reprimanded, "Do you think the higher you climb up, the better you will be painting?!". Once I climbed onto the roof and saw Sasha there who was enjoying a can of his beloved condensed milk hiding from a similar greedy of sweet. He treated me and helped to finish the landscape. All the time at school, he treated me with great passion.

Sasha got used to watch the Indian films because he found simplicity and sincerity in them that were close to him. I saw him for the last time when I was already studying at the institute. The old long coat, red beard, blue, kind, childish and sincere eyes. He was sitting in front of the 'Panorama' cinema on the green grass 'bisikom' (as he was saying); with the sandals off (he loved to walk bare-footed, was reading Japanese haiku and meditated. He spoke abruptly, «Art ... I will never understand where it comes from ... maybe... an instinctive cognition of you in the world». He had already displayed his works at the exhibitions of professional artists. Sasha had a genuine hand of a drawer equal to Rembrandt's hand. His last posthumous exhibition was at the «Ilhom» theatre – a few from not many surviving works. Sasha died when he was 38, in 1989 – he had a sick heart from his childhood. I recently saw in the Internet that Karpunin was included in the list of famous artists of Russia.

At the boarding school, Sasha made his plaster self-portrait. It became an «epidemic» among the students of the arts department after the senior students, who later turned into famous sculptors, Farid Ahmedzyanov and Pavel Podosinnikov showed us how to make a plaster mask. They covered the face with Vaseline, put a thin reed into mouth for breathing and poured plaster over it. It was strange to look at your mask like at the posthumous mask of Pushkin that was hanging on the wall in our classroom.

Both at school and at the institute, Farid Ahmedzyanov treated me like a little brother. He, Pavel and “Kuka” (Khikmat Gulyamov) studied under the mighty and flamboyant sculptor Raphael Nemirovskiy. The sculptor had his studio at the boarding school at the backyard of the former orphan home for talented children where some of them were hiding to smoke and “talentedly” play lyanga⁴⁴. But the orphan home, later on transformed in the 60s into a boarding school that had rather outstanding teachers of music and painting than talented children.

Orphan home number 20 was created yet before the war in Beshagach, in Baynal-Minal Street, 2. One-storied buildings with very thick brick walls of classrooms and bedrooms were located in a big court-yard with a small fountain. It was a whole country for me there! There was a slaughtering and meat processing plant across the narrow street. Sometimes the stench was coming from there. But the surprisingly tasty pies –“gumma” - at 4 copecks per piece were also sold from there. Generations of students from Benkov Arts School, Arts Institute and the Institute of National Economy were raised on these pies. The whole city was coming for them including venerable artists in their cars like artist Perov and his wife arts critic Faina Mihailovna Perova and their friend artist Taldykin – like in the youth... There are neither such pies nor the meat processing plant now.

Music teaching at the orphan home started with the creation of the brass band under it. Later on departments of music, visual arts and ballet enrolling talented children from the entire Uzbekistan and South Kazakhstan were established in the orphan home. There were also children of the political migrants – the Greeks (Maya Goghu), the Kurds (Mustafa Issa Mula Shami.)

Mikhail Solomonovich Orenberg headed the children’s home in the 50-s and early 60-s. The legendary director opened the workshop producing gramophone records with the children’s home, and the pupils of the 9th-10th forms were spending several hours a week working there. Part of the income was used for children: there were the “Kremlin” strips of carpeting in the bedrooms and fruits on the tables in winter. The earnings went to children into the savings account with the savings bank and after the orphan home children had their own money to get on to “feet” or on to “feather”. Some pupils like Vasya Morozov and Salavat (I cannot recall his surname) also stayed to work there.

Probably, somebody needed this workshop, and Orenberg appeared to be on trial and court for the “exploitation of child’s labor” as they said. He was replaced by I. V. He drank day and night without leaving his office, and during his directorship the shop went amiss. After him, already the Republican Special Music-and-Arts Boarding School was for a long time headed by Msyrhon Norbutabekovna Sultanova. I remember how he was embracing me to calm down when one day I was drawing in the studio, and the earthquake of 1966 happened – the floor was shaking under me, the walls vibrated around, and the plaster was cracking and falling down from the ceiling . Dead-white, I rushed into the court-yard shivering with fright.

Let me go back to my initial arrival at the boarding school when I entered my fifth form for the first time. It was not large at all, a huge old man, the painter Victor Stepanovich Podgurskiy, completely occupied the room. Podgurskiy was hard of hearing (had the earphone) and that is why he was very loudly inspiring us: «The people have Saturdays and Sundays when they rest from work and reap the harvest of their labor. But the artist has no resting, he works everlastingly, endlessly, and his fruits are controversial. Remember, it is very risky to become an artist». And without listening up to him we were rushing from the classroom for the sandwiches that were brought from the canteen at the noon break.

44 Lyanga – boy’s game with a piece of skin weighted with lead to be thrown up by foot something resembling a Volant for badminton.

And Faina Mikhailovna, our teacher, was saying that an artesian usually lived a complicated and tragic life that was rarely easy and simple. Perhaps therefore, the same Van Gogh's way of life attracted me; I copied all his letters to Brother Theo by hand that time. Once I gave them to Arslan's class mate, the violist Svetlana Gaisina, and got them back almost 30 years later! in Nukus where she came on tour with the symphonic orchestra

Words of Victor Stepanovich and Faina Mikhailovna also reminded me of the statement by V. Favorskiy, a genuine graphic artist and art historian, that it is easy to be the artist until forty, and then it becomes very complicated. It is really true. I also put up with painting at forty. Creativity courage ended. The last things that I painted during that hard autumn of the 94th year when I was running around looking for the earnings to be sent to children in Tashkent were the still-lives with vegetable or breads.

Once I saw at the Uzbekistan Museum of Arts, in its marble foyer, gouaches of Podgurskiy with the views of the old Chinese temples and beautiful water-colors highlighted with the whitewash, with very exact and fine tints in shadows. After the war, Podgurskiy returned from the Shanghai Russian emigrant colony with the English wife (she did not speak Russian at all) and with the adult son (he also became an artist). Podgurskiy mainly taught at the Benkov Arts School where Alexei Kvon studied. Alexei warmly recollected Podgurskiy.

Behind the school walls, we lived on a comfortable islet of the boarding school off the noisy world. Every path, bush of lilac, wall and tree were known on this islet. Sometimes at nights of warm showers we ran naked in the rain. Then we splashed in the fountain with cool water. We childly made friends, fell in love, quarreled and reconciled.

After Podgurskiy, up to the senior forms, we were taught by the best man and real educationalist, artist Vladimir Ivanovich Boiko. And in the senior forms, we were "captured" by the luminary artists – Burmakin, Taldykin, Plaksin and others. Absorbedly we abandoned ourselves with their lessons in such a way that on Saturdays and Sundays, through a small window, I stole into the locked classrooms for drawing and worked upon still-lives at nights striving to achieve exactness of displaying of glossy surface of kumgan⁴⁵ and luxury of the drapery color. Such tension manifested itself, once towards morning I was attacked by the mysterious horror. It seemed to me that I hanged upside down, my legs were bent somewhere behind the head, and the awful unbearable burden was approaching me. I woke up my classmate Ramil and asked to let me under his warm blanket as I was shivering. Even before this, yet in the Nukus School, I have experienced the attack of such insanity several times. Suddenly I thought that terrible danger threatened me but if I twisted up myself into a spiral was able to avoid this danger. I asked my friends to press my soles to the floor and tried to twist up around myself. I failed to twist up but the attempts helped.

Valera U., a boy from an orphan home, studied one form higher. We were getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning and ran to go in for "body-building" on the chinning bar. After the boarding school, when he was studying at the institute, he married to the elder daughter of artist M. who was the pupil of A. Volkov (though Savitsky rejected this pupilage). Later on I got to know that Valera died. He lost several thousands of roubles; that time it was an enormous amount. Whether he could not endure reproaches of his wife or father-in-law or was so much distressed himself and committed a suicide.

After classes and lunch, I went for sketching until the evening. I returned in darkness, washed brushes with the household soap in the basin at the canteen's entrance and went for dinner. And the cooks nourished me in the kitchen even if the dinner was over long ago and the canteen was closed.

45 Copper jug for water

In the village beyond the 22nd block of the Chilanzar district, there were the deserted houses and among the fields there was the old but cared cemetery; small old mazars⁴⁶ covered with golden leaves, quiet alleys, benches, century-old trees, rare old men, steep bank of the river and ... the skies! Taldykin did not know about the cemetery but, probably feeling the spirit of my water-colors was looking at my sketches and grumbled, “Your paintings are so tragic as if your boots are pinching. Where does this tragedy come from?! You are 14 years old. Be your own self”. (Few of those sketches I presented to Faina Mikhailovna).

I loved music from childhood. Dad played records for me – “Animal’s Parade” by Saint Saëns, Paganini, march from opera “Aida”, opera “The Barber of Seville”, Bach’s chorales; I painted their imaginary portraits. My brother Vitya liked one of them; he praised it by saying, “This portrait is very good! ».

Composer Boris Dubrovin introduced music to us at the boarding school. He was arranging unusual musical parties accompanying them with the demonstration of the replicas of artists – contemporaries of these or those composers. Dubrovin was the pupil of the famous composer Kozlovskiy. A. Kozlovskiy, in his turn, was the friend of the artist Alexander Volkov. I remember Dubrovin showed to me the Bible that was prohibited that time and said that the Bible was presented to Kozlovskiy by Alexander Nikolayevich Volkov himself.

In the senior forms, Dubrovin was joking at me saying that I imitated Modigliani when saw once that I was painting slightly drunk. When he noticed my youth’s yearnings, he advised me to read Aragon’s novel “Orelien”. I read it and got very excited at Orelien’s love to Berenike.

Teachers Dubrovin and Plaksin pushed us to the searches of parallels between music and painting. Later I looked for music in painting where I tried to convey melody with a line, and color – harmony like in music.

Zest to music was also affected by the fact that students of the arts department studied together students-musicians. Those who finished the musical department happened to become artists but not on the contrary for some reason. For instance, Tanya Litvinova finished school as a musician and in Ashkhabad studied at the arts school. Now she works there at Ashgabat TUZ⁴⁷ as the artist.

I visited Navoi Opera House almost every day for year. I got acquainted with the theatre employees to such extent that I was freely entering the theatre through the backstage doors where I was making sketches of ballet dancers hovering onstage and behind the curtains where they stood behind the curtains bowing, holding the rope and hardly breathing saying to each other, «Oh... that’s all ... carry me out ...», and suddenly flew out onstage and easily hover in the dance.⁴⁸

Ah, theatre! Red magnificent arm-chairs, brilliance of the huge chandelier, gilded ornament of the walls, screwed pillars, soulless iron and wire cables of stage mechanisms (supporting beautiful light and color glistening scenery). Ballet dancers - nifty legs, laughter, smiles, blue lashes, curls, cheap tinsel – and flows of sweat running down their backs and breasts into the old gowns. But breathtakingly beautiful! And «warriors» in bloomers nearby are mocking, laughing and spitting on the floor. The microphone dooms with orders, then requests and after that tired pleas of a stage manager, a thin young man, to the actors. The arm-chairs are occupied by the director, a superman wearing glasses, grey-haired composers and conductors; make-up-men and stage workers are sliding like shadows among the actors. Magic life! (Perhaps

46 Grave-stones.

47 Theatre for Youth.

48 These sketches were not preserved.

it was the dress rehearsal of “Tahir and Zuhra”, one staging of 25 Uzbek national operas and ballets).

“To Moscow, to Moscow, to Moscow»⁴⁹

After studying at the boarding school, I went to Moscow together with my classmate Sereja Makarik. The purpose was very presumptuous: if to continue studies, then in Moscow. We had better entered the Tashkent Institute of Arts where we had 100% chance to enter; all teachers at the Institute were also training us at the boarding school, and probably encouraging us - saying that we had been prepared better than at Benkov's school.

We had a long trip by train, were joyfully drinking and singing. First we went to the Higher Arts-Technical School named after Stroganov, commonly called «Stroganovka». Multiple applicants ran about the corridors. On the second floor, we found the admissions office and showed our works. They liked my works; they saw the «spatial thinking in them and ordered to submit the documents. I do not know why Sergey's works had not been approved. For solidarity reasons, I refused to take the examinations. We went to Surikov Institute, but the entrance exams had been over there. Therefore, we submitted our documents to Printing and Publishing Institute and lived at its hostel in Lubertsy among the forest. We went by the suburban train to take our exams and talked, dreamed about the revolution, about the future art, about something reminding of the plan of monumental promotion as art and revolution merged for us into one notion. Of course, we went to the Tretyakov Gallery and to the Pushkin Museum. The summer was very hot and smoky, moss lands were burning under Moscow. Sergei passed exams but did not stay to study as I failed in the font examination. We paid for this by the years of service in the army. Makarik was taken to the internal troops, and he spent two years guarding court prisoners in Kazakhstan. I served three years in the Northern Navy.

My stepfather was sending detailed letter-instructions for me to Moscow: how to save money by buying pies and bread for 10-20 copecks and etc. He was describing his postgraduate student's life in Moscow and thought that I would learn a practical lesson from them. But in Lubertsy, several times in the evening, we went to dancing attended by the local girls. For the acquaintance with them and continuation of this acquaintance we spent our last 30 roubles left for the way back. A kind female conductor brought us to Tashkent; we paid her off on the arrival. The trip lasted three days. Heartily Uzbek-countrymen were feeding us on the way. We returned to Nukus from Tashkent.

Some words about the first and the last earning experience by means of «shirking». On the return to Nukus, I started thinking where I could earn money to help my Mother. Many artists were «shirking» to have the opportunity for gratuitous creativity. Artist Madgazin was motorcycling for painting sketches and landscapes worthy of placement in the museums, but he was selling them to hospitals, hotels, collective farm's offices, even to the bath-houses where payments were much higher and more reliable.

At one time I went to the Arts Fund studios located beyond the «108th turn». Why was it called like that? Maybe because there was building office 108 or this was the outskirts inhabited by the «one hundred eights»⁵⁰ (hobos), most likely because of both. Sometimes artists let me size and tint their canvases but did not want substantially share «shirking».

I left them and worked with two Leningrad artists that were decorating the new airport. The payment was fair. The work was interesting; they made the coat black not white but worked

49 Reminiscence of the phrase from Chekov's play “Three Sisters”.

50 Following the name of the Article 108 of the USSR Criminal Code persecuting tramps and non-working members of the community.

on them with light paints. Savitsky bought some paintings by these artists. One of the artists was mature and married; the second was young and single. Once they crashed on the motorcycle running into the truck near hotel «Nukus». The elder had the thigh bone crushed; the younger lost «only» the heel. He was «lucky». I visited them in the hospital. The elder asked to bring something by Chekov. He complained about his wife: she was much younger him, lived behind his strong back and “got lost” when this accident took place and thus did not come to him from Leningrad. In this way the elder artist was justifying her. When he improved, I sent him to Leningrad hardly wheeling him onto the board.

After working at the airport, I tried to find earnings in the advertising bureau of the city executive council dealing with the artistic decoration of the city. I went there for the whole month, took with me a piece of bread and a slice of dry cheese and some books to read during the lunch break. There was no independent work and I was finishing the poster left uncompleted by somebody. Before November holidays a young KGB man came and offered to write slogans for the October Revolution Holidays for KGB's facade. Nobody took up, that is why I took it up. I was writing revolutionary slogans «Jasasyn Ully Oktyabr!» and «Long Live Great October» in KGB's building during the whole night. Then I understood why others did not agree to work for KGB: I had to beg for payment for about two months and received «good» 20 roubles. My colleagues got surprised as earlier nobody managed to get payment from there.

Savitsky offered me the work at the Museum, but the salary there was very small. I thought I had to help my Mother; she and the stepfather sold the house for us to get profession at the boarding school. Madgazin also tempted me, «If you go to work for selfless Savitsky, you will not get money; come to me, I will teach you to work quickly, and you will be getting good payments, the art will not leave you».

The military commissariat did not give me the chance to choose. I was called to arms.

Service at the Northern Navy

I wished to see the world and, perhaps, even Cuba, the Homeland of my idol Che Guevara . I asked to go to the marines but they did not take people there from Karakalpakstan but I talked the military commissariat in and they took me to the Navy (there were few to wish serving three years at the Navy instead of two on land). I came to Leningrad by train; from there I went to Kronshadt by ferry, to Lenin's Order Naval Hospital. It was located in a huge three-storied Catherine building the two-meter thick walls and high ceilings. Our military training company of sanitary instructors was situated on the second floor.

They ranched pigs and rabbits for sailor's kitchen under the hospital. Sometimes we singed pig's heads in the fire-room and enjoyed pig's ears that appeared to be tasty almost like the lamb's. For winter they salted cabbage in an old wooden barrel of two heights of a man to press the cabbage with the rubber boots.

They boated inshore and were proud of sailor's corns. I could have made my service easier by drawing posters and slogans but I concealed that I could do this but the first experiences of promotion «shirking» caused stable aversion of it.

In the other part of the building, on the third floor, there were classrooms, where windows looked out on the spear of the Petropavlovsk fortress. During six months, we covered the entire course of the medical school. We were prepared as ship's doctor assistants so that in the long sea cruises we could do anything from injections to assisting surgeon.

After the training company, I was sent to Severomorsk to a large submarine hunter «Derzkiy»⁵¹. We spent the night with the ship captain Brazhnik, a great lover of poetry, in his flat in Peter and went to the ship in the morning.



It is hard to be a «young» sailor. The «young» were peeling potatoes or holystoned floor boards, metallic sheets on the floor in the machine department lacking the air because of the diesel oil and red-hot engine. We went up to the partition one by one to take a breath. Once, when throwing out potato peels, I tried to prevent the young sailor from throwing away the box together with the peels... and fell down into the North Sea myself. It happened just near the place without hand ropes. Somebody noticed and guessed to throw a fire-hose to me; I grasped it very firmly. I was dragged out, rubbed with spirits and even let to swallow it. If I slowed down for some more minutes, ice water would have done its part. Pea-jacket that I threw off went to the bottom. Later when I was sometimes looking at water trying to imagine myself at the sea bottom in this jacket.

«Derzkiy» made crosses over the straits from the Baltic Sea into the North⁵² Sea and around the Scandinavian peninsular. I remember snowy fiords in Norway, smart Swedish houses, and green fields of Germany. We swam in rather peaceful straits but for some reason there sounded the command «Battle Alarm», and we lock fasted the partitions and scuttles.

It was curious for me to see the stormy sea after Karakalpakstan deserts; waves in the heavy rhythm fell behind the scuttle into the large abyss and again billowed heaving to low skies. In the Barents Sea, I admired quiet bays among blissful islands covered with the incredible coloration of grasses in spring and blossoming tundra in grey rain. I was stricken with Aurora Polaris creeping with rashing and crashing along the sky.

And on land, frosts, long night duties, dances at the sailor's club, seeing off the girls and kisses among the houses covered with snow in a blurring town. In the evenings, in the berthing space, I read Rockwell Kent and had copied all verses of the greatest César Vallejo.

I was so lonely there that like a puppy nuzzled seeking communication to artists, librarians, to occasional acquaintances. One day looking for the colleague-artists I dropped at the arts showroom in Murmansk and asked, “Aren’t there any artists to get acquainted?” One of the sellers, Natasha, said her husband was the artist Ivahnenko. We made friends and I visited them during the holidays. I was visiting them during the holidays. And when I got into the hospital

51 Impudent.

52 German sea

after the failure to open veins, they visited me and brought oranges in small nets. I left a part of my drawings with them.

When I was going from Severomorsk to Murmansk to the Medical Administration of the Navy delivering sailors' blood tests, reports and etc., I certainly visited the beautiful library located in a huge building, and the visual arts department. Going downstairs, I saw the girl in yellow trousers and red blouse; I noticed books in her hands. These were letters of Goghen and verses of Schiller (in German) and Matisse (in French!). I came up and introduced myself, we fell into talk. Next day we met in the hall on the 4th floor, she read to me verses by Ahmatova, Apollinaire, Rambo, Valery in French. Her name was Marina Berkovich. She worked a translator at the Institute of Deep Waters and knew the German, French and Norwegian languages! There was the Decade of Leningrad Culture in Murmansk those days. I invited her to the lecture of the famous art historian Yuri Halaminskiy. I got acquainted with him. The same year he tragically died. Before that he wrote wonderful books about Central Asian Arts and also mentioned in one of the books Savitsky whom he met in Nukus.

There, at the library, I got acquainted with Natasha Lede «Ledyshka» (an icicle)... In the winter evening, in the foyer, I noticed a beautiful girl of about sixteen dressing in front of the mirror. I paid my attention to a strikingly thin waist and gorgeous hips when she was putting on the coat incurving her shoulders at the back. I caught up her in the street and started talking about something. It was already dark, snowing, and the snow was crackling under the feet...

Then we confessed to each other that this, in fact, casual meeting was happy, and that was nice that I started talking to her, and she answered to me without prejudice. I fell in love with her. But she presented me only with her friendship. We started lively correspondence. She wrote to me to the ship, and I wrote to her to the Cheluskinty Street. We wrote each other about books, music, dreams, our likings and spirits. (She liked when I missed or put extra commas. That is why I had to reread my letters thoroughly and keep the track of grammar). I wrote to her a great number of letters, left with her all my drawings in color pencils. I shared with her the plans of the future life full of travels and grand adventures. Everything turned out to be more prosaic. I left for Tashkent to study. When I wrote to her from there that I got married, she stopped writing. Then I understood she also loved me and waited for me.

After serving at the Northern Navy, I thought I had matured very much, but childish credulity did not happen to leave me. On the way from Murmansk to Tashkent, I decided to visit Leningrad. I arrived in Peter, took a luncheon of pies at the stand in a cafe. When I went out, I saw a lying lad. Nobody came up to him, but I came up and raised him. He asked me to take him home. I caught a taxi, and we went along the Nevsky Prospect. On the way, he offered to spend the night in his flat promising that «I'll be very well». When he stopped the taxi and ran for vodka, the driver told me in a low voice, «Run away immediately, guy, it's a drug-taker».

I rushed out of the taxi and went wandering along Leningrad in the mist of the sunrise. I passed by the house with the last F. Dostoevsky's flat on the second floor. I wandered along the Nevsky and other prospects. In the day time I visited the Russian Museum, the three-storied Mikhailovsky Castle where Emperor Pavel was strangled and where Dostoevsky studied at the Engineering School. In the evening, hardly dragging my feet, I came to Moskovsky railway station and took the train to Moscow. On the train I got acquainted with a Russian girl. I do not know why she offered to stay for night at her home. I got acquainted with her parents, took a bath and rested. In the morning, she saw me off to the railway station.

From Tashkent to Nukus, I came tired and worn-out. My old jacket was hanging on me like on a hanger when I put it on and went to make a photo for the passport. On the next day I went to see Savitsky and get back from him my canvases, pictures that I had left for storage. I regret now that I put on fire several suitcases of my drawings and not bad water-colors before the

military service as my home people said that I have overcrowded the flat with my works. I would have left graphics with Savitsky for storage, he would have saved them. He knew the value of artist's early works.

Studentship

I entered the Tashkent Institute of Arts and Theatre without great zest, Savitsky also dissuaded me saying that the Institute would only spoil me. But Arslan insisted, «The boarding school has not spoiled you, nevertheless!» – and reminded me how our Father once obeyed his elder brother Magjan.

Sergey Makarik was entering it together with me. When we bought new sketch-box easels, we got as excited as the first-form pupils with their first portfolio. And I was so much preparing for studies that even! bought the watch not to be late for the examinations. Before exams, I went to Faina Mikhailovna, my favorite teacher and patron and asked to speak for me. I would have not made the second attempt to enter the institute. She acquainted me with her friend, ceramist, and that one spoke for me to A.S. Kokotkin. He was likely to remember me as I was in the sailor's uniform. I was so tense during the examination that lost even more weight. I was enrolled to the Institute, after that I went to thank Faina Mikhailovna. She invited me the next day. I invited Grisha Kaptan that also entered the Institute. First he refused, but went and not in vain at all. There were outstanding artists Tokmin and Perov at the dinner table!

Perov treated me contemptly and with ineptness. When I admired Van Gogh, he fairly rebuked saying that one should not imitate but diligently study drawing; that Van Gogh was a self-taught genius but my genius was yet doubtful, and etc.

Perov had a favorite student Shukhrat. We corresponded with him when I served in the navy. He wrote about his projects of narrative compositions. Shukhrat was a friend of Abdulla Aripov, later on the People's poet and the author of the Uzbekistan anthem. Unfortunately, Shukhrat's life stopped at the age of 30 in 1976, the year of my enrollment to the Institute. And he just started his creative work after graduation from the Arts Institute. As I heard, he died under the car – he was celebrating something with friends in his studio, ran to the shop, he slipped on the ice...

Splendid and very subtle artist Tokmin lived in the Artist's House in Ak-tepe. Once at New Year's night, all his paintings burnt down in his flat. Sometimes I saw burnt fragments of his works. Having heard of the fire, we, students, went to his place to Ak-tepe. There were the blackened burn walls on the top floor. Artist Taldykin, my teacher at the boarding school, pouched me and told to run to the shop and buy two bottles of vodka as for the commemoration meeting on the burnt paintings by Tokmin.

The artists treated the students like elder brothers treat the younger ones. I remember the exhibition «The Hungarian Landscape Painting» at ODO (the military officer's club); I was there with the artists Melnikov and Ruzy Charyev. We dropped in the cafe, and they sent me for vodka. I brought it; they drank and poured for me too. The artist-student, gorged, drunk and proud of tableful acquaintance with coryphaeus colleagues – what could have been better!



Famous Limakov was the dean of the faculty at the Institute, and a splendid graphic artist, Ivan Ivanovich Enin, headed the Drawing Department.

During the first year, drawing and painting was taught by a very handsome, red-bearded, wise and philosophic Yuri Chernyshov. Once we started talking about Savonarola with Chernyshov. I respected Savonarola for sincerity and fanaticism, considered him to be a furious fighter against luxury and vicious practices. And Chernyshov said that nothing could justify Savonarola for four Botticelli's pictures burnt in the inquisition fire. Once in the studio, we were painting a still-life trying to do our utmost but Chernyshov got upset, «Damned impressionists, they turned everybody's days, and you too!» Later on in the third course, he praised my paintings and said, “Powerful!” and approved my drawings, “Power!”, “Convincing!” And added in front of all, “You are my best student in drawing. You prepossessed us with sincerity and personality. You are turning into a master”. Kokotkin also said that he liked my paintings. I got proud and started painting in a slipshod manner, plunged into student's bean feasts with the course-mates Sergei Ivanov, Petya Kravtsov and Maya that came from Dushanbe and stayed to live Tashkent. Maiya's brother brought the rarity from Dushanbe – a reel to reel tape recorder, and we listened to rock, jazz, Vysotskiy; their recordings could be found only on the cassette tapes. When the guests left I recorded passages from Shpengler's book «Sundown of Europe» (it was necessary to return the book). During the next term, Chernyshev repudiated his premature assessments and cursed, «These are drawings of a little self-taught artist not of a student». I stood pale from under sleeping after bean-feasts and urgent work over performances without knowing where to put my hands.

Elmira Ahmedova taught History of Arts. I saw her for the first time in the white dress; she was very beautiful in it. I fell in love with her secretly and was drawing her at the lectures; she strictly reprimanded me for that. Of course, for drawing – I disclosed my secret love almost 30 years later. And then in the classroom, she looked at my drawings, got kinder and even provided me with the arts history books, but also complained, «These lectures have bedeviled me». Once seeing that I was not drawing her, she said, «It's a pity that you do not draw me now». I answered, «I would have done it but I am afraid to make you angry». She said, «I am tuning in

since Friday morning that you will be drawing me». During those years I painted three her portraits upon those drawings, one of them with her sister Nigora.

My teacher Alexander Sergeevich Kokotkin was deeply and all-lovingly kind. And I am still suffering from one absurdity and ugly act of mine when I tried to court his woman-friend. Despite this, Kokotkin remained for me both the teacher and the friend. He taught us the course «Interior and Equipment» and provided us with the substantial avant-guard education, taught elements of formation, fundamentals of chromatology, spatial and plastic thinking within early traditions of VHUTEMAS⁵³, German Bauhaus, Jugend-style, Le Corbusier.

Kokotkin had an enormous Urals beard almost reaching the waist, grey hair and spectacles. He was so tall and blasé that I sometimes thought the surrounding people should address him «Your Very Reverend». His ancestors were the Russian engineers and important merchants that arrived in Tashkent yet before the Revolution. He lived with his elderly mother in a small house near old TashMI⁵⁴. The neighbors called him «Sasha-architect» as not to disturb his mother with the noise during the work; he built from palsa⁵⁵ an unusually shaped oval studio for chiseling in the courtyard. There was a fireplace-like stove, a table, records and books in it. We, students, often visited him and spent whole evenings and even nights at the bottle of wine. He had a vegetable garden; sometimes we weeded it when growing vegetables including those for lunches. The huge dog Lada was running in the yard and interfered with our work. Sometimes Kokotkin took us for sketching into the mountains where we painted the beautiful Tashkent valley in the mist from above. I panted there so much that Alexander Sergeevich said, «You seem to paint by two hands».

Kokotkin recommended me to the student's scientific society where we once presented with Grisha Kapsan the very nice lecture on chromatology, in our opinion. Grisha lived not far from the «Russia» Hotel; he rented a room with a small court-yard. Bright empty cans were hanging on the wall in the entrance hall, and the room was filled with pictures, drawings, verses and records. He let me listen to one of them; those were the appalling songs by Rabi Shlomo Karlebach. During the last three months at the Institute, Grisha and I spent days and nights preparing our diploma works that were not assessed high by the teachers. Our Bohemian life had not led us to anything good. Sasha is now in Israel; he became a famous artist and poet.

I could not and did not want to live at the institute hostel during the studies. One time Dima Jeludev gave me home in Beshagach. In Dima's room, I was implementing my projects, did our tasks in composition and drawing. I also drew much of him. I remembered the drawing – he is standing at the door and looking into the rain. He was a good person and artist.

Beshagach was famous that time. Now it is desolated, and that time there was the tram, lots of people rested in the park and bathed in the Komsomolskoe Lake. Beshagach Bazaar was boiling, people were crowding around beer tanks, donkeys were roaring in the arabas⁵⁶, arabakeshes⁵⁷ were coming and going. We sat on the pavement at the bazaar entrance and painted sketches. The ancient mahalla⁵⁸ was located behind the lake, and the people were very common. But the Russian noble noblewomen, I made friends with one of them. There was the old bath-house in this mahalla; I went there to bathe and wash the clothes every week. (But what a stink of urine was there in the dirty bath house!)

53 Higher Artistic and Technical Workshops

54 Tashkent Medical Institute.

55 Clay kneaded on the straw.

56 Carts

57 Coachers

58 Neighborhood community

My schoolmate Ramil helped to rent the dwelling for me in the house of Nadezhda Ivanovna Vassilina in Beshagach Street, house 13. She was a retired teacher, a very kind and open-hearted woman, living with her son Kolya, a hydrogeologist and good lover of books. I painted some his portraits, Savitsky bought one of them.

Saidhasanov Ibragim, called Musik by everybody after the name of the personage from an Indian film, studied with us at the Institute. He became one of my closest friends during my studies at the Institute. Musik with his girl-friend Maya lived at my place for some time. He was sent to study to Moscow, but came back in half a year. Half joking, Kokotkin set up a condition for him, «If you marry to Maya, I will help you to restore your studies». He managed both to marry his student and restore his pupil at the Institute. (By the way, Savitsky liked Musik's works very much).

When I temporary put up with the studies at the institute, Musik went to Kokotkin, and the latter asked about me, «Hasn't the «Highest» come yet? You will see – will return to the institute». A foreteller!

My female classmate Luda visited me at Beshagach together with the classmates and course-mates. We went to the cinema together, went for a walk in the park. Once I was visited by her two brothers and harshly uttered, “Marry”. I was not against either, but I did not have the family plans at all. The life did not seem to last long to me, I was living waiting for nuclear catastrophe and preparing for the partisan war reading Che’s book, was spending several hours walking among the surrounding hills with Father’s military map-case and knapsack stuffed with books. Once I walked as far as 22nd block of Chilanzar and back to Beshagach. I repeated Che Guevara even in clothes, wore the jacket and breeches with big pockets, beret with a small star. And I presented my sailor’s uniform to Ramil; his father served a sailor in the Far East; moreover, Gauguin who used to be a sailor was Ramil’s idol.

I studied without particular diligence because of the “Bohemian” life; that is why I did not get scholarship after the second course. But my Mother, brother and Savitsky monthly sent to me 50, or even 100 roubles each. I lived or splashed out on this money: on holidays or after examinations/reviews when about 20 students and teachers gathered in my room to debate, dance and wine drinking. The landlady came from Siberia and was instructing us, “You cannot drink like males in Siberia, they drank twice or thrice more than you band they also ate five times more than you that are why they did not turn into boozers. And you all will become the boozers if you continue drinking without eating! ». And where could the student take the food from? Only from the fault-free landlady!

Rather a heavy drinking philosopher taught at the Institute for half a year. However, that time it was quite usual for ordinary philosophers in the USSR. When he knew that I am aware of the existentialists and their doctrines that were mentioned that time only as small bourgeois philosophers, he did not examine me and simply gave me a credit. He read lectures in philosophy amazingly. I spent several days and nights in philosophic discussions with him at the huge 20-liter bottle of the home-made wine. Waking up at nights, we continued discussion about existence drank more and again ran into non-existence.

I was getting very much tired of that senseless studies and obligation of pseudo Bohemian life, surrendered to despair and broke away to Nukus for a month or a month and a half; I lived there not at my parents but at Savitsky’s place. Rhythm of life and work next to him and his calmness brought back my assuredness, and I was returning to studies. The same happened when I dropped studies in the institute for a year and left for Nukus to Savitsky. Musik then was with Kokotkin and the latter asked about me, “Hasn’t the “Utmost” arrived yet? You’ll see he will return to the institute”. A Foreteller! The same also happened in a year after quitting the institute.

During my student years, Savitsky was coming to Tashkent for pictures left with me for storage. I remember, for instance, I stored in Beshagach many pictures by artist Kashina. He also came to me in Karborundovaya Street, where he got acquainted with my wife and mother-in-law. Then he said that I “miscarriage”. I thought he implied “a poor sponger-student“ but now I understand that he foresaw problems with the wife’s relatives because of my artistry, and to be more exact, because of the “Bohemian” life, of course.

When we were wrapping Kashina’s pictures, Savitsky for the first time suggested that I should replace him as the Director of the Museum in future. He started as usual, «I will die someday ...». But when after the Institute I had worked for the Museum, he was saying quite a different thing, “You are not ready to manage the collective as you will tyrannize people, introduce discord, conflicts, and the staff will leave you».

Despite the «Bohemian» life, I still painted much during the student years. On one of my visits to Tashkent Savitsky looked at my works in the evening, but got very much displeased by them. He reproached me for negligence to preparation of canvases for the works safety. Then he found my previous works and said that they were interesting. As a model, I held up the works by Rozhdestvenskiy, Shevchenko, and Falk. With wine, we dreamed about the usefulness of Paris for an artist. “But only for the fully developed master”, he emphasized. In the end of the “lecture”, he selected my works for the exhibition at the Museum and decided that he would buy something. In the tram, on the way to the railway station, he talked about existing opportunity to purchase Zurbaran (only for 6.5 thousand roubles) and said, “That will be mighty good if it happens”. He told that the Museum faced great challenges: 0.5 million roubles of debts; necessity to construct a new building; how much the Museum needed devoted workers and not casual people. He pointed out to my dispersion and held up as a model Van Gogh’s self-upbringing. During parting on the railway platform, he was moralizing, «Just look around. Do you see the coloration, how diversified and changeable it is? And you are not painting the real landscape but the one you feel and see. Therefore, landscapes become monotonous because they are limited by the frames of your impressions. One should paint a landscape and not oneself in it» or «Edik, look, if not into the mirror then into a can, to see yourself and your works from aside».

When finishing studies at the Institute, I chose the topic for my diploma paper myself. Construction of a new museum was planned in Nukus, and I started the project of decoration of its interior and exterior. Savitsky advised to turn to the chief architect Alevtina Kozlova and gave me a note for her. Alevtina helped me to Xerox draft plans of the new museum. I stuck them to the cardboard sheets and started work with those plans at the sketches of monumental paintings. But I failed to complete the work because of the family problems. And the project remained in the sketches.

I had to take another topic for my diploma – monumental painting of the “Ilhom” Theatre. After defense of the diploma, I grasped my cardboards, sketches and went home to Beshagach. I drank a little on the way and went to bed after the sleepless nights. My course-mates went to lagmannaya⁵⁹, spent their some time and disported as particular holiday did not happen. Beginning at the Institute was romantic, inspiring and the finale

It’s time to go to Nukus, to Savitsky. Good-bye, Tashkent, my favorite “Paris of the Orient”.

59 The café were pasta was cooked and served.

Life of Museum and Human “Exhibits”

I hope that somebody else will also write and leave the deserved memory about the people that gave years of their lives to the Museum. I will begin with myself.

In 1968, I was 14 years old; I came home on holidays from the boarding school and knew that the Arts Museum appeared in Nukus. The Museum was located in the building of the old museum of regional studies. I went to the Museum and all-day long wandered around it. That time there were the textile lamp shades hanging in the museum making it homely cosy. A short, humped, bony man running past me from room to room attentively looked at me and asked in a falsetto voice, "Would you like to work for me?». I said, «Yes, I would». Then he said to me, "Ask your mother if she allows you to work for me, and come».

Since then, during the holidays from the boarding school, I spent all the time in the Museum where I started with the ceramics gluing. At that point in time, Savitsky began collecting ceramics during archaeological excavations from the sites of ancient Khorezm. Lots of ceramics!

Savitsky took me to the excavations where he often went with the archaeologist Yuri Manila. (In the seventies, Manylov headed the Archaeological Department at the Museum; later on he moved to Turkmenistan.) The full set of fragments to make up the whole ceramic vessel or ossuary were rarely found. If just a half of them were collected, the rest were added by gypsum by Joldasbek Kuttymuratov, sculptor, restorer and a friend of Savitsky.

I happened to be in daily contact with the objects concentrating eternity, and that willingly or not forced to value everything from the point of view of the eternity.

During the day time I used to glue ceramics, arranged bowls with water to humify air in the halls where we often changed expositions together with Savitsky trying to hang pictures in this or that way. Because of the lacking space, he stopped on the trellis layout when pictures were hanged close to each other by authorship or historical period. Savitsky said, «At Ulyanov's home, the pictures were hanging on the walls in four rows, and I also hanged them in the same way! », and laughed gratified by coincidence and its explanation.

At night I fired furnaces of the Museum. There was a hut in the yard where the coal was kept, and I particularly remembered the winter of 72–73, that I spent in grudgery work – I fired 12 furnaces of the Museum. One day, passing by, J. Kuttymuratov saw me smeared with coal, overburdened with buckets of coal and joked, «Cheer up! Van Gogh also began with the Borinage coal mines». Comparison flattered but did not add the strength.

Museum's building was very old, it was necessary to guard it continuously as there was no reliable guard, there was a threat of flooding from under the roof, and then from the central heating radiators after they were installed. Once, the open air pipes connecting the Museum with the Hotel "Nukus" got frozen. The boiler-house was switched off but nobody warned about this. To avoid bursting out of the radiators, Damir and I were running with the blowtorch throughout the night trying to warm up those radiators. It was dreadful to think what could happen if they burst out and the Museum and pictures were flooded with the boiling water?

In the Museum I started learning restoration of the pictures under Kvon and visiting restorers. Professional restorers from Moscow worked in a small room on the second floor of the Museum. There I made friends with a bearded restorer Anatoly Makarov. Despite his short height and ordinary complexion, he could by a stretched hand lift the bucket full of water above his head. For me, a teenager, he was fabulously mighty. But it was worth seeing how tenderly he was putting tissue-paper with the fish glue onto the cracked colors of the oil canvasses, how caressingly he was ironing these places and then floated out the tissue-paper with warm water, how thoroughly he sized a canvas and tinted with paints the spots which lost the coat of paint.

Arts historians from Russia and even Siberia worked at the Museum. There was Tanya among them (I remember only her name). Once she thought and suddenly started crying. When I surprisingly asked, «What are you crying about? », she answered, «I am crying about you. The very hard life awaits you». Had she seen something in her enlightenments.

There was Valya Panjinskaya, one of the authors of the book about the Museum, was among the art historians. Art historians, Natasha Moiseeva from Leningrad and Lena Hudonogova from Krasnoyarsk, worked at the Museum. Lena came together with her husband, artist Valentin Teplov. I got acquainted with them in the Museum's court-yard in the dusk of the evening when Lena was talking to Savitsky. She was the daughter of a Siberian artist, was studying by correspondence at the Academy of Arts and was writing the diploma about portraits painted by artist Ulyanov that were exhibited in our Museum. Her father perished by taking his own life. His death was a great shock for Lena. Now, from afar, I see that she was a deeply suffering, painfully broken-down person, but managed to survive and create her own world around. She soloed in our «Bohemian» company, where I played the role of her page-boy from autumn 1973 to spring 1973 when Elena landed me “a sense prisoner” by her mighty, powerful, somewhat hysterical and marginally emotional personality. One day she told me for some reason that I reached such emotional height that would never be reached again. Nothing awaits you afterwards, only falling down and down.

Lena left for Leningrad for examinations, and I have not seen her since. When parting, I presented her with three volumes of Hofmann that was a great rarity that time. I seemed to offend her asking to send them back; the three-volume book turned out not to belong to me.

Valentin Teplov worked with the Arts Fund and at the theatre with the wonderful artist Alvina Shpade. He got very good professional training of a painter at Krasnoyarsk School of Arts. The oil sketch on carbon was hanging on the wall in his room – the Kazakh steppes in yellow ochreous coloration. I saw huge Valya's eastern still-lives with sugar, tea pot and flat round breads. Once in winter, Teplov painted my portrait – a hairless Muslim in a quilted jacket reading the Gospel!? I also painted Valya but a la Modigliani.

We went together to a small aul in the outskirts of the micro district where the endless Kyzyl Kum began – to sketch «Tahiti aborigines» as Lena and Valya jocularly called local the aul and its residents.

In the 80s, «our girls» (as Savitsky called females of the Museum) were at the exhibition in Moscow and met Valya Teplov there. He got matured and looked like a real, bearded Siberian.

Natasha Moiseeva was beautiful – the Russian face with blue eyes and short haircut. She was desperately courageous in her enthusiasm. In her youth Natasha traveled around the Union, like a fare-dodger stole into pilot's cabin, together with them flew to the remote Siberian corners. In Nukus, Natasha was carried away by wood carving and went to Kungrad to the wood cover Volodya (Aman) Atabaev. He presented her with a mortar for butter churning to do carving. It was a splendid present as that time such mortars were already a rarity!

Natasha was finishing her correspondence studies at the Leningrad Academy of Arts and wrote diploma about Ernst Barlach's creative work (why in Nukus?). She had a god command of German and advised to learn the language in the following way – take the text of «Faust» by Goethe in German and read it comparing with the Russian translation.

Natasha often fell ill and we, Teplov, Lena and I, visited her. One day I painted her like that – she is lying on the sofa surrounded by the books on arts. Once being in blue moods she said, «We are kindred souls with you, Edik; we painfully get over everything, our closest people will be betraying us and hurt us. »

Alexei Kvon was in love with Natasha. And she wanted a baby from Igor Vitalyevich and said him about that. The latter got lost, tossed among museum's workers seeking for the advice or consolation. Nothing shaped out. For one reason or other, Natasha left Nukus.

Some years later on the way from the service in the navy, in Leningrad, I dropped at the Academy of Arts and hunted out Natasha's address. But her neighbors in Fontanka said that she left for one of the Novgorod monasteries. I went away leaving her a letter which, by the way, she did not answer.

Natasha Moiseeva and Lena Hudonogova in many respects influenced upon me in my spiritual searches. Since then I am comparing my ambience with them and miss them without finding the similarity. How grateful I am to my destiny for bringing me together with these Russian women deserving to be described by Turgenev and Dostoevsky...

I arrived in Nukus after 5 years of study at the Institute in high spirits and looked at the world through rose-colored glasses believing that faith, honesty and labor would bring fame, honors and well-being. Most likely I would have never gone to work at the Museum after the Institute if it had not been for Savitsky's personality.

When I came, Igor Vitaljevich was about 50 years old. He was very hectic and stayed at the Museum from early morning to at late night. He often slept on the cot in the dark back room where archaeological findings were stored on the wall shelves. If Savitsky fell ill, he covered his blanket with the propylene film or even used it without a blanket in order to warm up and sweat out the cold. He might sleep even in the office, but there was space only for a table and a chair.

At the Museum, after the Institute, I was treated not as a "schoolboy" or a "student" but already as a professional. The staff was mostly female, and it was hard for me to work with them because of their intergroup intrigues. Calming me down after quarrels with them, Savitsky would say "You'd better not deal with women that are clever", and "Distance yourself from them". But I failed to distance myself from them, and would upset relations with these women with or without cause. As I understand now, we tormented each other in vain.

After arrival in Nukus, I immediately left for an urgent business trip to Kazan – Savitsky was asked to arrange a large exhibition of pictures from the Museum there during Karakalpakstan Culture Days in Tatarstan. Igor Vitaljevich called those ten days "A Feast in Kazan during the Plague in Nukus": the Museum was already facing serious financial troubles, and the press made a big thing out of the environmental disaster in the Aral Sea region.

I came to Kazan by air together with a young artist that graduated from the Alma-Ata School of Arts to pick up the paintings and exhibits and bring them back. They occupied an entire freight-car in which we traveled back to Nukus at snail's pace for a whole month. I slept at the entrance to safeguard the exhibits. My companion slept deep inside the car, he was all the time afraid that the one who slept at the entrance slaughtered because of those exhibits costing enormous money already at that time. At every station we had to run to tip the railmen so that our car was hitched on to the following freight train. Many ceramic items were broken although we asked to let the car down from the hill very carefully. Perhaps one bottle was not enough. I got very much upset of that and regretted that I did not refuse this trip; it was not my duty but it was impossible to refuse Savitsky. When we arrived in Nukus, both were black from the train soot and dirt. The trip was carried off only by the Kazan artist that honored us at the beer restaurant, saw us to the train and provided us with food on the way back. We dried bread for our trip together with a kind and beautiful girl at her flat. And, of course, the road was carried off by the Russian landscapes, hills and steppes.

During the same year I went on business trip to Moscow as I was called for by Savitsky to help to collect pictures of Moscow artists or their inheritors. I caught him at the Artists House; it is also called «Favorskiy's house» inhabited by the widow of artist Kibardin. It was the time

when I quarreled with Igor Vitaljevich for the first time: I declared to him that I had a family and needed a flat that he flayed me, and if he did not provide me with a flat and earnings, I would not stay in Nukus. Then from time to time I was seized with blind fury and anger for myself. I got tired to carry out the burden of small household matters and obligations of a shipping agent of the Museum instead of going in for painting. But Savitsky was taking that as the betrayal of the Museum; and every time I was pulling down my fury against the grandeur of his lifework ... unless the next outburst. We returned to Nukus by plane after making up the quarrel.

When I just started working for the Museum, I met Alexei Kvon (I called him “Kun” or “Confucious/K’ung-fu-tzu”) there, a fine art restorer. It was Kvon who restored Volkov’s “Caravan” and a lot of works by other artists.

Kvon was born in 1932 in the Far East; at the age of three appeared in Karakalpakstan together with his deported people.

Kvon had a clean soul of a baby, and he remained as that until his death. Savitsky said that Alexei was otherworldly and artist Kvon was “a black sheep” among the rational Koreans in Nukus.

When Alexei after divorce took to the bottle, Igor Vitaljevich reminded us and ourselves that Alexei needs to be saved from booses and was “saving” him by locking him in the Museum. There Kvon painted “Shooting of Komsomol Members”, his fundamental narrative picture. He was proud of it. The copy of this work was included in the book about the Museum.

I remember the case when Savitsky and I first kept, than carried, and later on I alone carried irresponsibly drunk Kvon home. I shouldered him, his head overhanged my back, and Savitsky trotted short behind me holding his head and was explaining to Alexei that he must not drink... It was both sad and rather comical spectacle. Anyhow by taking tremendous effort, Kvon stopped drinking. It is the only case I know that a man stopped drinking in one go and forever. Except for one period when his lungs started failing (he smoked very much), and his mother, Mary, sometimes brought vodka that helped him to breathe. Probably because of this he lived longer for a while.

After quitting from the Museum, Alexei lived the anchorite’s life in his small extension studio with the self-made easel, sofa and chairs. The shelf with the art books nestled on the chair at the window. (There was the history of the Japanese Arts presented to him by Victor and Valya Panzhinskaya). In this attachment Kvon buried in thoughts made his hands busy unwinding clews of threads, exercising in patience and concentration; that helped him to make pictures of fish scales abstract constructions of fish bones.

He also painted ordinary sketches on the banks of the Kyzketken Canal – landscapes, boys. And Kvon went to auls for sketching and painted there at one sitting the portrait of the old Karakalpak with the very crafty expression on the face. Frankly speaking, he did not finish painting the hands and thus cut off the portrait to the waist. He also painted small still-lives, practically of a palm-size. He painted much. Once he said to me, «In the drawing – I am opening the secret that has been disclosed to nobody – it is more important what has been painted than what has not be painted but must be seen by those who are looking at the pictures». This exists in his drawings – intentional emptiness. He showed such emptiness by Rembrandt who was leaving them for viewer’s co-creativity. And this understatement is one of mysteries of the mastership in arts.

He has a friend, sculptor Joldasbek Kuttymuratov. One day, trying to help Alexei to sell his works, he brought in some foreigners, – I think, from Belgium. They bought a lot of drawings from him and, as they say, one work by Savitsky that the latter presented to Kvon some time before that. And all that for 200 dollars?!. When I heard that, I got drunk and wrote desperate

letters to Marinika and to the government asking them to buy out the remaining works by Kvon whom Savitsky valued so much, however, they were never mailed.

And Kvon used those 200 US dollars to buy a TV-set to replace the old one. He loved to watch films. He did it with abandonment. Some time before purchasing that TV-set, he went to the cinema for the same show every day. The got used to him so much that when he once was late a little, the cashier, projectionist and spectators rushed into the street looking for him. And the show started after he entered the hall.

I visited Kvon to communicate and kindly support each other. During the meetings we spoke about Savitsky, discussed films, news, artists, books, his college.

Kvon talked both about the legendary Aizik Aronovich Goldrey who lost his wife and two children during the siege of Leningrad. Goldrey taught at the Benkov Arts School, cooked himself and brought cans of ochreous-yellow paint. Kvon recalled his greasy latissimus trousers, the mat that he instead of the blanket on the earthen floor in the rented room; his love to a young, gorgeous red-haired student; his stylistic howlers finishing with the words «...it is not all»: «Benkov it is not all!», «You think that art is a chinning bar – it is not all!»...

Kvon also told about the young Burmakin who also studied at school. Alexei recollected with a smile how Burmakin – tall, thin and white – made cornicle of his lips when he sang, «Great is the land of Punjab, You are cruel Raja, for you Raja I killed the one whom loved so much ...».

Kvon also recollected Yakushev, his college's CPSU branch organizer, who in the autumn of 1952 broadcasted to the students about Jews as about «semites-cosmopolitans» and «Imperialistic mercenaries!..» and etc. Students listened to this raving nonsense with their mouths open, guessing with horror what was going to happen to the jew Goldrey now.

At the end of our reminiscences, he would scold me a little, saying: “Once you’ve decided to dedicate yourself to the art, just do your job and stop blabbing”. Or: “You are grouching like an old man that has never been young”. Probably, I was that naïve and silly ‘old man’.

As I probably was one of those few people who visited Alexei. Kvon's mother applied to me well and treated to Korean delicacies. During the sales at the Museum, I was bringing his drawings there, and when he reached the retirement age, collected documents for his pension (It turned out to be crummy...)

The old Museum's attendant was called Elena Andreevna. She rented a room in an old two-storied building near the Museum together with her son Vitya who had been a worker at the archaeological expeditions for many years. When archaeologist Elena Nerazik came, she always asked Savitsky to send just Vitya as an assistant. He dug very carefully feeling remains of the constructions without destroying them. Vitya slept in the kitchen behind the curtain; not once we drank there after the working day like at the excavations.

Generation of hall's attendants has not once changed since that time. A diligent attendant Luda long worked at the exposition halls; frankly speaking, she was a little nervous and talkative. Her death was strange. In the 90s, I was told she was found killed near the Kyzketken Canal (its name is translated as «the lost girl».) The Canal is strange and ominous. They say that the daughter of S. Tolstov, founder of the Khorezm expedition, also settled accounts with life there...

Aygul was a humble museum attendant. She started working at the applied arts department and became the head of this department after graduation from the institute. She became a famous arts critic, – I saw her interview on TV.

Before her, the department was headed by Gala Madjitova for a long time. After Savitsky's death in the end of the 80s, she fell ill, became disabled and resigned. But from time to time she visited the Museum. Once, we visited her with the colleagues in the cottage in the 24th micro district. That time I presented her with my big tempera work depicting Karatau from the Jampyk series; and presented Sveta with the picture depicting kumgan. During that evening, generous of drinking or drunk of generosity, I brought two piles of pictures belonging to the period of my work at the Museum and gave them out to the employees. (Later on after getting sober, I collected the part of them back)



Workers of museum in 1970-80-th

Most friendly I was with true ascetics of Savitsky's Museum – Valya Sycheva (now she is the chief Conservator of the Museum), and Svetlana Sonina (now the Head of the Sector of Records and Storage). I made their drawing sketches and painted several portraits of them.

In this Museum, one can see amazing works of uncle Volodya (Aman) Atabaev, a sculptor and a woodcarver. He preferred to work with oiled wood of oil mortars that wouldn't crumble when carved, and sculptures made out of it would last forever. Atabaev studied at Benkov's Art School. He had a brother, Edik Muratov; their fathers were married to blood sisters.

Volodya was a giant, a real bear. Edik was hollow like Savitsky but shorter. If Savitsky with this constitution had the appropriate falsetto, Edik had the powerful bass voice. During the 60s he was one of the first to graduate from the singing department of the Nukus Musical School and was singing in the foyer of «Rodina» cinema on the second floor before film shows. And during the happy minutes of life and during the tablefuls, he was singing arias and romances like «Oh, if this could happen forever...» or a Scottish drinking song in Russian - «Come fill, fill, my good fellow! Fill high, high, my good Fellow, And let's be merry and mellow, And let us have one bottle more.»⁶⁰

60 The verse by Schmidt, the music by Beethoven

Both brothers were famous and incredibly brave pigstickers. But uncle Volodya was careful in his bravery, he was afraid to leave his daughters, Olga and Irina, and wife Katya alone without himself. In the daytime he was looking for boar's paths in the bed of tugais⁶¹ under Kungrad. Then he went there at night, dug out a pit and during the moonlight nights waited for a wild boar in it. Sometimes he returned home «empty», but more often brought the butchered boar in the boxes on the sides of the heavy motorbike. I remember how he passed over the smoked boar's ham to diseased Savitsky in the autumn of 1983.

Edik, on the contrary, risked hiding without a pit. He liked fishing more than hunting. What marvelous fishing was that time on the Kazak-darya, on the Amu-darya, the Muynak lakes where meter long barbels and carps, and half-meter breams were caught!

I admired uncle Volodya, and called him a great sculptor. Savitsky chuckled but agreed, still saying that I was exaggerating. Igor Vitaljevich loved uncle Volodya and was attached to him. They were on the first name basis with each other (that was rare for Savitsky). Even though, Volodya considered him to be his mentor and a subtle connoisseur of masks, ornamental compositions, medallions that he, Atabaev, made of wood. When Volodya was visiting Savitsky in the Museum, he was heard from afar: a loud- speaking Kungrad «Hemingway». But Atabaev smoke neither pipe nor cigars but enormous rolls-up with the strongest tobacco.

Volodya would return from Kungrad to Nukus in a truck loaded by him with very heavy tree stumps and logs. Once he took me to Kungrad with him. All the way back, – over 100 km, – I sat in the truck bed on logs, beating off my butt badly. Those 'road impressions' brightened up several days I spent at his place with feasts at which uncle Volodya would cut big chunks of bread, cucumbers and tomatoes in addition to huge pans of fresh boar meat. When returning I brought from uncle Volodya several small packets with amberat for Savitsky that I went to Kungrad for, and my several landscapes.

In the year of Savitsky's funeral, Atabaev sold his cosy house with the vegetable garden in the Old City of Kungrad, bought half of the house in the center of Tashkent and moved there. First, he found the job of the restorer of wooden items at the Management office of exhibitions. The work was not pear-shaped and he got nervous. Uncle Volodya could not forget his Kungrad. Tashkent and Tashkenters seemed too dodgy for his «provincial» naivity and openness.

They say that he got very much upset as he tried to defend an old woman buying tomatoes in the street because the seller palmed-off the spoiled ones and was saucy to her. There were breakdowns involving officials, and the seller came to excuse.

The wonderful artist Marat Khudaibergenov told that on his visit to Volodya he saw how the latter was jumping on one leg in his court-yard after the first stroke; He was busy with his household and pretended that he «was severely quarreling» with his family members. The second stroke after the case with the tomatoes beat completely tat big man. He has not lived even one year after Savitsky's death. What has Savitsky's death to do with this?.. During the funeral of Igor Vitaljevich, Volodya jumped into the grave to receive the coffin from beneath and mildly put it onto the bottom. As I heard later on – it is a bad sign to climb into the grave. I do not much believe in superstitions but too soon Atabaev died after Savitsky....

There was also Sasha-Krishnait at the Museum; my stepfather acquainted me with him at the branch of the Academy of Sciences where Sasha read lectures on Krishnaitism. And Sasha Abubakirov acquainted me with Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and etc., Sasha translated Krishnait texts rather professionally, and when we compared them somebody else's translations, Sasha's were more interesting. We communicated for twelve years, visit each other at home, and talked much. He was very lonely as neither his relatives nor different «competent» organizations could

61 Forests

make up their minds to his fanatical Krishnaism. Once, calming down his grandmother, I said «Sasha is used of God; Granny is used of Sasha and, thus, is used of God. It is better to have a holy man in the family than a drunkard; and she whispered me back, «A holy man in the family is more unbearable than a drunkard». So...

All kinds of 'competent' authorities were not willing to put up with Krishnaism. Sasha told us that officials from the Interior Ministry and KGB, the secretary of the City Komsomol organization would pay visits to him allegedly being interested in Krishnaism, but, apparently, were probing for new threats to the CPSU ideology.

Sasha said that officials from KGB, and secretary of the City Komsomol organization visited him and started talking about religious literature, and the Komsomol secretary even criticized the CPSU «mafia». This Komsomol member told Sasha that Komsomol members got the main task to feed the country and take it out of crisis. One day, passing by the Gorcom⁶², I heard the clatter of the axe on the scaffold, saw heaps of mutton bodies and chopping Komsomol members «supporters of the people». But in the end, I did not see this meat in «people's stores».

I said to Sasha: "Don't be silly, these talks are not accidental, and these are whistleblowers send by Zorin, the second secretary of the CPSU regional committee". The latter also asked to visit Sasha's home as if to 'get acquainted' with the new religion, but Sasha somehow managed to weasel out of it, and the visit to the humble follower of the Hare Krishna by the VIP guest (the CPSU regional committee responsible for ideology!) did not take place. (Arslan told me that Zorin did not allow the Ministry of Justice to register and legalize the ecological movement «Union of the Aral and Amu-darya Protection being founded in the end of the 80s by Yusup Kamalov, son of Academician Sabir Kamalov. Nevertheless, this «Union of Protection...» was later on registered, but when Zorin went to Moscow after the collapse of the Soviet Union.)

Good People and «Bad»⁶³ Flats

In 1982, Igor Vitalyevich helped me to receive the flat in Gorky Street, in one of the houses built by the Leningraders for the builders of the "Great Stalin Construction of the Century". (That was the name of the attempted construction of the Main Turkmenian Channel, on which had being worked the entire Soviet Union for 2 years, but not built).

The flat was entered not from the porch but straightly from the yard through the hallway (former loggia faced with bricks). Bathroom and toilet were to the right of the entrance. Directly – entrance into the room divided by the uncolored plywood partition into two parts. One was turned into a small room with the high window looking out into the street, and the second was turned into a small kitchen and also with the window but looking into the bathroom.

Why am I writing about this flat? Once day, it was the first Savitsky's flat in Nukus and the first premises for the exhibits of the future museum. In the bathroom, Igor Vitalyevich together with the colleagues washed carpets, scored the parts of the yurts⁶⁴ with a carved ornament, that they were collecting during the expeditions around Karakalpakstan districts. Those expeditions lasted till the end of the eighties, and I happened to be in them even after Savitsky's death.

The former Museum's photographer Edik Muratov also lived in that flat before me; when he was drinking his wife, a stout Tatar, herded him around the yard. His wife abandoned him and

62 City Young Communists League Committee

63 Reminiscence of Bulgakov's novel "Master and Margarita", where one of the characters says that people are good, but they damaged by housing problem.

64 Yurt – nomads tent.

took away his son whom he loved very much and monthly sent almost all money he earned. He continued living in the same flat until my wife arrived with children. Then I understood that was the only Edik's dwelling, I am still ashamed. He left the narrow self-made wooden bed in the flat. Together we hunted pigeons when we were left without money for food, followers, to be exact. We were catching pigeons on the lofts of the houses and of the Academy of Sciences: I was reaching into there with a sack in the teeth and was putting pigeons caught by Edik into it. After great toils, he managed to receive one-bedroom flat in the micro district not far from the bath house – "Hammom"; he lived alone and one day was found dead.

Many good people passed through that flat. Some time ago the family of young arts historians from the Museum – Alik Nishanov (later on I met him during my institute years, he was a restorer at the Tashkent Museum of Applied Arts) and Elmira Gazieva that worked for Savitsky's Museum as the Deputy Director responsible for science right till their departure to Russia at the end of the eighties.

Arts historian Valya Panjinskaya, the author of one of the first books about the Museum, lived in that flat too. Valya lived together with Elmira when Alik was in the Army. He wrote to me from there that my misfortunes are caused by the fact that I was scared to get down to business, pendulated for a long time and that is why read and chatter much. One must not pronounce the intentions, he wrote, he must do it silently because the pronounced seems to be performed already. I was justifying myself by the fact that «First was the Word...» – and the like.

Oh, how much disturbance the flat caused – yearly repairs of the pipes and sewage; they were not lay deep in the ground and burst out of frosts every winter! I had to hollow out the ground, hire a welder, a plumber, buy pipes, get them laid and tarred. I did all thoroughly and was very much proud ... until next frosts. But the hardest thing was to endure that on the second floor above our flat the washed linen was dried in the open logger like ours and an enormous dog reminding of the Basquerville's hound⁶⁵ was also running there. His urine mixed with the linen water flew to our entrance hall and kitchen.

It is difficult to imagine that Savitsky also lived under these flows; after him we were seeing in the New Year there together with Lena Hudonogova, Valya Teplov, Elmira Ganieva and after the New Year chimes were admiring night stars like huge chrysanthemums...

Currently, I understand that attentive glance of Savitsky and his question, «Do you really want to receive THIS flat?». He hinted the flat in Gorky Street was not good, that he would help me to receive another flat, and being silly, I decisively answered that wanted just that flat. I had already had children, and needed my own home whatever it could be.

Savitsky received his second one-roomed flat in newly-built "Cheremushky" in the 60-s. The flat was in the middle part of the two-storied building, the second from the Corner of Kalinin and Gogol Streets to the right of the two-storied store. Once we went from the Museum to this flat and saw the awful and symbolic scene through the window of the knitting workshop at the corner of the Ordzhonikidze Street. At nights, pale women were working in the long, wretched, obscure hall in the machine oil smoke, amid reed and cotton dust and clatter of the knitting machines. And on the remote wall of the shop, there was hanging the slogan «With full return in each job-place», Lenin's portrait and «Obligations of the Brigade of the Communist Labor».

In that second flat on one ill-fated day Savitsky did not switch off the iron when he left hurrying for work. The neighbors noticed the smoke, called for the firemen and Igor Vitalyevich. Many pictures, books and things burnt. Some canvases partially survived – those lying in a flat

65 From the crime novels written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle featuring the detective Sherlock Holmes.

pile on each other, thus burnt from the sides. If they had been on the canvas stretchers, they would have burnt to ashes. I saw those canvases with still-lives sizing one meter by meter and half-two meters. Perhaps they have been already stretched in the Museum. Those were Savitsky's paintings of the Moscow period of the thirties-forties years when he was drawing still-lives for state institutions. Very well I remember one still-life of the noble Umbrian color, covered with lacquer – a big bunch of flowers in a vase on a table in a dark room. It was a classical painting made by the master. I do not know why those still-lives were not purchased and were stored in Moscow, in the flat of N. Ulyanov, Savitsky's teacher. In my Moscow years, Kira Kiseleva, Ulyanov's student, lived in that flat.

The same second apartment of Savitsky was also the place where Volik (the son of painter Alexander Volkov) lived. Several artistic paintings by Volik Volkov were the pride of the Art Museum already in the old building. When Volik came to Nukus in the 70's, he used to go to its outskirts to sketch, asking me to join him. Volik made his sketches on large sheets of paper with bright oily Czech crayons, while I used simple graphite pencils dreaming of learning to draw with the same crayons.

The third Savitsky's flat was in a new nine-storied building opposite school named after Pushkin and sports hall that I painted by crayon, the same as had Volik, through the window. In this flat, he himself washed the floors by foot (tube withdrawing food from the abdominal cavity did not allow him bending) without letting me to do it. It was something like sports exercises. Then he was waking me up. He always got up very early, in darkness at 5-6 o'clock. But he also went to bed at nine o'clock in the evening straight after the program "Vremya" (time for news) that he watched to be aware what was going on in the world. That time the Soviet TV presented conflicts in Palestine as victimization of Arabs by the Israelis. Relying on that information, Savitsky was angrily scolding the Israelis.

In the morning, before breakfast one of us ran to the Museum to open windows to air the halls and storage rooms or close them after airing. After breakfast, we went to the Museum and did not notice how the day passed. On the way back, Savitsky was admiring the beauty of Nukus in the night, effervescing with multicolored windows under the low polypetalous stars. He admired at the fine lights and colors on trees and clouds at sunrise or sunset and said that only then in his old age when he long ago stopped painting, he saw color differently than earlier. Sometimes he asked himself, «Shouldn't I start painting again? ».

Savitsky told us how he had received the flat. After the first surgery he was in the hospital in Nukus. At the same time a very important person from Karakalpakstan was examined in the Kremlin hospital at Academic Efuni that asked during the examination, «How is Igor Vitalyevich going on? How is he? They say he is in the hospital? » During the conversation, he let this man know WHO is Savitsky; after this the important person called up to Nukus and ordered to attach the appropriate attention to Savitsky. And suddenly the high ranking visitors started coming to the stuffy multi-bed ward with the packets of fruit and food reminding of something like the operetta with the actors running in and out. Somebody asked, «What do you need, Igor Vitalyevich?» «Having the front to do», Savitsky asked for a flat. Soon he was informed that he could receive the order and the keys. After mentioning that he would not be able to equip the new flat for living himself, one of the chiefs in trade equipped the flat with the «critical» furniture, and another trading manager provided the similarly «critical» imported crockery and somehow crystal vases and stemware.

One day Savitsky offered Arslan to see the archaeological findings. Dusty fragments were lying in bulk on the polished furniture, gorgeous upholstery of the sofa and arm-chairs, in general, that flat like other previous ones was used as the restoration studio and the storage room of the Museum. The crystal was powdered with dust on the shelves, and Savitsky still ate from

the metal bowl as he used to do in the expeditions, in the old museum building and in the previous flats.

In 1984, I wrote him a letter to Moscow, to the hospital desperately asking to change my flat to another one as the children were smothering from dog's urine effluvia. Irina Korovay returned that letter to me via Alvina Shpade and wrote that I acted like the Fisherman that repudiated from his teacher Christ. Comparison was limp, request of flat was not the repudiation, and it was bad that he did not ask in person and on his deathbed. But I did not believe he was dying as I simply did not believe in that.

This was the apartment where writer Militsa Zemskaya stayed during her last visit to Nukus with her huge mongrel that caused me a lot of headache. All that was left in the apartment from the 'import' furniture was just one sofa in each room. The wallpaper was peeling off the walls, hanging down in some places. There was an old refrigerator in the kitchen and an old gas stove. In the living room, there was still a black-and-white TV in the corner which Savitsky used to turn on at 9 p.m. only to watch the evening news program. Zemskaya, during her last visit to Nukus, would call me a 'novice of the holy elder'. However, I was not a novice but rather a laborer, and the Museum was anything but a monastery⁶⁶.

And Arslan told me that I wrote the unforgivable letter. That time I thought that Savitsky would not forgive me that letter and thought of change the Museum for «shirking» to arts studios or to decoration of collective farm's offices. I wrote two letters of repentance: for Savitsky and for artist Kibardin's widow, asking her to convey Savitsky my pleas for his apology.

I think Igor Vitalyevich received the letter as on 11 June he called up from Moscow, scolded us all as usual if we deserved or not, and told Gulya (Marinika Babanazarova) to help me to change the flat. Soon he died, and it became already impossible to exchange flats without him.

Escape into illusive freedom

After the death of Savitsky, I continued working at the Museum as the Head of the Exposition Items Department. I am proud of these years as I that time I managed to talk Kvon into returning to work at the Museum as a restorer. And when I was graded to the job of an ordinary restorer, we worked with Alexei together for some time until his next departure from the Museum.

In 1985, the low salary at the Museum made me start teaching at the arts school. It appeared that the law did not allow the part-time workers receive full salary at both places of work, and the Museum began paying half to me. It was enough only for buying 0.5 liter of cheap vodkas for me or 130 gramm of meet per day for the whole family. It was possible to start «shirking» - decoration – but that meant to sell soul to the devil that, of course, I did not run to it.

Perhaps, I had to continue for the sake of children, keep to the Museum as a «float» in the storms of the 90s; these could help gradually repaying the debts for products bought for winter. But the thought that I would have spent all life as an unknown restorer and fail to achieve anything in my profession – in painting. Moreover, painter Buslov straightforwardly and convincingly told me that if I stayed with the museum I would be lost as a painter.

Probably I would have remained the restorer at the Museum if I had been paid «half-wage» or «full wage» for the work done if paid for its complexity, quality and volume but not for

66 A novice is being tested by his life and work at a monastery to become a monk, while a laborer just works and lives at a monastery for some time not going to become a monk.

the attendance at the job-place. And rather mentioned on picture's labels the name of the restorer. Otherwise, it was the work of a rubbish danner, and not the creativity similar to the author of the picture.

I had to choose teaching at school, restoration and painting. I had chosen teaching for «earning» to be able to allocate all the remaining time to painting and drawing. It was impossible to create art staying at the Museum, therefore it was necessary to quit. I was aware that it would be hard first, but I promised to myself that I would rather not buy more books and would less spend on food although I had not been buying meat.

That time I appeared to be on the threshold of shadow freedom that I had been dreaming a lot. It was so hard and fearful to quit, assume, poor but quiet place at the Museum! And Valya Sycheva said that many pictures need restoration, very many of them I knew that myself and managed to restore only the least part of them, but yet over 100 works of very different artists. Particularly, I had to trifle with Lysenko's picture «Composition with the Bull and the Anthropomorphous Figure».

But how much tired I got to mending and adding colors to somebody's pictures! Nevertheless, I quitted remembering that «the holy place is never empty» - in the 80s, the Museum was already famous, and the work in it became prestigious. Suddenly the number of those wishing to work restorers at the Museum greatly increased, even among the children of high-ranked officials (And Ilia, the sister that was working at the Academy of Sciences, hinted that there were many claimants for my place of the restorer.) It happens that somebody grows the fruits but others try to pick them up when they ripen. But the sinecure for «VIP»'s children did not happen: the work at the Museum is hard and low-paid; only those who really value it and was honored by it remained in the service.

The times of human relations built up in the Museum under Savitsky's authority were over because of the competition for working at the Museum They were replaced by the relations built up on mutual squabbles and heartlessness, including those «democratic performances» of elections to posts and positions as it used to be during «perestroika» years. Two groupings emerged: one, conventionally a «Tatar» one, and another one stood for Marinika Babanazarova. I also belonged to the latter one.

That was good that she was appointed without any elections one of the reasons was that her father. Also because Marinika's father, Marat Nurmuhamedov, was the patron of the Museum, Savitsky's like-minded person who took great efforts, connections and authority to make this Museum open. This was a big man, one of true intellectual leaders of the Karakalpaks.



Marinika has saved and has been saving the Museum by being able to save that spirit and collective that existed under Igor Vitalyevich, and even keeps the male staff of the Museum that was, on the whole, pushed out by the very kind women, if it were not for the «competition» on working at the Museum and retaining some employees.

It seems symbolic to me that on the day of Savitsky's death yet before Marinika was appointed the Director, the ivory Crucifixion (presented from the Pushkin Museum among other copies of works from Louver by Nadya Leger, the wife of the painter Fernand Leger). Another employee tried to steal few pictures. After that safety measures were taken: the police post, bar screens and the warning system were installed. The times when employees had their own keys from the Museum, locked the main door, and hardly ever latched another inner door. The Museum is now guarded much more thoroughly than the bank; that is why free access to the funds that I used to have, is became impossible.

After Savitsky's death Tashkent officials and officials from the local Minister of Culture habituated to inspect the Museum; they were also worried among other shortages by my absence at the job place during the working hours. Following the inspection results the Minister of Culture was preparing the order on my dismissal for discipline violation, for my refusal to pick up cotton, to be exact. Once I failed to endure such fault-findings, went to Marinika and wrote the advance notice. She persuaded me not to quit. I was ready to burst into tears and ran away.

Kvon was persuading me to return to the Museum. He thought that I would find myself only there. But was not striving to developing my career within the Museum, moreover I could not do it. Therefore I fully devoted myself to teaching. I taught at school from 1984 to 1996, almost for 12 years. Teachers were mainly young artists – graduates from schools and institutes: Rashid Latypov, sculptor Tolegen Jaksybaev, ceramist Berdybay Tajimuratov. Among the young I also remember Adyl (ah, how he was singing the Kazakh songs!), Aynabay, Nursultan and Gulya Embergenova that finished in Tashkent the same faculty 'Interior and Equipment». She is clever, well- done and revived the famous now Karakalpak embroidery. From the «old» artists, whom I remember, was Islam Jaksybaev. There were very talented and even genuine students. I have kept the works of some of them. Did they become the artists?

In the early 90s, waiting for famine in the country, I started drying bread (as I recollected the navy dry toasts stored on the ship for those who could not eat anything else because of seasickness.) I dried several big sacks – 200 kg. Earnings were really lacking for food but the severe famine has not come. Therefore I gave one sack to Adyl, another to Islam and to someone else. They were surprised that I had dried bread and were likely to grind them into tolkyn⁶⁷ and ate.

In 1988, my mother-in-law died in Tashkent and Luda with children left for Tashkent. It was dangerous for children to live in Nukus; hepatitis was raging because of defoliants and other agricultural chemicals. Some years later I also left for Tashkent. And in vain. Life in Tashkent was far from the «miod», my mother called honey like that. There was no work and I had to work as an interviewer for sociological centers. When I arrived in Nukus with the questionnaires, I tried to find the time to drop at the Museum, the library, see pictures in the exposition halls, talk to female staff of the Museum, visit the school and learn about the life of the Nukus artists. or years the artists complained that it was hard up without Savitsky, only rare «bourgeois» were buying their works. Sculptor Joldasbek Kuttymuratov left the Museum, part of the employees left Nukus at all for Russia, Kazakhstan. A very good painter C. whose works were often bought by Savitsky and the Museum is now painting for bath-houses, offices of «new Karakalpaks», whoever else. I was told how he was looking for the customers. He would paint somebody's

67 Tolkin – dry bread pieces crushed and fried in vegetable oil.

portrait and then goes with it around the city, went round the bazaar showing it as a bait waiting until somebody every now and then hires. How else could one subsist?

Painter U., valued as a wonderful Karakalpak primitivist by Savitsky, is begging at the cemetery. To help him, the Museum displayed his sketches in its shop but they are not much bought.

Painter B. started painting to meet tastes of the emerged lovers of art. When I was interviewing the entrepreneurs, I got acquainted with R. All his office was in the works of B. They look rather well. But despite the demand for his works, B. once said that he failed to find money to undergo surgery on his eyes; their sickness prevents him from painting.

Because of the need, someone fell ill with the tuberculosis in the family of the wonderful sculptor K. My God, I can understand how much pains K. took to find and buy the medicines. My wife Luda also suffered from tuberculosis; I gave her injections buying medicines in the flea-market near the garbage bins behind Kuylik-ota mausoleum. But following the law, the medicines should have been provided free of charge. Luda wrote the appealing letters about the medicines to anywhere. Eventually, an official from the Board of Pharmacy came and ... asked to write the letter of gratitude for allegedly provided medicines that he promised to provide for sure, but we failed to tarry for them.

But stop whimpering; let's recollect something more joyful, namely the fact that Savitsky with his Museum can be called the founder of painting art school in Karakalpakstan and the creative works of the artists that founded this school – the peak of the flowering of art. This is proved by the fact that the halls with the works of Karakalpak artists are as good as the halls of the works of the artists collected for the Museum by Savitsky beyond Karakalpakstan. Will this school be continued? I hope it will...

About Own Painting

My first personal exhibition of painting was held in the Museum during Savitsky's lifetime when in 1978 made the first and the greatest purchase of my works. Igor Vitalyevich wished to buy all my works at 5 thousand roubles. That time it was the enormous sum of money (almost the car cost !). But the "old" artists who also needed procurements dissuaded him as the Museum did not only have a limit on purchases, but also multiple debts for already acquired works. Nevertheless, Savitsky then bought some of my works.

That time I painted standard-sized works on the factory grounded cardboard of approximately 50 by 70 cm. All the months of the long summer vacations at the institute on the excavation in Eli kale after morning excavations, from three o'clock p.m. and till the evening, I was painting landscapes and views of fortresses. And at home and at nights at the electric light I was painting still-lives and finishing landscapes. In the morning at dawn I managed to paint one-two more sketches. I was enduring such a mad rate of work all summer long.

In Moscow when I was there together with Savitsky, I was greatly impressed by the exhibition of German expressionists. I understood: these were only the reproductions that seem to be of negligent painting. Actually these were very much elegant and refined works. I am speaking about the pictures of Pechshtein, Schmidt-Rottluff, Kirchner and others. After them I painted in a similar style: the bridge across Kyzketken, with the rusty pipes lying on the bank, park and views of the old theatre, old two-storied houses in Nukus; and during the frosty winter I painted the sun appearing through dark grey clouds. Gashy was this painting. Part of these works is in the Museum exposition, and, employees of a museum said that the well-known painter Djavlon Umarbekov liked these works.

Then the tempera period started. I painted lots of faces but rather images from nature or by sketches and drawings. During that period, Fernand Léger was the closest to me in style. In these works I tried to achieve completeness, classicality and vigorousness of style, but obvious and excessive laconicism showed through some portraits.

Then followed the period of abstract works, then began the period of still-lives.

And then there were three consecutive "Jampyk" stages when I was painting landscapes at the site of the ancient settlement Jampyk for about a month. An unforgettable sad event happened during the first Jampyk period. I was to remain till the end of the archaeological expedition on Jampyk landscapes but was by the Museum to pick up cotton. I have left all my works in a room of the forester's house. But when returned, about 20 works of 60 were missing. It appeared that the chief of the archaeological expedition had stolen the work «The View with the Sunset» and a part of other works I in the neighboring expedition, but those were the geologists.

A venerable art critic Rimma Eremyan arrived to the Museum that time to settle down squabbles among the employees concerned with the dismissals and distribution of titles; she also showed slides with the works of modern Tashkent artists and told about them. The chief of the expedition complained to her on my request to return the works and declared that Joldasov was the worthless artist. But then what for had it stolen my work then?! Rimma Eremyan comforted me, but in same time upsets me, advising to pause and think over what was painting. She said, too many my works are hanging in the Museum and at the exhibitions, that was overpraised and that was like «suffocation of the baby by a pillow».

Eremyan is deeply devoted to art. She judges art as a highly learned professional, but lacking delicacy is too furiously irreconcilable to those whom she calls mediocrities, lacking of talent as being deeply assured of her own infallibility and correctness of her assessments. All this is against her mad temperament in every possible way curbed by the iron bridle of will.

All her life is devoted to arts that is why she finds an internal justification in the performance of the sacred mission: to clean Augean stables of modern art with the fanatical determination of pulling out by ruthless hands the "weeds" which have expanded in the garden of painting of Uzbekistan. As a missionary to whom, in its prophetic mission the Almighty granted the right to eradicate heresy and heterodoxy, if I dare to joke - as "Savonarola" – the "inquisitor" of the modern art. Probably, therefore even in Picasso's works she tries to discover the features of religious obsession and underlines it.

Listening to her, I thought, that in the search of the form some painters think that art is revealed in skilful improvisation, in the divine easiness of expression, in the easy and free playing with deeply ironic glamour. I also tried to improvise counting on the "genius" of casual findings. But I did not understand the simple truth that art reveals itself, first of all, through the steadfast studying of nature and in thorough craft preparation like at Modigliani, Van Gogh, Munch who very carefully performed works just seem to be an improvisation. Therefore, I mostly agree with the painters who study the world, rather than those who what interpret it in their own way.

Moreover, not the quantity of the executed works matters but their quality. For example, each Leonardo's work reminds of a delicately polished diamond that he had been working for years, carrying it with him from city to city, at times leaving some of them unfinished.

Some painters do not express their attitude to the world but illustrate their and even not their ideas that sometimes happens to be loud enough because of the emptiness. Eremyan was most likely right in criticizing the artists; but, probably, it is necessary to understand and therefore forgive them. They are compelled to search for earnings to provide families, children,

and it is necessary to be grateful to the artists at least for the fact that they find strengths in themselves forces for Art after working for earnings.

It is a pity, of course, that coming back to the creative searches after the poster "hack-work" or pleasing tastes of the salons, some artists involuntarily run into bright forms in which everyone wishes to stand out and draw market's attention as the hard and nameless work will not bring benefits. Such labor needs self-sacrifice and even yet more painful, it voluntarily or involuntarily requires sacrificing needs of the native and close people to the Arts.

For all that and nevertheless, the Artist should work only for the sake of himself without looking at the market, family and vanity around him/her. Ideally there should be nothing between the nature and creation of the artist. An example of this is Van Gogh, the Master who has reached the limits of perfection of simplicity in painting. It is more difficultly to achieve simplicity than pretentiousness in arts. It is easier to subtilize – however paradoxical it may sound. Therefore some painters also do not deeply study the nature, the world, the landscape, the human being but and hasty improvise on the topic of nature and, consequently, the world picture in their works looks fantastic or brutal. They do not see the world and nature, but look at them through the foggy literary-poetic philosophizing. Works of these artists possess much egocentrism mixed with the sense of elitism, proud sensation of the creator of a new universe, sensation of the exclusiveness of the right to their own vision, each time (seemingly) the most true, and similar to nothing.

The aspiration to take the own place, to win it, to be unlike and to stand out among the hundreds of other artists is quite clear. However it seems to me that all this leads to the fact that the result frequently turns out to be directly opposite when the artist tries to find the compromise between the tastes of buyers and their aspiration to self-affirmation in creativity. Probably, the imitation of surrealists, expressionists, and postimpressionists and even of Soviet "naturalists" of the 40s and 50s can be partially blamed for this.

And I am sinful; I was keen on "collecting" styles in my works. I had better at once at institute started working seriously, carefully and uninterruptedly. How much time has been wasted for the unnecessary affairs!

But I will return to my own painting. There was a period when I refused tempera and worked with the pastel and oil paints from the sunrise to the sunset catching color changes in the landscapes.

1980-1983 years, when together with Savitsky I went to Jampyk-kala, were the most fruitful period for me. For the first time, I went there in spring, painted there conventionally-schematic with tempera on scraps of a canvas and cardboards. The second trip was in summer when I wrote pictures sizing 50x100 cm, tempera and China ink variations of the sunsets, fortresses and mountains. 20-30 etudes per day. Whole heaps of tubes rolled in a fortress. The third trip was in the autumn of 1984. That time I brought the whole bus of pictures from thee. During the day I painted 3-4 big canvases in oil, and managed to make a sketch before the lunch. And in the evening, at night near the fire I was making drawings in coal. It was the time of the enormous creative spirit.

In 1985 there was my fourth and last Jampyk period. I wish Savitsky had seen works in oil. I sold several works to the Museum, I kept some others with me - with them I joined the Union of Artists where I was a member of the painting section of the association of young artists before and almost became its chairman.

Recommendations to the Union of artists were given to me by painter Bazarbay Serekeev and sculptor Joldasbek Kuttymuratov. Revision of the applicant's works was held in the Tashkent Central Showroom where each artist took the floor to tell about himself and show the

works. Taldykin, Burmakin, Jalalov and others examined them. Probably, they found it worthy to see me among the numbers of their Union.

There was not any practical benefit from the membership in the Union of Artists in the late eighties besides, that I could visit all exhibitions free of charge. Why then was it necessary to join the Union of Artists? Probably, to get recognition of the colleagues-artists and to obtain the right to receive more money for the works. Membership in the Union of Artists allowed selling works through art salons instead of markets and anywhere. But very few people were buying paintings in the salons either. When I submitted my works to the salon in Nukus, were hanging there for years, and the only thing bought there from me in 1992 or in 1993 by the Japanese (Nakahata-san) was «The Tree Trunk with the Fallen Leaves», an old student's work. A few abstract works were bought by a Dutch who collected products of Russian avant-garde; he paid 10 dollars per each. Having compared these prices (two bottles of vodka for a picture!) with for what Savitsky (at over 100 dollars at the exchange rate of those times), I have stopped delivering my pictures to the.

Since 1993, and last time I sold several works in 2000 to Alisher Ilkhamov for the “Open society” Foundation. I spent this money to buy a flat for my daughter. The flats that time were very cheap 3 thousand dollars. When the Fund closed, Alisher gratuitously returned me the works though could not to return. In the 80s, Alisher studied painting at the Tashkent Theatrical and Arts Institute and, as I heard, painted interesting etudes going into the mountains with the employees of the first centre of sociological researches in Central Asia that he established early 90s.

I returned to abstraction within suprematism, geometrically-cosmic direction in painting in 1983. I was pushed by the works of Kudryashov, the remarkable Russian painter. He had worked as a VDNH⁶⁸ designer for many years, and when in 50-60s the space epoch started in the USSR, he recollected his young searches. His works hang on the second floor of an old building of the Nukus Museum; there I got acquainted with them. First I painted abstraction on cardboard, then on plywood.

In Museum's restoration workshop I painted big still-lives - with statues, including “The Still-life with the Venus Sculpture”, and began a still-life with the objects of the Zoroastrian cult. Then I started painting the huge portrait of Sonina and the portrait of Elena Andreevna, the many-year-old elderly matron of the Museum and failed to finish both. (Why I remember unfinished or sold paintings? What happened to them and where are they now?)

In 1985 I have received a studio in a decayed building that had no electricity, heating, water was running from the roofs, and the corridor of the second floor fell onto the ground floor; and the painters were struggling to their damp studios like shadows in the darkness risking to curtail their necks. In this tumble-down studio I was rigidly and long painting a still-life with white draperies against water-melons and flowers left after commemoration day after Savitsky's death. The Museum bought the picture for decent money which I could reserve foodstuffs for the family for winter.

In the 90s, I was painting small still-lives with bread and vegetables in one of the studios in the same workshops in the same broken building. I did not use the whitewash but tried to achieve the golden glow effect by applying instead of the whitewash canned strontium yellow and cadmium yellow. And the bread turned out to be gold precious! Then I also painted vegetables, kumgans.

Almost all studios in that destroyed building were empty, only two-three painters worked there. Sometimes we drank after or instead of work in these studios. We spoke about Rembrandt

68 Exhibition of Economic Achievements, Moscow.

and peered at the reproductions of his works, in each his touch and rejoiced when found the finishing touch - pasty, light, powerful, expressive, and fused into a precious light. Discussing his works and justifying our poverty, we reminded each other that Rembrandt died in poverty, forgotten, and has been opened anew only almost in hundred years after death. And each of us secretly dreamt not to remain unknown.

One day, I told Arslan's mother-in-law that was very practical, that artists are at difficulty now. She answered, that in the 60s, it was fashionable to give children «into art». It seemed that the country and the power in it will be eternal and they will always needed by them. At the same time translated "show-literature" about unrecognized geniuses producing greatest creations in poor attics flocked in. Then, like in the story with Cinderella, suddenly came critics and opened the treasures of art to the world, and so on.

These were the legends about Van Gogh, Gauguin, Lautrec, Manet and other painters. The fishing rod of this great but legend caught generations of artists. Nowadays this legend is dead. Collision with the bourgeois reality, with the "market" has shaken art as well as the fine painter Zilberman. He was creating surprising impressionistic canvases, but took a great interest in naturalism during the last years, painted the ethnographic, small pictures very much "made" almost in the photo way - old Tashkent, old men, flat cakes, grapes, pomegranates and so forth. After the Union disintegrated, merchants rushed in, bought up his works for as near as 50 dollars per picture; he was very happy. But when left for Germany and saw there one of the sold works at the cost of thousands dollars, he was said to fall with an apoplexy! Yes, artists themselves rarely succeed in trading their arts.

Books - my Friends and Treasures

How pleasant it is to touch and look through books! Books make my main treasure after children and painting. They do not betray and always will be with you, teaching to retain courage in all tests. My aspiration to books is explainable: I was sentenced to loneliness in the remote province, but I was attentively watching heroes in books and saw reflexing of the facets of my life in them.

From the childhood I was surrounded with huge bookcases overcrowded with books. When I was 5, Dad brought to me from Moscow my first book about lions, multi-colored, with glossy sheets. I looked at the lines and moved my lips as if I was able to read.

I started reading before school. Nobody supervised my reading; I grew "wild" among the books and followed them where they led me. How much I liked to sit at home in a corner near the bookcase and plunge into the worlds of Jules Verne, Wells or in the adventures of the Leather Stocking!

In the 60s, Sputniks started flying, Gagarin went into the orbit. And I was deeply read in Belyaev, Efremov looked at the night stars. When reading "Andromeda Nebula" by Efremov, I imagined that I myself was in this ship and was flying in the lifeless space. Already then I started making compositions on the cosmic topics, to the impressions from Kudryashov's pictures.

After arrival from Nukus at the Tashkent boarding school I started reading of the Russian classics. And fancy for books on western philosophy came during the student's years - after meditations on the inevitable retreat into emptiness, into nothing, into complete disappearance. Existentialism as the philosophy turned directly to the person, as a desperate attempt of love and help to the suffering person is close to the total constitution of my soul and my reflex ion. Thus I defined the selective writers - Hesse, Márquez, Thomas Mann, Dostoevsky, Hamsun, Rilke, Helderlin, Du Faugh and other geniuses.

We did not have access to the works of Sartre, Kierkegaard, and Camoes that time. I got acquainted with them through rare citations in the Soviet "critics of Western philosophy». It already then, in the eighties, I collected the full set of the «Philosophical heritage». The same concerns the Bible that I studied through citations from the atheistic books. Then like an "archeologist" I tried to restore in the mind the contents of the original books. What for? Because without these scriptures, it is impossible to understand the history and essence of the European and Russian culture and art.

I saw the Book of Books - the Bible - for the first time when I was 17 years old at Nadya Kosareva, more truly, at her aunt's, a lonely old woman, in a small angular room with the icons and the reproduction depicting Christ, apparently from Vasnetsov's picture. (My diploma work on painting was devoted to Nadya: - in a dark blue dress, with red tulips in hands. We spent days and nights sated with sudden love and romanticism of the Cuban revolution. Our love shocked the associates. I was at school yet. Nadya was six years older. It was the first woman whom I loved in an adult way, worshiped her. All was so stunning and unexpected, that even now it seems to be a dream. We talked nights through, smoked cigars, listened to music. I finished the portrait without her; she had left for Cuba to her husband. Since then I have not seen her. Half a year later I read all her letters; for some reason the whole pile of letters was delivered by mail once at a time. (It happened when we were sitting in the cinema, Igor Vitallyevich knew who these letters were from but reproached for reading personal letters in public.)

For the second time I saw the Old Testament at Lena Hudonogova. The third time I came across the Bible published by the national-labor union serving in the Northern Navy. Our big anti-submarine ship "Derzkiy" came to Sweden, and ashore someone distributed to sailors small books with the thinnest papyri an paper. They had both the Old and The New Testament. I read the book at the doctor's table in my ambulatory and made notes. The ship doctor saw my notes, got awfully frightened and informed zampolit.³⁷ The latter called for me and resented for my unreliability: "What's that, you are a Komsomol member?!" The Bible was taken away, and I was not taken to a round-the-world travel as a potential "dissident". Since then and till now, it seems to me that studying of the religious doctrines is a penal crime.

I was copying the Bible into my note-books until Arslan bought me the Protestant Synod Bible with comments for 150 roubles in Moscow in the late eighties. My stepfather was surprised and said that the most expensive book "Renoir" bought by him cost 40 roubles almost enough for buying 10 kg of meat!

I wish I collected books during studentship although during those years it was possible to buy fine editions, especially in the "Academ-kniga"; there were several of them in Tashkent. In the 90s, they were closed and multiple second hand bookshops emerged; but their largest part were also closed. The shop in the Abay Street could not pay a very expensive rent. The shop in the Beruni Street, in the campus, the book -seller, a Russian girl took the maternity leave but has not returned. She treated me well and helped to sell books from my library. The good secondhand bookshop was opposite the "Panorama" cinema. I also handed many books over there, but last year they were returned to me saying there were no buyers. Now my books are lying at Lenya's shop in Shota Rustaveli Street. Lenya is a Korean, a nice, polite guy. The elderly Uzbek works for him at the same shop as the seller. Twenty years ago, he was the grocery seller in Zavodskaya Street. I used to drop at this shop to drink 100 grams before dinner/supper. He ran away from a grocery shop to a bookshop because in his words, books trading are not a profitable but the quietest matter.

I also ran away from life into books, in monastic dogmatism, into searches of rest; in this is both my pleasure and tragedy of the loser. The pessimism in anticipation of personal self-affirmation appeared to be stronger than acquired knowledge. However, it is not necessary to

look for justifications; all can be explained and justified being pitiful to you. And all evils begin with self-pity and self-justification of not-activity.

But, my God, what poverty my Mum and my family experienced when I have been keen on the purchases of books! Once, I have shown her the album of painter Perov being proud of my purchase; she looked through reproductions and started crying. has begun to cry. They have reminded her of something in her childhood.

«Rodina - Urodina»⁶⁹

Books did not only help me to run away from life, but also to make friends with the similar “runaways” into books like me. One of them - my friend Jenya T. (he was over 60 in late 90s); I often visited him to exchange books or look at the photos from his family archive. I helped to write on the backs of the pictures names of their characters that were described by his aged mother Nina Ivanovna. The entire history of the country was reflected in the history of their family as well as in the family histories of many of my friends. Meanwhile, I will tell you about Jenya’s family in photos and stories of his mother.

Jenya’s Grandfather Eugene after the Japanese war returned without the legs. He received a very good pension, and the family was not in need. Speaking about this pension, Nina Ivanovna recollected his father’s friend, some Denisov. During the German war of 1914, he was taken a prisoner of war and wrote letters from there, “There is no bread, but potatoes are available every day”, and after returning from a captivity the Tsar! himself awarded him with a good pension, and he lived without need. (I thought that time, recollecting daddy’s stories about Janabay-aga, their aul and the guy, footless after the war of 1941-1945 that the attitude to the invalids in the tsarist’s and Soviet times could not even be compared).

Jenya’s father, Dmitry Danilovich T., worked as a bookkeeper in Sterlitamak, ran from the reprisals of the 30s in remote town of Turtkul lost between the deserts – Kyzyl Kum and Kara Kum. Jenya recalled how he went to see the film “Peter the Great” in this city when I was a child. After the film, in the square, over the loudspeaker he heard Molotov’s speech about the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. When he came home, the neighboring males had already gathered and were drinking saying goodbye to each other. Jenya’s father returned from the front heavily wounded and started working a bookkeeper like before the war; he was arrested for managing “the black cash”; he was sentenced to a 10-year detention and died in prison in Tashkent failing to wait for the amnesty on the occasion of Stalin’s death. (Remembering him, Nina Ivanovna, for some reason, was every time saying that he had thin hair and, therefore, shove his head.)

Konstantin, Dmitry T.’s brother, was hiding during the civil war both from the white, and from the red in Siberia; he did not want to fight, but nevertheless turned out to be with the white and then went missing. In the photo, Konstantin, probably, a lieutenant is with the George Cross on his chest, with a sabre and a holster on a sword belt.

Elizabeth, Dmitry T.’s sister, died of cholera in the 20s; before the revolution she worked as a teacher. Her photo of a young beautiful girl shot together with friend had the inscription, “On the day of graduation from the gymnasium on 3 May 1912». And such grief was in her eyes!

Jenya’s grandfather from mother’s side, Ivan Mitrofanovich M., worked as a clerk at the skinnery in Sterlitamak. He saved some money and pledged the bill to build a house. During the civil war, he also hid from mobilization to both the white and the red armies. When Ivan was

69 «The Home Land - the Ugly Land». From the song of a rock bard Yu. Shevchuk.

reading books at nights, his wife sometimes woke up from his sighs and crying. He explained his grief by the appealingness of the book. (Such a biblical simplicity.)

Ivan Mitrofanovich elder son, Volodya, perished at the age of 15: he was killed by an eighteen-year companion in a quarrel concerned with sharing guelder-rose berry sites. Parents of the murderer tried to hide a corpse, dragged him up to the river and covered with the wind-fallen trees in order to drop the body into the Belaya River at night. But Ivan Mitrofanovich found the body of his first-born earlier on the same night on the horses together with a police supervisor and dogs - the bullet passed through the heart.

After Volodya, Ivan Mitrofanovich got four daughters - Alexandra, Maria, Nina and Evdokia. When Alexandra was baptized, the priest wanted to name her Fyokla, the father had revolted and threatened to leave her unbaptized if she were not given the sweet name of Alexandra. Ivan was a non-believer but under the pressure of his wife attended the church not to set "a bad example" for his daughters.

Alexandra M. was the most beautiful among the sisters. In the 30s she lost a six-year-old daughter from meningitis; and her son despite suasions of the father, senior lecturer Danilov, went to serve in the Navy in order enter the institute after service. He perished on the third day of the war on the Baltics. When Alexandra knew about it, she ran mad – she was wandering along the streets looking for the lost juvenile son and calling him back.

Maria M. married Michael, a chapel-master. During the war of 41-45, he was taken prisoner of war by the Germans, ran away and was with the partisans in the mountains of Yugoslavia; he froze his feet and suffered from the pain in them during the bad weather. He died after war. His heart failed to endure daily threats of the expected arrest for being the prisoner of war. When he yet was alive, Maria bore him a daughter, a very beautiful girl; later on she married a pilot and gave birth to a son. Daughter's husband damaged his feet in an air crash and was sent on the beggarly disability pension; he got frozen in a snowdrift after the next hard drinking.

Evdokia was born in 1906 and lived in Sterlitamak. Her son in the early childhood at the age of 10 had to go working to at the military plant to receive the higher portion of bread as a male-worker and feed his mother. The heavy work leaned him and the hump had grown.

After the death of her husband Dmitry, Nina Ivanovna remained with the ten-year-old Jenya and eight-year-old Volodya but managed to raise them and give them the engineering education. Jenya became a good engineer and retired in 1991. Both have such a small pension that they are hardly available for scare food and medicines.

Nowadays, Nina Ivanovna is 87 years old. Jenya suffers from her psychological insanity that was insignificant in youth and is strengthening now. I also see this, when during our next meeting she cares me on the head and says with surprise that she has never met me. But her memory about the far off past is excellent judging by the detailed stories about the relatives. Her writing is very literate, and she even writes herself! corresponding with her sister and friends from youth.

Nina Ivanovna is so much tortured the pain in her feet that she constantly shouts from it and calls for her son to help her to get up and go somewhere; therefore, Jenya cannot leave he alone for a long time. One day, we were sitting with Jenya watching a football match and heard a dull blow on the floor. We went to see what had happened: his half-paralyzed mother fell down from the bed, overturned a night pot and got smeared in contents. Jenya abused and beat her; she shouted as a wounded bird. I tried to help but Jenya refused and I left.

In 1994, 70-year-old Jenya buried his 90-year-old mother who was at last taken by the God. His younger brother Volodya took Jenya to Tyumen. That time we stood at the tomb of his

mother, at Savitsky's tomb and parted forever. While parting, I presented Jenya with the picture «An Autumn Landscape» and a couple of books. He was happy, and I was happy that could make him happy. He now suffers from pains in his feet like his late mother and lives without a family and children. All his life has passed in service to the country and people.

Jenya T., Alexei Kvon, A. Goldrey, Venya (who made a hara-kiri to himself after the intolerable insult) and many others - Great and Unknown generations of sincere and pure-soul boys that have carried by belief in honor, in good, in the height of human relations through their lives and, thus, managed to save their Dignity and Soul. Probably, they died in time, - they would not have accepted today's time, and the time would not accept them already.

When I was looking through the photos and listened to Nina Ivanovna' stories, I thought that the horror would have captured the country if destinies and archives of millions unknown people became known! The "happiest" society appeared to be a bloody mess of the guarded, guardians and informers, deceivers and deceived, bosses and servants - from birth and to the cemetery.

Once I orated - "It is a pity that Satan came as genuine Lenin and turned the empire into a grinder of peoples." But Savitsky bitterly responded, "about killing innocent tsar's children perused up and down the cellars and killed by the Bolsheviks when they were crying "Mama!"

Everything is interconnected, both the present time and the past horror. I see, how the country is disintegrated, how communists are coiling within "perestroika" in order to retain their money and power. However, there are no communists at all already, and there is the KGB in the cover of the CPSU and the "purgatory" of the VLKSM to let the careerists into gorged paradise. During 70 years of power, their hearts and brains puffed up with fat; and the higher the "communist" the fatter he is. «We all come from October», they said to us, but we are from the different tribes with them.

The people trust neither the CPSU, nor the state because the party does not repent an iota but put the fault on the leaders - Stalin, Beria, Khrushchev and other rascals. I am amazed by the similarity of their evil deeds with the acts of Nero, Caligula and Tiberius. But the communists have far surpassed them. The Roman tyrants though not for long were endured and soon killed. And our "Tsars" reigned for decades, keeping people in humiliation under the cheerful music of marches. "Leaders" have only changing the signboards - "Tsar" for "General Secretary" or "President", "Petrograd" for "Leningrad" and "Saint Petersburg", "Russian Empire" for "The USSR" and again to "Russian Empire"; the "People" for the slaves humiliated with a residence permit in a giant GosLag⁷⁰. In what world will my children live? I am worried about them.

I imagined my protest against this state - self-burning in the Red Square opposite the Moscow Kremlin. As usual there was too much enthusiasm and castles built in the air.

THE GRAND OLD MAN

The one who has once seen the volcano eruption must describe what he has seen. The same concerns Savitsky. I should have taken notes of him and of everything.

About ten years ago Arslan brought a journalist that arrived from France and among other affairs wished to interview me about Savitsky allegedly «promising to pay in dollars» (Arslan tried to "seduce" me in this way). When they came, I did not open the door. It was bad, of course. But I could not speculate either on Savitsky's glory, or the reflexion of his fame on me, no for the sake of "dollar" payment for the memory of the Grand Old Man! And what I could then say if I have not collected memoirs about him even for myself.

70 State Concentration Camp.

The day before yesterday I saw a dream - Igor Vitallyevich lies on a hospital cot in a sweated old body stockings. I changed his clothes. His eyes were closed. The light has suddenly gone out. And he asked me: «Edik, switch on the light for me, it is dark here». He said this without opening his eyes. His face seemed to be the same like during the last years of his life - the sunken mouth and wrinkles on the high forehead. I switched on the lights, but the bulbs hardly glowed and faded. He demanded - and the bulbs gradually began to shine brighter and brighter. I told him about this, and without opening his eyes, he said that it was all the same dark to him. I woke up and started thinking what that dream could mean?

I went to Olga⁷¹ and asked what this dream could mean. She answered that the dream meant that I should write my memoirs about him - Savitsky's soul demands it. The soul that fills and moves anyone during the lifetime leaves him/her after the death in order to visit the alive and remind them of him/herself.

Therefore I started writing quieting myself that “it was better late, than never”. And, thanks God; it was the time for it to be launched.



If to consider the Teacher to be the Father (spiritual) as I considered Savitsky to be, then he is somewhat the "grandson" of painter Serov because painter Ulyanov (Serov's favorite pupil) was the "Father" – the Teacher of Savitsky; and I, in my turn, will dare to consider myself Ulyanov's "grandson" and the "great-grandson" of Serov.

I write about Ulyanov because once read his “Memoirs about Serov” and they have fascinated me by Ulyanov's love to the Teacher. Something similar I also see in a small masterpiece of Isikava Takuboku “The Diary Written in Latin». The same brevity and the beauty of the text. These small books by Ulyanov and Takuboku exemplify for me perfection and sample memoirs on the Teacher.

When I worked and lived near Savitsky, mentally I understood his greatness, but could not feel it by heart because of the youth's aspiration to self-affirmation in a nearby living with a small native man - sick, hunched, toothless, dressed in the worn out boots and shabby clothes. Besides that, he was always well aware of his significance and value without showing off and being the Confessor for all of us – museum's employees and artists. He was teaching, fostering and loving us. We talked over this with Kvon, with Kuttymuratov, with Sveta Turutina, Valya

71 Brother's wife.

Sycheva; and Larisa Shtogrina always starts crying as soon we start talking about him. Savitsky gently reprimanded her more often than others. Apparently comes the time when we begin more and more sharply feeling whom we have lost.

Probably, something of the following has been published by now, but by omitting anything, I risk to miss something unknown that is why I will begin with Igor's childhood.

Igor's father was the son of a well-known philologist, scientist from Kiev. Once Savitsky said that his father took to bottle in Igor's early childhood and left him with his Mother alone in Moscow. Since then Savitsky disgusted alcohol throughout his life, but felt compassion to drinkers. Occasionally, he allowed himself taking only the diluted wine.

One of his most early memoirs of post-revolutionary Moscow was the first days of NEP. Igor then ran into the room from the street shouting, "Mum! They are selling pies in the street!" Igor Vitalyevich told us how he and his mother were managing on one rouble a day, and even a trip by tram was causing a sustainable gap in their budget. One God knows how they managed to survive during those years! That famine is well seen in Favorsky's xylography "Hunger", where people are taking away corpses of the fallen horses. Great Zoshchenko also mentioned this period of life in Russia saying, "Oh, how much we starved; bread was the wonder". And my landlady in Beshagach said that in 1932, in Tashkent, every day tens of the Kazakh corpses were collected and taken out from the square near the Mukimi theatre - men, women, children that died from hunger. And then – "Bread has come! Bread has come!" – that was the way how happiness came!

Jews consider only those to be a Jew who was born by the Jewish mother. Therefore Igor's mother, apparently, was the Jew because in childhood, Igor went through the Judaic trimming ritual (circumcision). But Savitsky himself had never spoken about his origin and the Jews being perfectly aware of the Jewish environment and culture; he mocked at their strict following of the Judaic traditions. For example, at Falk who laughed at himself telling us that once he arrived in Vienna where his parents lived; they ate only kosher meat and neither fruits nor vegetables. On a visit being tired of meat, he ate the whole pack of bitter almonds making his stomach suffer.

Talking about the Jews, he was scolding them as much as the Russians mentioning that during the post-revolutionary years when the Russians were in frenzy to each other in the fratricidal war, the Jews recognized the new power as freedom from residence qualification and provision of the access to higher education. Then they filled higher educational institutions and consequently constituted the core of technical, scientific, medical and arts intelligentsia in the USSR.

The Russian arts critic Galeev recently visited Tashkent on his way from Nukus; he was collecting data for the book about Savitsky. Arslan took me to meet him at the apartment of the famous art historian Irina Bogoslovskaya who showed the whole shelf of catalogues of pictures of earlier unknown artists that Galeev had discovered to the world. We touched upon the topic of reprisals, the role of Jews in art. In passing, I mentioned Savitsky's attitude to the Jews. Arslan remarked that this was the usual attitude of a Jewish-born Russian intellectual like Guberman.

A year ago Arslan and his wife, painter Olga, took me to see a nice film about the Museum and about Savitsky; the film was shot with the support of the Fund of "Friends of the Nukus Museum". (By the way, Savitsky valued and purchased Olga's works regretting that she did not work much as "tyrant Arslan does not free her from kitchen and drudgery housework").

Marinika and other admirers of the Museum shared impressions about the film. After the film, Arslan boiled over telling me that the film presented everything in the "cold war" manner, presented the Artists of the Museum as victims of the Soviet regime, and the museum – as the saviour of their creativity. And after all, 90% destinies of those artists were more or less trouble

free, for example the same "formalists", Ulyanov, Falk or Stavrovsky, and added that, for some reason, in the West they do not shoot films about unknown artists and their pictures of the times of the French and English revolutions and after them.

I thought that though the museum was established with the help of and in the times of the communists, these were not communists but already the Soviet proto-"bourgeois". Moreover I thought that the art that comes to the politicians by itself becomes the powerful art (Guttuzo, Courbet) but when the politics interferes with arts both turn out to be disgusting.

I do not remember what I responded to Arslan but we came up to the agreement that both the films and destinies of Savitsky and of the artists had been shown in the film. In conclusion, we joked that the word "desert" in the film title «Desert of the Forbidden Art» could be also read as «dessert» (delicacy) and the delicacy should be praised and not put down.

Speaking about the Artists, victims of the Soviet times, Savitsky bitterly noticed that the artists rather often informed the NKWD and KGB against each other. This was done both anonymously or not publicly, in written statements to "competent" bodies, and directly in open debates and publications where they highlighted their adherence to communism/socialism and disloyalty to their rival colleagues.

Yes, any Artist is great, but a little man in him happens to be weak in his aspiration to survive at the feeding trough of the powers by voluntarily or involuntarily sending "competitor" to the camps for long years, or plunging him into poverty.

After watching the film, I wished to say, but have hesitated and kept silent, that Savitsky occupied an honorable place among such travelers like Athanasius Nikitin, like Roerich with his sons and wife Elena, like the whole lot in the momentum of Russia towards the great East. Moreover Igor Vitalyevich was not only the collector of pictures as it was presented in the film, but also the finest Russian painter of the East like the great Artists Paul Kuznetsov, Martiros Saryan, Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin, Istomin, Falk, Favorsky and others.

Savitsky, The Painter

Savitsky's painting is grandiose as it is not lost in the bulks of any halls like it happened in Moscow, in Pushkin Museum when it housed the exhibition of Savitsky's works. That time, Marinika wondered and quite precisely noticed, «Look here, Edik, his pictures are modest, but they have not been lost here».

Somewhere I came across the Taoist idea that the greatest art borders on non-art, on artlessness, on meekness and deep modesty, and recollected Elmira Gazieva that once told me, «Your pictures look ceremonial like Savitsky's pictures». She probably compared our works with the epic works of Rybnikov, Volkov, Michael Ksenofontovich⁷² and Tansykbaev. Yes, in their context Savitsky looks to be in love with nature and very exactly reflect the slightest play of light and form. It is the love to accuracy that Elmira called recording. And they also seemed to be like this to me in my youth. Indeed, Savitsky's painting is an improbable accuracy in love to nature, and here lies the beauty of art in general. It is easy to dream of color and form. It is rather easily done; it is very easy to deceive and to get deceived. But you will not deceive when in sincere love, and you will not be deceived yourself.

Savitsky has developed as the painter during the pre-war years. It was the ARRA⁷³ time. He studied art under Istomin, under Ulyanov and under Falk. Once, in my presence he was reading artist Istomin's book of theoretical works and regretfully remarked that while studying

72 Sokolov.

73 Association of Russian Revolutionary Artists.

under Istomin, he did not hear what Istomin had written in his books. And Igor Vitalyevich regretted (in vain, in my opinion) that he had not been sufficiently trained to drawing although studied it under fine masters of drawing. Then he noticed that drawing nevertheless could be learned, but it was more important to become the personality in art and quoted Falk, “I cannot teach only to that what makes a painter the artist – Personalities”.

A precedent and reliance on the predecessors is important in art. Savitsky's favorite Painter Alexander Andreevich Ivanov, the creator of the great Russian evangelistic picture “Christophany” was one of the predecessors for Savitsky. In particular, Savitsky loved Ivanov's preparatory sketches for this picture – landscapes of Roman Campania and the Neapolitan landscapes. Savitsky said, “In these landscapes, Ivanov studied the nature, submissively and lovingly following it. He painted sketches in a hard white paper slightly pasted with the fish glue. He used oil paints, but they were liquid, not pasty”.

He recollected Ivanov's panoramic landscapes and painted by himself similar landscapes sized 10 cm by 100 cm that painter Alvina Shpade playfully called “macaroni”. Looking at the far off Karatau Mountains, Savitsky spoke about Ivanov's Italian preparatory studies to his great picture “Christophany” and repeated, “It is also possible to create meek, modest and simultaneously great art”.

Only two Savitsky's pictures remind of early painting in Karakalpakstan. One of them is painted in style of small Dutch masters. This fine and masterful work depicts the interior of the pantry with edibles, sacks, pumpkins and vegetables. And the second picture, also in dark color, depicts the yurt⁷⁴ standing inside a court yard.

He painted exclusively on the factory canvases pasted on the cardboard specially prepared for him in Moscow and was complaining that he turned out to be far from Moscow stretchers and canvases. Sometimes he pasted canvas on the cardboard and diligently prepared it for painting as he strained after durability of pictures storage. By touch his pictures are abundantly covered by the smooth varnish that Savitsky carefully polished with pumice, sand or thin emery paper to the nacreous luster. And when we were on sketches, and he saw my canvases and cardboards, he reproached me for their negligent preparation.

Post-Moscow pictures of Savitsky are arranged by series. First, landscapes and kinds of castles, fortresses and sites of settlements of Ancient Khorezm from the times of his participation in the Khorezm archeological excavations expedition. It is the largest series of pictures. In them Savitsky aspired to embody scientifically and accurately the beauty of the sites of ancient settlements and castles of Ancient Khorezm that had been buried under the golden sands of the desert after Genghis Khan's destructive invasion.

Savitsky loved to paint different types of deserts with the silhouettes of the medieval castles and sites of the ancient settlements on the horizon, bushes tamarisk and saxaul⁷⁵, and the early spring desert turning into green and blossoming. He often compared coloring of Karakalpakstan with the coloring and nature of Spain, also sandy and dry.

At the beginning of the fifties, when Savitsky came to Karakalpakstan for the first time, he chose for himself the modest, ingenuous and sincere following of nature. He was happy to discover abundance of the sun, submissive beauty of the desert and the same submissive and simple soul of the Karakalpaks that he had made out in the fine coloration of their embroideries.

That time, he admitted that former painting skills of his Moscow period became unsuitable there. And Savitsky as the Artist performed a deed. He had dramatically changed the palette of colors, and in a root has broken the former style. I imagine how difficult it was for him

74 Felt dwelling of nomads.

75 A large bush in a desert.

to reverse himself from a strong classicist lacquer painting into an impressionist from painter Laktionov's style of socialist realism. As a result, Savitsky had thrown out dark paints of the Moscow period from his palette and had burst into impressions of light and color of the Asian desert. And out of all impressionists, Savitsky had valued the most modest and finest painter Alfred Sisley.

Then Savitsky started to paint rural landscapes of Karakalpakstan - roads, trees and fields. They are very carefully and masterfully painted the fine details complying in style and performance. But there are not many of them.

Then, Savitsky painted views of the Nukus lawns to flower beds. And a touching picture among them - children under trees in a kindergarten.

Then Savitsky painted a series of landscapes depicting cane houses, canals and lakes in the mouth of the Amu Darya and Kazakdarya.

Then there is an independently standing series of pictures with the view of the ancient Khiva (Ichan-kala that until now exists as a town-museum). Among these pictures there are views of Khiva from the roof of the house in which he rented a room from a local aksakal⁷⁶.

Speaking about the Karakalpak nature, he said that both in Tashkent and in Samarkand the nature is beautiful. But it is different. Everything in Karakalpakstan is finer and chamber-like. Speaking about Ichan-kala, we recollected the old Bukhara and the old Samarkand. And I told him that yet in 1968 he found the bazaar with the heaps of hay and straw, donkeys, sheep and camels in the very centre of the old Bukhara, near Kalon minaret. Ark and Emir's palace were built of ancient pasha. The city seemed to harden asleep in centuries and the young life boiling up among the ancient monuments only highlighted its antiquity. That time Savitsky bitterly told me that ancient Bukhara had been destroyed and abolished. Now it is the dead scenery of former beauty, poetry of the lively medieval city with the old quarter of the Bukhara Jews living there since the times of the Babylonian capture in the sixth century B.C. and which had moved to the remote outskirts of the Persian Empire under tsarina Esfer.

Saying, that the ancient city had been destroyed, Savitsky meant, that the destruction began with the exile of Bukhara Emir to Afghanistan by the Bolsheviks. He said that being evacuated to Bukhara during the war, artists found Bukhara as a city from the fairy tales from «The Thousand and One Night». The mood of the fairy tale is felt in Robert Falk's picture - the young townswoman against a Suzani that Savitsky painted next to Falk. Savitsky told us how difficult it was to find a woman to pause to the artists in that Muslim Bukhara.

When I once asked Igor Vitalyevich what Falk was like in communication, if he was proud? Savitsky answered me that any Artist perfectly knows his worth and puts himself higher his contemporary colleagues. But Savitsky highly appreciated Falk as an painter. But Falk that time in Bukhara scornfully spoke about Savitsky's gift of painting and even about his lack of talent. But each artist has his own voice and melody. Savitsky has left such melody in painting.

I recalled how in 1980 year, on the eve of the New Year, I was at the studio of the known artist Slava Ahunov. As they considered me to be Savitsky's pupil, they began talking about him. Bahodyr Jalalov thoughtfully said that a small sketch "The Blossoming Desert" by Savitsky is hanging on view on the second floor in the Tashkent Museum of Arts. It depicts a cool bluish shade under the bushes in the foreground, and a piece of sky is seen above the bushes. The painting is fine and very gentle. And Bahodyr said that he so much admired this small Savitsky's sketch and so highly appreciated it that put it above many grandiose academic and ceremonial pictures of the Tashkent Museum of Arts. He called this sketch of the desert ingenious in lyricism and beauty. Both Jalalov's delicate taste and his sincere admiration with Savitsky's

76 An old or highly respected man.

sketch amazed me. After all, artists usually treat works of their colleagues zealously and seldom admire with them.

“Up Yards and Down Houses - Now Here, Tomorrow There”⁷⁷

Perhaps, I will echo that is already known, but I will write, that Savitsky collected works «in household detour» of the artists and/or their successors. He followed this method of collection after the lessons of ethnographer Tatyana Zhdanov in household gathering of items of the national-applied art of the Karakalpaks. Having assessed the importance of this collection for cultural history of the people, the leaders decided to establish the museum of applied arts of Karakalpakstan. Savitsky started gathering Museum’s collection but already of the fine arts items; he was buying works of the artists at his own risk using the funds allocated for purchases of objects of the national applied arts.

The first thing that Savitsky had done – he collected almost all most valuable paintings of Uzbekistan artists of the 20s-30s in his Nukus. First of all these were the works of Alexander Volkov, almost all works of Michael Kurzin, early works of Ural Tansykbaev, Podkovyrov, Nikolaev (Usto-Mumin), early Ufimtsev, Elena Ludvigovna Korovay and Karakhan. Then, having made a start from their Russian roots, he started collecting works of the Russian forgotten, unrecognized or not "pushy" artists of the first half of the twentieth century. Consultations of artist Irina Zhdanko⁷⁸ and her husband painter Kramarenko helped with the gathering of the collection of these pictures by directing him to those or other artists or to their successors from whom Savitsky went further.

There was a peculiar feature In Savitsky’s collection of pictures – he aspired to collect all works of the artist to show him retrospectively, and, most important, starting from the early years of his creativity. He always repeated, that a museum is neither an exhibition nor a warehouse, but a scientific institution where artists, science-critics, historians must study the life and creativity of artists not at the peak of fame, but from the first works and in the subsequent development as a part of the development of the culture of the people.

Igor Vitalyevich was telling us about the artists whose works he collected not only as about artists but also as about common people.

When speaking about his teacher Ulyanov, he did not use the word “was” (with difficulty breathing, his lungs began to fail) - «the Artist... of the great culture... draws excellently”. A real... aristocrat - in the best... sense of this word.... There is integrity... and purposefulness... in him despite the hardships.... During evacuation... to Samarkand..., he suffered an asthma..., was unable to make... a step without nitroglycerine; he took loving... care of his insane wife///, Anna Semyonovna... Nowadays, the part of Ulyanov’s works... was inherited by Kira Kiseleva... from Ulyanov’s Varvara Yakovlevna, his wife’s sister. I myself... studied under Ulyanov and under that ... Falk”.

With delight Igor Vitalyevich spoke about Redko and mentioned that he left for France in 1926, returned in 1935-1936, was excluded from the Artist’s Union in 1946 because some artist accused him of studying "bourgeoisie art» in France.

77 Reminiscence of the folk song

78 Zhdanko sisters are remarkably described by V. Germanov in the article «Zhdanko Sisters Erminia, Irina, Tatjana. Reconstruction of the Myth. Historio-philosophic Triptych”. <http://mytashkent.uz/2015/04/27/valerij-germanov-sestry-zhdanko-erminiya-irina-tatyana-istoriosofskij-triptih-ili-dekonstruktsiya-mifa/>

Once Igor Vitalyevich took me to the meeting with the Ufimtsev's widow; they were touched, kissed each other and shed a few tears. In the astonishment, I looked at the dry clusters of grapes in Ufimtsev's studio, and his widow (Usto-Mumin's sister by the way, he is also artist Nikolaev) told us that Ufimtsev hanged grapes all over the studio and replaced them with the new ones when they dried. She also told us how she was sitting (if accidentally?) on the usual route of Ufimtsev to sketches and thought of who appears first that she would get married to. And this happened.

Despite Savitsky's asceticism in relation to life and art, almost an anecdotal example speaks about the width of his views. During the examination of artist Stavrovsky heritage we were showed the folder with the erotic drawings. These were drawings of the unbridled rural orgies. Savitsky said that it was impossible to show those drawings to anyone but they were made with such a great mastership that it is necessary to purchase them for the Museum. He hid the drawings, but the staff of the museum its female component, surely, studied them, of course, not only with the scientific interest.

Savitsky also spoke about Kurzin whom I should have given half of my live in order to write the book and since the student years had been collecting data about him. Probably when our student-mate Anna after our group's departure for cotton fields said that her father thought it was important for someone to write Kurzin's biography and repeated the words of her father, «Kurzin like other artists painted portraits of Soviet leaders, Voroshilov, and others by request. Acceptance commission included the important people from «competent bodies». One of them, most haughty and "competent" reprimanded for the wrong color of hair. Kurzin sharply responded that everyone should mind his own business, and it will be better not to paint at all instead of painting on orders. That man put this statement into the minutes as follows "Leaders' portraits should not be painted at all!" Then he arranged collective denunciation and forced (threatening by the arrest) the well-known, but deceased now artists (T. and K., that is why I do not give here their full names), to sign it; he said with derision, "therefore I do not result completely their names, and has told with jeer - «Let Kurzin now mind "his own business" in the camp."

In particular, I "took a strong liking" to Kurzin after his and his mother's visit to the younger brother Vitya at one of the confinement in Navoi. We saw Vitya. We spent twenty four hours in a room of appointments; he did not sleep for an hour. Mum suffered, Vitya suffered, I suffered, and we all had to keep ourselves in check not to upset each other. We were returning back by the night bus "Bukhara-Nukus" via the Kyzyl Kum. Mother fell asleep in tears on my shoulder. Oh, these painful visits to Vitya with mother or Arslan! Black columns of prisoners trudging to the black shops, horror that still oppresses me even now.

Kurzin's destiny is tragic because of his honesty, sturdiness, frankness and boldness. In the history of arts there is no other case when the ingenious artist was pulled out from creativity for 19 years by the state.

Savitsky regretted that Kurzin could not hold his tongue. He or Alvina Shpade told why and what for Michael Kurzin was arrested and condemned for the first time. At one of the exhibitions Kurzin drank too much and declared, "This one, I don't know his name, has hanged out his Jewish snivels». Whether for this reason or another, someone informed, that Kurzin was "the imperialistic spy". Indeed, Kurzin was in China in the 20s, but most likely the occasion to arrest Kurzin was provided by his presence in Crimea, in "a counterrevolutionary nest" o the civil war. And when he was sentenced to the settlement in Bukhara after that case with the portrait of one of the "leaders", he was added 10 more years of imprisonment. Including his speech in the bazaar when he heavily drunk after the next scandal at the Artists Union, urged the wondering crowd of Muslims in the bazaar to study the great culture of the West and declared, "I

am not going to struggle for socialism which will not be providing freedoms, even the bourgeois ones”.

When I was in the Tashkent Museum of Arts, I saw several works of Kurzin, but for no reason without labels with their surname. Kurzin is likely to be ignored yet. Has the monograph been written about him? By the way, M. V. Munts's monograph on the art of Uzbekistan has no one reproduction by Kurzin and no word about him. And after all, Kurzin was one of the founders of the Union of Artists of Uzbekistan. However, it is probably that the Soviet censorship did not let mentioning of Kurzin.

If someone starts writing the book about Kurzin's creativity, it can be divided into 3 periods and following them to structure the book. The first period before the penal servitude - works in oil and gouache. Such paintings like “Bay is Agitating”, “A Tea-house”, “The Old and the New” are drawn very boldly as well as the drawing “The Portrait of the Uzbek”. The second period, on penal servitude, - pictures "Emigrants", "Poets", "Bazaar". And the third period after penal servitude - still-lives and portraits. All works are painted very vigorously, a la prima, with the divine sensation of color - the pictures “Flat cakes”, "Sea" and "A Window" which casts the rest, enlightenment and a slight grief. Despite the endured sufferings, Kurzin's late still-lives are cheerful. Very few artists depicted meal, fruits, and vegetables with such desire. And this is clear, after a scanty ration of the zone.

Kurzin's works of the late period (1956-1957) conveys tremendous expression (“The Still-life with a Bream”), and the portraits of the old men and the old women from the Old People's House - love to people that were not spared by the time. (I wish we could find that house for the old people, maybe, its employees remember something about Kurzin or retained some of its works).

Savitsky was buying works of modern artists, but rarely. On the eve of one of the New Years I was in the studio of the artist Slava Ahunov, there was a well-known sculptor Damir Ruzybaev and a painter Bahodyr Jalalov. Bahodyr was painting a sketch on a small cardboard. Slava jingled the banjo which he used to play once at the restaurants in Russia under the jazz records. Jalalov's sketch was silver-blue. It was based on a fine pencil drawing by Ahunov, a dog in a night court yard with puppies at the udder. In a while, Savitsky appeared in the studio. He came to Tashkent on business, dropped at my home and was told where to find me. Savitsky then saw Slava Ahunov's drawings and bought them for the museum. Drawings were very good.

Damir Ruzybaev was in the same studio and entreated Savitsky to pose for him. We all went to Damir's studio decorated with a huge picture of senior Volkov - girls in the national, bright red dresses. During two hours Damir powerfully and expressively modeled Savitsky's head in grey chamotte while Savitsky simply stood and briskly talked to someone. Then Damir cast this head in bronze, it is now in the exposition of the Nukus Museum.

Damir Ruzybaev was the Benkov Art School's classmate of the junior son of Alexander Volkov. Why did I recollect Sasha Volkov? Sasha made the monument to artist Saipov, Savitsky's friend. Saipov's bust holding a palette in his hands, his face is turned eastward to meet the rising sun and the boy made by Ruzybaev on Savitsky's tomb sees off the sun to the West.

The artists were proud of Kdyrbay Saipov as he was the first Karakalpakstan artist and also because the government allocated to him the car to purchase; that times it was a higher recognition than an order.

Unfortunately Saipov died in this car in an accident. The funeral procession stretched along almost the entire Kalinin Street. It was late autumn. The weather was sad and cloudy. Savitsky went in crowd sadly bending the head. Saipov like Volik Volkov was on the first-name basis with Savitsky, as well as sculptors Atabaev and Kuttymuratov and nobody else as far as I

remember. Savitsky's relation to Saipov like to the friend and colleague can be explained by the fact that Igor Vitalyevich could not say a word in Karakalpak, but learnt to say two words, "Kdyrbay bar ma?", Savitsky often asked Saipov's wife over the phone, "Is Kdyrbay at home?"

In the mid-seventies, Savitsky bought the works of modern painters - Vladimir Burmakin, Eugeny Melnikov, Jury Taldykin and some works of senior Zilberman. But then, when the Museum started facing financial difficulties, he regretted that he had bought too many of their works. Yes, these works go beyond the concept of the Nukus Museum, and I do not remember, that they were put on a museum exposition. Nevertheless, and in my opinion too, Savitsky was not mistaken - these artists represent a special stage in the Uzbekistan painting of the sixties years as an analogue of the "severe style" of the Russian painting. Their works are important for understanding the logic of the history of painting in Uzbekistan. These works possess power, brutality and mannerism that the Nukus Museum lacked in its collection. Perhaps, someone else will collect the works of the forgotten artists of Uzbekistan of the 60-80s years and, particularly of the 90s years, and will create something like the Museum of Arts of the second half of the 20th century that will add the Nukus collection of pictures of the artists, but of the first half of the 20th century.

While choosing the pictures, Savitsky paid little attention to the tossing of artists in search of the form because was looking for the revelation and continuation of predecessors' traditions. He constantly inspired me that new generations of artists are torn off from the century-old roots of culture; that is why they often "invent a bicycle" instead of studying art of their predecessors in the museums and further creation of their own, new and significant works. As for the lack of culture, he also often and persistently repeated this to the artists in Nukus and caused their annoyance at times. Nevertheless, they gathered in the 50s and 60s years at a newly open Museum, arranged nature, drew and communicated. Then Savitsky already asserted and not dreamed that his Museum would raise the Karakalpak art and culture high, but, of course, not rapidly as the culture and mastership should be cultivated from generation to generation, and exemplified the Karakalpak masters and skilled female workers of the applied arts.

Savitsky was skeptical about modern painting and considered that nowadays paintings were quite often made in the style of the 20-30s years, but it is insincere, that is why it is false. He said, "The Artist should address to the real life that is immediately surrounding him instead of living in the clouds of «fabricated philosophizing» created from the thin air. He was saying this giving a reverse example of the works of the Karakalpak artists, works of the forgotten Nukus artist Petropavlov – "He has a vital spark, and it allows him creating fine things. He is a very good artist, but he is drinking now, is he painting now?" He also marked the works of Uteghenov, Khudaibergenov, Serekeev and Erimbetov, "There is Karakalpakstan and its soul in their pictures. He looked at the works of the Karakalpak artists from the point of view of expression of Karakalpakstan only, its nature and spirit, and criticized other types of work, "Such things can happen anywhere ... in Africa, in Australia and etc. But this is not Karakalpakstan».

I do not want, but I will recollect that when Savitsky was saying that, a boring type of man with bulging glimmering pink lips and an inevitable portfolio of "the important boss» approached him. I am writing about this just to underline the striking contrast between K. and Savitsky concerned with the attitude of collectors to art, to artists and to the personal glory. This man was drilling the pictures at the wall with his eyes; the pictures were brought by artists for museum procurements. When that man left, Igor Vitalyevich shared with me, "He asked for the works of the amateur?! Karakalpak artists for the exhibition at his personal gallery in Tashkent". Later on I knew it was K. that had not found himself in a literary field and decided to imitate Savitsky and immortalize himself in the personal gallery "H"; he begged trustful artists for pictures promising to pay money for the works, but "was vanishing" and stopped answering artist's supplications about payment or return of their works. Somewhere he is now treated as a "

journalist-writer-artist-Maecenas". This swindler speculator exhibited artists' works without specifying their names on the pictures and in the catalogues as if the pictures were his own, or distributed these pictures among various galleries for self-advertisement of the "patron of art". Where are now the works of those artists and, mainly, where are their names and memory of them whom K. had thrown down to the foot of the pedestal of his "glory"?

In autumn 1983, Savitsky could not already leave the bed, and all were coming to part with him before his departure to Moscow for treatment. His favorite Alexei Kvon also came and brought fish. (For me this looked like an evangelistic symbol – a tribute to the teacher.) Kvon sadly said to me that Savitsky killed his lungs by formalin vapor which he used to boil jewelry items to bring them into the state appropriate for exposition.

Academician Efuni, Savitsky's admirer, invited him to Moscow for treatment. He also collected painting and graphic art. I remember how he came to the Nukus Museum together with his wife. There was no electricity in the storage rooms that is why I showed to them graphic pictures of the Moscow artists in the court-yard; they admired them.

Two days before the departure to Moscow, Savitsky decided to take me with him after convincing me that he would need an assistant in Moscow. Farida Madjitova was to go (she and her sister were the oldest and the most faithful workers of the Museum). Moreover, Savitsky thought it would be more convenient to foster me in the Moscow hospital like one day he did it in the Nukus hospital, as well as pull and carry pictures to Nukus from Moscow. Perhaps he guessed that there was little life left for him as he said that it was my duty to be with him up to the end. And I did not believe in his end and thought that was his way to talk me into travelling with him. Besides that I did not want to tear myself off painting which I arduously rushed to during a short period in the Museum work. We started for Moscow on 8 October 1983. Academician Efuni worked at the Center of Hyperbaric Oxygenation under the Surgery Institute not far from the Novodevichje cemetery. Within that Center, the patient was placed in the compression chamber, and the lacking oxygen was delivered under pressure into the chamber. Savitsky fixed himself up into the only suit that he had bought for this occasion. In the airport we were met by of the doctors from Academician Efuni's Center. We went by "Zhigulenok"⁷⁹. On the way, Savitsky wished to thank the doctor for his attention and admired with his car asking questions about it and saying it was roomy and as such resembled "Volga". We came to the Center, accommodated Savitsky into a one-bed ward on the 3rd floor. Efuni met me warmly that time.

Irina Korovay, a committed Orthodox Christian, was the most frequent visitor of this ward. Almost every other day she brought Igor Vitallyevich the food, various books on arts, albums. Usually she was sitting on the chair to the left of Savitsky; Savitsky was lying in bed looking through reproductions and they were discussing something.

Savitsky was under treatment, I was diligently fulfilling his tasks written down in a notebook or keeping his notes in it. After fulfilling the order, I went to him to report. A couple of times he himself left the hospital when his state was improving.

After my reports, together with Savitsky we discussed different topics, and sometimes I started debates with him running into "beardless" self-actualization. Once in Irina Korovay's flat, Savitsky was admiring and marveling at Modigliani's album. I was under impression of German expressionists at the Pushkin Museum displaying Schmidt, Ratliff, Nolde, Von Yavlensky, Kandinsky, France Mark and said that Modigliani was an excessively mannered artist. Savitsky answered, "You, silly boy, do not understand anything, he is a genius!" He was

79 "Lada"

right in both cases. I also saw in some of the portraits that I had painted an involuntary influence of Modigliani's works upon me.

During that autumn and winter of 1983-1984, I, first, lived at the hotel "Kolos" near VDNH. But accommodation at the hotel was expensive, and on Savitsky's request, the artist Irina Korovay, Favorsky's pupil, invited me to stay at Favorsky's house. I spent the winter at the Golitsins; besides Illarion Golitsin there was his daughter Katya and her young husband Grigory Potanin, the descendant of the great researcher of Asia, Kazak Potanin, a friend of Dostoevsky and Chokan Valihanov.

Irina lived on the third floor in a small penthouse-like room serving the studio to her. Savitsky also used to live in it during his previous visits to Moscow when we visited the artists and searched for the works for the Museum. Then, Savitsky was consulting me while selecting works for the Museum. I thought he was pretending to consult for me not to be so much timid in front of the choragi, but then I understood that he was training me like an experienced hunter is training his beginning partner.

It was like that when we were selecting the works at elderly Shugrin (the favorite follower of great graphic artist and painter M. Sokolov). Shugrin lived in a new Muscovite quarter in a very cramped little one-bedroom flat crowded by the shelves with his pictures and sculptures. (I remember his telephone with the light signal as Shugrin was hard of hearing). Shugrin showed catalogues of his exhibitions in New-York arranged by his followers. He told us about Sokolov, his teacher. I was devotedly listening to him while Savitsky was looking through Shugrin's works.

It was also like that when we were choosing the works at Alisa Poret's. She was already of the venerable age. I remembered the old sofa in her flat and a student of forty for whom Poret was arranging still-lives. Lay-out of objects was unusual as if "naturally displaced" in the elongated space without classical center of composition. (Later on I tried to paint similar still-lives). We chose a few Poret's works for the Museum including her famous works dedicated to Bach.

Both Shugrin and Alisa Poret allowed selecting only a certain number of pictures. Otherwise Savitsky would have carried away everything.

Robert Falk's widow also suggested Savitsky selecting only a certain number of works by Falk. He chose the best works from almost all periods of his creative work starting with the student's works at School and up to the last works via Paris and Samarkand periods. Savitsky had even selected the works of Falk's son Valeriy – night landscapes of Paris streets with stand lights. Probably he did this to see reflexions of father's creativity in his son's works. When Valeriy was in France with his father, he did not want to stay there, returned in 1939 and perished in the war of 41-45 years. If I am not mistaken, both sons of Vladimir Ivanovich Favorsky, Nikita and Dmitry, also perished in that war. The former in Moscow militia in the battle under Moscow in autumn 1941, the latter was an artillery officer and perished in 1944.

Igor Vitalyevich purchased many works of Kira Kiseleva, a student and the legal successor of Ulyanov; Igor Vitalyevich purchased many Ulyanov's works – small portraits of his wife Glagoleva-Ulyanova. The portraits very decently convey the souls of their heroes like in the portrait works of their favorite teacher Serov. Savitsky also purchased lots of rural prerevolutionary landscapes painted by Glagoleva-Ulyanova herself. Fashion of these landscapes reminded of Ulyanov's fashion – thick pasty painting on cardboard, paper or small canvases.

Savitsky made arrangements with Kira on buying a huge Ulyanov's canvas for the Museum – marching of the firemen with the gold tubes in prerevolutionary Russia. This canvas might have become the pearl of the Museum centering display of the entire Ulyanov's painting and graphics. But Kira changed her mind and sold the "firemen" to the Leningrad Russian

Museum. I just think they offered more money than Igor Vitalyevich could do, or Nukus seemed to be a dead “hole” for this picture compared with the Russian Museum. Savitsky got so much frustrated that sent me to Kiseleva’s flat where Ulyanov used to live to collect Savitsky’s pictures and things that symbolized the breach of relations with Kira.

The famous drawing – a young curly God, Pushkin, sitting at the table – was standing on an easel in Ulyanov’s room. Kira led me into a very narrow room through the high and long pencil box-like corridor with a small window at the end. I collected Savitsky’s works, and Kira said, “I ask you to take these frames too, they also belong to Igor” and pointed to several durable pre-revolutionary frames touched by the Ulyanov’s arms, and probably by the arms of Valentin Serov himself. The frames are now with me too. I am keeping them like they keep in the museums the original frock-coat of Peter the Great, a walking stick or ring of Pushkin.

Savitsky stayed in the hospital, and I was to return to Nukus to take the bunches of Russian icons there. They seemed to be the last lifetime procurement of Savitsky. Icons were passed over to the Museum on the orders of Margarita Truskova, Head of the Museum Department at the Ministry of Culture of the USSR or RSFR. I think she was one of most active patrons of Savitsky and his friends. Her assistance in the strengthening of the Nukus Museum was priceless.

I rushed to her and to the Restoration School named after 1905 year with the papers needed for passing these icons to Nukus. At 1905-year School, I received from Vladimir Ilyich (I do not remember his surname) a large number of the restored icons of the 18-19th centuries, wrapped them into the oilcloth bought at the hardware store in Taganka, transported them first to Favorsky’s house, and from there took them by a taxi-truck to Kazansky Railway Station. With the help of the porter, a Tatar by his accent, I squeezed all these treasures into one compartment. I bought all four tickets. Before that, I was told at the booking-office that there were no tickets. Then, Savitsky wrote to Kazansky Station Master a note in such a manner of the times of the civil war that the Station Master was taken aback and helped us.

That time the boom of interest of the private icon rose in Russia; M. Truskova was likely to transfer icons to Savitsky believing that he would be able to secure them in the Museum as sacred objects of the Russian religious art. I left for Nukus with them and other pictures. After my arrival in Nukus, Savitsky called up from Moscow and scolded us because we did not supposedly tell him about the refusal of the Karakalpakstan Minister of Culture to pay for the icons. He scolded me and Valya Sycheva, “Edik told me nothing about payment. The Old Man did his best to extricate himself when he did not want to return the purchase, but at the same time could not pay it off.

Beloved Archaeology and Hateful Directorship

When I was just born in 1953, Savitsky was already working as an artist of the Khorezm archaeological and ethnographic expedition of S.P. Tolstoy. Militsa Izmailovna Zemskaya spoke about the expedition and Savitsky, and at the same time mentioned his name in her book “Time in the Sands”. It seemed to me that images of Savitsky and members of the expedition have been distorted for the sake of aesthetic artistry but in the prejudice of historicity and accuracy. During those first years of expedition, she was a young girl and this, perhaps, can justify this aspiration for aestheticism.

Prehistory of that Khorezmian expedition is interesting. As my Father (Emberghen-aga) said, probably according to the words of his friend D. Nasyrov or of his daughter (S.P. Tolstov’s daughter): in the end of the war, the English archaeologists addressed to S.P. Tolstov, through him to Stalin, to be exact, with the request to allow excavations on the territory of Khorezm where Tolstov started during his first Khorezmian expedition yet before the war. Probably,

inspiration of the English archaeologists was encouraged by the fact that the British Museum keeps the archaeological finding “Gold of the Amu-darya, but not Khorezmian. It seems to me that the English archaeologists wanted to find the similar gold of the Amu-darya but in Khorezm. They were refused. Then they highlighted that they are ready to finance the expedition and hinted that the country had no money for luxury and superfluity like archaeological expeditions. Indeed, there was famine and breakdown of the postwar years. Aiming at damaging interests of the English, Stalin ordered to allocate huge money for the expedition that even had, as Father said, its own planes and the first in the world air-photography for archaeological explorations. This air-photography discovered the entire country with the multiplicity of the destroyed fortresses and the large irrigational network between them.

Artist Savitsky and Tolstov’s brother, also an artist, came together with the expedition. That time Savitsky was thirty five years old. He was in the prime of life and talent. Ancient Khorezm was opening in front of him like awakening from the century-old sleep by the efforts taken by great Tolstov and the cohort of his faithful followers – Yuri Rappoport, Lapirov-Skoblo, Vinogradova, Elena Nerazik, ethnographers Tatyana Zhdanko, daughter of S. Tolstov himself and other “nestlings from Tolstov’s nest” as Savitsky called them.

The orders in the post-war expedition were quite “military” including punishments for lateness. There was one exception from all the rules – Tolstov set up the “prohibition law” in the expedition. Violation of this law led to the “capital” punishment – the guilty party was forever excluded from the composition of the expedition. There were very many volunteers to work in the expedition among the metropolitan and St. Petersburg lovers of traveling even among those who were not related to archaeology.

In the expedition, Savitsky made sketching of the archaeological excavations by China ink and pencil. Having no skills of sketching archaeological findings, he was learning the skill to convey volumetric details of the archaeological monuments in drawing, conveying constructively their forms. And he came to this mastership. Proceedings of the Khorezm Expedition contain splendid drawings made by Savitsky’s pen. The light pen exactly depicts the volumetric forms of excavations and findings.



One day on the excavations, Savitsky requested me to draw in pencil a part of the discovered room with a clay sufa⁸⁰ made of the mudbricks. I started drawing it like the academic

80 A bench

setting with shading. Savitsky was not satisfied with the drawing. He said that the task of the archaeological drawing differs from the photograph that thoughtlessly fixes an object; but in the drawing one should convey the scientifically thought out construction of the findings. Later on, when I was making drawings of interiors and exteriors of the Zoroastrian shrine not far from Ayazkala following his instructions, Elena Nerazik accepted the drawings and even paid me a lot of money in those days - about one hundred roubles!

First time in 1976, Savitsky took me to the excavations of the feudal castle on the plain in front of the triple settlement of Ayazkala. These excavations were carried out not by the Khorezm expedition but by the expedition of our museum that seemed to enter into competition with the late parties of the Khorezm expedition.

That time I had to leave for the institute but stayed because took a decision to quit from the institute. There were 6 of us: Savitsky (quarrelsome as usual), Faim (the driver, somewhat resembling Goghén) and the artist Alvina Shpade. Before noon, I threw much ground. I got tired and started talking with Alvina about art, about Van Gogh, Kurzin, Volkov, about her life, studies and so on. Recalling Faim's resemblance to Goghén, we started talking about Goghén. She spoke about Goghén as a "rascal", a "debaucher" and a "swindler". But not only this was to be said about the genius. He left the high and recognized art for which he had paid the awful price, daughter's life. But I liked Alvina more and more, she was very kind and unprotected behind her external roughness. Speaking about Savitsky, she called him "my Lord". At once the "Lord" appeared and the firestorm burst out for idleness; but he excused next day at breakfast. He could have not excused as I also considered him to be like the God.

Usually Savitsky started excavations before dawn around 5 o'clock in the morning when a new era is just dawning. He was the first to wake up and quietly go to the excavations. When I got up a little later, he was already digging the hard ground with a knife standing on his knees in the dust and like a mole was pulling it off behind his back. I shoveled the ground into a very uncomfortable shaky-and-unsteady iron truck, took it aside and threw it out down on the ground. We worked like that in scorching heat and dust throughout a day with a short break for lunch. On one of such days, all in dust and with dirt runs on the face, in a black sweated kerchief on the head, he suddenly said, "It would be nice to get a glass of cold champagne now! Cold, you see?" and burst into laughter when saw my dumbstruck face dreaming at least about some cold water.

I remember workers' silly joke that seriously saddened Savitsky. These workers were not the Russian fans of the Khorezmian expedition but the locals, almost "lumpen", "bomjes"⁸¹ that could be hired for Savitsky's poor salary. One of them modeled phallus, dried it, burnt in fire and placed under the ground on the site where Igor Vitalyevich was digging; surprised and proud he then was going around and showing this phallus to all. By the laughter of these lamebrains he understood what the matter was about and got silent for a long time. I tried to reclaim a "joke" by the explanations calling for his Russian intelligence saying that those workers seldom saw something lofty allowing to laugh in happiness, that is why they find happiness in something malign. I do not know if it helped or not but bitterness in work retreated.

My second time at the excavations seems to be in 1979, when we two stayed near ancient Jampyk fortress after the departure of all workers of the Museum. Yuri Manylov, head of the archaeological department of the Museum, came by the truck quite unexpectedly by the evening and told Savitsky that our minibus with the Museum's workers on its way back to Nukus overturned after bumping with some other car on the highway. Manylov calmed down Savitsky saying nobody had suffered. On the same day we returned to the Museum.

81 People without definite employment and residenceship, a hobo.

It was just in time. At night he felt severe pain in the belly. After medical examination the ileac passion was diagnosed. He was urgently taken into the hospital. The decision was taken on the removal of the direct intestine. He had surgery in Nukus. He said in the hospital, “Edik, can you imagine what could happen if we had stayed at the excavations, and if we had left with those who overturned?!” I echoed, “Both would have been awful!”

Doctors told me that after such a surgery, people usually did live for 5 years, not more. I did not believe that his years were counted as was assured of the power of his Spirit for recovery. He himself took the situation tragically but not because of the threat to his life but because he had not yet completed his affairs and plans. There were no professional art historians at the Museum, but there were enormous debts for the purchased pictures. Nevertheless, some kind of calmness of the man who had done a great deed and whose name will not die shone up in him. He clearly understood his grandeur by displaying his political mind and wittiness from time to time. It was worth seeing him heading the table of the museum’s employees when he with Voltaire’s face like a Patriarch was sharing his experience and knowledge with the Museum’s employees! But with the years he became forgetful, quarrelsome and grumbling.

In that year of 1979, Elena Evdokimovna Nerazik headed one of the late parties of the Khorezmian expedition working not far from our expedition. We could hear how she was reprimanding nice and relaxed girls from the Baltics that worked in her expedition. Reprimands were caused by their appearance at the table in bikinis after bathing in the canal.

Nerazik was digging the same house that Savitsky discovered or partially discovered in 1970 or 1971. In 79 continuing digging of this house we reached the deep layer of ashes and coals. At once, Savitsky brought archaeologist M. S. Lapirov-Skoblo for consultations. He showed this place to Nerazik, and she got interested in the finding. Later on she was carrying out huge excavations in this place and around it for several years. Her workers were presented mainly by the Moscovites and, partially, by Leningraders. From year-to-year these were the same fans of the Khorezmian expedition and its legends. Napalkov, the veteran of the Khorezmian expedition was among them. When I studied at the All-Union Restoration Center near the Taganka Theatre, I called up to Napalkov and we marked our meeting and reminiscences at the photo atelier in the Gogol Boulevard near ”mujik in a jacket”⁸² – Gogol’s monument. Napalkov worked as a photographer at the atelier. I can imagine how many photographs of those expeditions and their history he had! But only if he had not rested from his profession in the expeditions.

When Nerazik and archaeologists went in-depth of that site of fire, they discovered a large feudal manor. Topic of Nerazik’s scientific research was the medieval feudal castles in the ancient Khorezm territory. Her findings were interesting. I wish we had enough forces with Savitsky for massive excavations that year. In year eighty, the next Volume of the Khorezmian Expedition fully devoted to the castles including that feudal manor, was released. Nerazik passed the volume of this book over to the academician Sabir Kamalov via me and said that I disappointed Savitsky and did not continue his matter as the Director because I could not get on with people and, moreover, manage them. But Savitsky himself told me about that not once. And Irina Korovay blamed me that Savitsky saw me as a continuator of his lifework – “And you have disappointed him”. But I had my own hopes and plans.

Archeologists forbearingly considered that Savitsky as an archaeologist was not a professional as he did not recognize Masson’s and Pugachenkova’s schools. Despite this forbearance Savitsky did not hesitate to consult and asked if he was digging correctly. He dreamed to find the ancient Khorezmian treasures like Schliemann in Troy but he did not dig pits

82 Phrase of the comical character from the comedy “Gentlemen of the Fortune”.

like Schliemann, he dug on the surface, on the plane. As it was difficult to distinguish between a clay wall and waste in a beaten cob pit.

Maybe being jealous about Savitsky and archaeology, Kvon considered that there was no scientific value in Savitsky's excavations. But excavations were of the essential necessity for Savitsky; particularly during the last years of his life they seemed to return into youth. He was depressed by directorship. He already could not continue collecting; he was not competitive compared with rich museums and collectors that suddenly got smitten with interest for the Russian avant-garde art that Savitsky was collecting for his Museum. During the excavations, he could distract from the drudgery work of an official, from all possible sittings and meetings of the directors and officials. And touching the ancient Khorezmian land, having worked for two days, with a tired body but rested soul, he was returning to Nukus and again pulled his directorial strap till the early morning of the next Saturday. He suffered from the accounts, bookkeeping, and requests to the officials for the allocations of money to be paid for the pictures already acquired by him. But at the beginning of the 80s, they stopped money allocations for him both licitly and illicitly as before. Maybe because the "nomenclature"⁸³ and "partocrats" feeling instability of their position during "perestroika" preferred to stuff money-boxes with gold and not to deal with sponsorship.

Igor Vitalyevich was pressed upon by the growing debts to the owners of the unpaid but acquired pictures; "intestine" intrigues of the growing staff of the Museum; shows of the Museum collection to any 'VIPs' that annoyed him with their instructions. He said, "They judge all by the "party line" and ordered to remove these or those pictures from the expositions. Even within the Ministry of Culture! there are only 2-3 people that understand what painting is like". And he had to obey and hang out what they "had recommended".

During the last months of his life, he was sadly repeating, "What a remote province yet!" when he was passing by the cows and bleating goats on the garbage sites, by the asphalt covered by the broken bottles, by the children playing at the walls of the rusty garages and grey concrete "khrushchevkas". And I was echoing to remind that Venice and Paris were prospering and was rhetorically asking him, "What fate has brought you here to this horrible desert in the country on the edge of the abyss?"

By 1983, atmosphere in the Museum became unbearable. Savitsky was always annoyed; he was so much fed up with the directorship that he was getting more and more furious in his attitude to the employees. He was choking both with the lung disease and unbearable load of bulk of work at the Museum. If at the beginning, he was freely predominating in his business, now this business turned him into its slave. He often said he was dead-beat of directorship, that he had never wished to become it and complained, "What for did I get in touch with the Museum; how happy could I be to quit it!" But like an obsessed worked day and night to continue once started favorite business. This happens with the people led in life by the feeling of obligation.

When he was in the Moscow clinic and as usual complained about the burden of the Museum's directorship, I was stupid to echo him saying that Cézanne called museums the cemeteries of arts. Savitsky boiled over and hinted, "Museums are first of all needed by the artists to go to the museum and study pictures. But paint their own!" Undoubtedly, Cézanne's scanting words were excellently known to him, as well as the fact that they were said by Cézanne in hastiness, in the context of impressionists' attitude to the museums of France overcrowded with dead pictures of "poussins".

83 The list of the CPSU members among the acting and reserved heads of enterprises and organizations.

It was difficult for me to believe that Igor Vitalyevich, a meek and desperate toiler that went through “fire” (fire in the flat and burnt pictures), “water” (water leakage from roofs and central heating radiators in the museum), was involved with the “brass tubes” rituals – immoderate praise of the CPSU wisdom and its role in the establishment of the museum. (But it should be recognized that local party leaders provided sponsorship beyond the party line and thus, putting our positions at risk).



After Savitsky’s death, the famous archaeologist Gudkova that used to be Savitsky’s friend who lived and worked in Nukus for a long time writing books about excavations of the Nazlumkhan-sulu monument, wrote a letter offering to pass all her scientific library on archaeology to the Museum’s library. Oktyabr, Museum’s historian-archeologist, went to her place and brought a tremendous number of books including the first monograph “Ancient Khorezm” by Tolstov. A good gift by Gudkova to the Museum in memory of Savitsky!

Speaking about Gudkova, I recollected how in summer of 1980 or 1981, Savitsky told me to take the brush, colors, dusters and we started to the cemetery. In the center of the Russian cemetery, among the forgotten graves, he found the burial site of Gudkova’s mother. We removed the dried grass from the grave. Then Savitsky climbed behind the railings and painted it inside, and I did it outside. In general he could have sent me to do this wok but he did it himself; that speaks much about his attitude to Gudkova. That day Savitsky under the “cemeterial” spirits said what would happen to the Museum after his death waiting for the assurances that I would continue his work, and started talking about the site of his future burial. I said nothing about the museum but rather seriously answered him, “I will be deeply honoring your memory, I shall be visiting you, and I shall be planting flowers above you”. He understood me and bitingly joked, “Of course, you will be... watering the flowers... from your “hose”...”

I was happy when we went to the excavations with him; he again was becoming himself but not the “director”. During the last years, Savitsky preferred only fortress Jampyk. “Yes, it was a fairy tale.” he was saying when he was going around the fortress. Whether he imagined as tale those times when life was boiling in the fortress, or he recollected the time of the beginning of his work in the expedition.

Walls of the medieval castles were rising high among the wavy perspective of the desert dunes. Immense numbers of the ceramics and terracotta statues depicting people and animals, even coins were lying on the takyr.⁸⁴ Once upon a time, life was boiling here, people with their cares, intentions, laughter and tears lived and suffered here.

Scores of ossuaries with their remains Savitsky used to unearth and pile one on another on the shelves in the administration office and vaults of the Museum. And in reality, these

84 Smooth surface covered with clay after the rain and cracked after drying like shelling on the pictures.

ossuaries were simply the clay coffins keeping the bones and skulls of the diseased inhabitants of ancient Khorezm, bones picked by beasts and birds on dakhmas⁸⁵. (Decaying flesh of the dead man should not touch Zoroastrian sacred objects – fire, water and land).

In connection with this, I recollected Savitsky's funny habit. He had never washed hands after excavations before cooking or eating the ready-made food that we cooked in Nukus in early morning or at night and brought in two not very big iron thermal flasks in order to save the time valuable for excavations on Saturdays and Sundays. Once I failed and asked Savitsky why he did not wash his hands before meals? Probably joking, he said that it would have been disrespectful to the holy land of the ancient settlement sites.

We went to sleep on the camp-cots soon after dinner at the sunset near the black bulks of the upper northern walls of the fortress where the wind was whistling and howling at nights. We were lying and talking under the endless eternity of the star skies where the thick Milky Way was hanging as if in the dust of the excavations. The owl rustling its large wings hovered between the Milky Way and the fortress. Grandeur of this panorama was disturbed only by a mongrel that got attached to us and was keeping off the owl by its barking. And, of course, mosquitoes interfered with the perception of the grandeur.

One event in the Khorezmian expedition evidenced Savitsky's ardent yearning for the places and times of his youth; this event overwhelmed me. At the beginning of September 1984, when I was on sketches near Jampyk fortress, I unexpectedly saw how Savitsky was dragging himself towards the fortress, almost crawled along as if in dervish's rags and tatters – wet of sweat kerchief on the dusty head, legs were wrapped with dusty rags tied around with the rope strands. He, hardly alive of his disease, went several kilometers along the scorching desert from the highway where he was left by the passing car. He came up to me and reproached with the black caked lips, "You are still painting sketches and you do not bother about me, don't you?" He did not even look at my pictures and did not want to listen to what I tried to say that I did not know he was going to Jampyk.

He knew he was fatally ill but came to say good-bye to Jampyk like to himself. Savitsky was tiredly sitting at the foots of the fortress and like for the last time was enjoying the river flow into which the wind was dropping small clouds of poplar wool, was peering at the remote mountains and at the modest modern graves in a small Muslim cemetery at the foots of the ancient fortress.

And I was experiencing the indescribable feeling in the harshness of this desert near the gigantic walls of the fortresses sliding down under the pressure of time beyond the sands of the dunes. Once I saw myself there like on the unknown planet surrounded by the ruins of the pink fortresses and unearthly green-and-grey and ashy mountains. Then I bathed in the river, climbed up the wall of the fortress, threw off my clothes and felt by the entire body only these eternal fortresses and mountains rounded by the Amu-Darya River like by the river of time existing in the world; and I am above them, a naked little man. How to call this silent feeling of unity with the Eternity and Universe?

Savitsky's Attitude to Life and Death

Despite the exility, Savitsky was not a weak and sentimental person. After severe school of life, he got an iron character and a very rational, prudent mind that helped him to become what he had become. Despite the pressure of illnesses and tiredness, he hurried to manage to do as much as possible and knew that he should not stop. And he had never allowed himself to lie during the day if it had not been after the surgery. He taught himself to overcome the hardships,

85 Cylindrical elevations constructed afar from the dwellings.

illnesses and other “little nothings of life”. And not once he was saying while heading me off from the wrong way, “All begins with overcoming a small stuff. To be able to perform your main lifework, it is necessary to highlight and discard anything that you consider unimportant for this work. And it is very important to subordinate it to your lifework.”

In 1979, he had surgery on the removal of the direct intestine and took the hose from the direct intestine into a special small sack fixed on the belly. Doctors prescribed dieting to Savitsky. Instead of bread – dry bread, instead of meat – special ground meat sent to him from Moscow in small foil sacks. Probably, they were sent by his wife, a scientist biochemist, or academician Efuni and his wife, writer Kalinina.

After this surgery, he was brought from the Governmental to the Republican hospital and at had repeated surgery on intestine adhesion. In the evening, my mother made a nice broth for Igor Vitalyevich and was looking forward to my “sensitiveness”, and I studiously frowned at her compliments. Savitsky drank the broth. I read for him a little of Zweig (“Balzac”) and Zoshchenko (“The Blue Book”) and my Grand Old Man went asleep. Before sleeping, he spoke about the difficulty of our time that all are twitchy, exhausted; artists are poor and sick. It was good for him to sleep. Igor is a good name; I even wanted to take it as my nick.

His organism was heavily intoxicated after the surgery, and severe pains were torturing him despite the painkillers injected by the medical nurses; it was not morphine but something like Amidopyrin – a very weak pain killing medication. Savitsky resented but doctors reasoned that he might “get used” to morphine. But staff’s medical attendance was perfect and sanitary orders were strict. Savitsky was satisfied with them and even reprimanded me for not putting on the gown, or putting it on in the improper way when entering the ward.

I was sitting in the ward. Situation was catastrophically heavy, but there was a hope that my Grand Old Man would scramble; I was hoping very much. He did not sleep for the third night. I got up as usual at 6 o’clock in the morning, helped him with the toilet. During treatment procedures I went home and slept until 10 o’clock in the morning. I had not slept for several nights but felt well – a nice idea to store the strongest coffee and wine for night helped me. I took to them while Savitsky slept.

I returned by the evening. He was sleeping. I tried to be quieter than a mouse. I wanted to press cockroaches under his bed and touched the basin; surprisingly it did not clatter as I managed to catch it with the leg and hand. We bought the washing basin for the Grand Old Man together with Vyacheslav Alexeevich (deputy director of the museum) by rushing to the department store on the “Ural” motorbike.

The Grand Old Man woke up, had his dinner, listened to the “Clavecin Concert” by Bach and went asleep again. We borrowed the player and records from Arslan; when Savitsky got dull in the ward and said he would rather listened to music or news. We, Kvon and I, stealthily brought in the player through the window as the admission nurse on duty did not allow bringing the player. We put the player on the chair. Accidentally or not but there was a very rare record with the romances and Gipsy songs recorded by great Varya Panina with her powerful almost Negro voice. These songs turned out to be the songs of Igor’s childhood and youth. Because of my youth’s self-confidence I asserted that Varya Panina was a Russian singer. “No”, said Savitsky, “she is a Gipsy”. Savitsky considered that almost all Great Russian folk singers were Gypsies. I am saving this record. One day I will give the things touched by Savitsky’s hand to his Museum if there is his corner already.

When in the eightieth Savitsky again was in the hospital but already in Moscow now, he, perhaps recollected about the records and talking to one of the nurses found out that she lived not far from the shop “Melody” in the Kalinin Avenue. He asked her to buy records for him. And she was buying for him records with the songs of Alexander Dolsky, Okudjava, even “Bonny M”

and rock-group “Uriah Heep”. He presented me with them on his arrival from Moscow and told to share them with Arslan. I am also saving these records for his corner in the Museum.

Savitsky lay in a special care ward, narrow but high and light. His bed was in the center of the ward. Kvon or I were spending nights on another bad at the wall. He was lying facing the window and at night could see in the mirror what was happening behind his back. This reflection in the window helped me to see Savitsky’s attitude to death.

We were sitting at night and talking about something. Suddenly a doctor ran into the ward and cried that he needed just that ward for emergency surgery, as the Surgery ward had been occupied. They brought in the wheel stretchers with a large Russian mujik, a worker about 50 years old. He was groaning from pain, breathed heavily, hoarsely. As we got to know later, he came home from work and addressed his request for money for vodka to his wife. Naturally, she raised a hue, cried and did not give him the money. “Ah, hoots!” he rushed into the kitchen, poured vinegar essence into the glass and drank it down. When they brought him in, I saw that his lips, mouth and even part of the chest turned black. I did not know why there was no nurse. The doctor brought the instruments on the wheeler-table and began tracheotomy. I started helping him by offering these or those instruments and recollecting my skills of naval doctor’s assistant. I was handing over the instruments and thinking how was Savitsky being on the edge of life and death.

Mujik’s hands were tired to the bed in which he tossed in fits as if he saw the advancing death and tried to escape. In five minutes, while the doctor was cutting his trachea and inserting a tube into it, he suddenly took a deep breath, pressed his lips, died away, stopped breathing and his grey-bluish eyes faded. I started closed-chest cardiac massage. The doctor, a young guy, Karakalpak, was standing at the head of the patient. I raised my eyes and inquiringly looked at the doctor. In silence he pointed with hand and eyes into the skies, tied mujik’s toes to the back of the bed and closed his eyes. He was lying in spew on the creasy, bloodstained bad, silent and pale. Suddenly his face covered with scrub. Dead silence fell after the clatter of steel instruments and doctor’s and my voices. At the same moment a vociferous cry of the wife and daughters of the martyr came from the corridor. Due sudden silence they guessed that their father and husband left them. The wheeler was placed into the corner of the ward and covered mujik’s face with the sheet, and yelling women drove to the body. When we started taking them away from the ward expecting them to resent, they suddenly meekly went into the corridor and soon left the hospital.

Excited, I came up to Savitsky’s bed to know how he was after all that had happened. He appeared to be watching our fussing without excitement and with great interest as reflected in the dark night window. And he told me delightedly, “I have never in my life heard such a beautiful cry of the common Russian women. It was a divine accord of the voices addressed to the skies”.

He spoke about surgeries on himself simply as if surprising to his own indifference. “People are usually scared by surgeries. I am not scared whatever they might do with me. It is all the same to me what will happen to my body.”

I did not ask him if it mattered for him what would happen to his Spirit as I came to know about his attitude to the Spirit when we stopped for night at the ruins of the fortress. (Our driver was afraid of the evil spirits of the ruins and stayed to sleep in the car). That time I was fascinated with Buddhism and thought that in Buddhism the Spirit remains in reincarnations, though later on I understood that Buddha rejected the Spirit.

I asked, “Igor Vitalyevich. Do we die and that is that, does our Spirit die?”

He answered, “Edik, everything seems to end with death. After death, nothing is left from and for the man that lived; it is the end of anything.”

I, “And what about religious doctrine about the Spirit?”

He, “I do not know these doctrines, but I am sure that religion is a part of culture, and we should even without believing adhere to its traditions to keep alive the culture that unites us both believers and non-believers.”

Very rarely he talked on the philosophic and religious topics, to be exact, he did not talk on them at all, but when he opened to me, I saw his Spirit that lives now in his Museum, in his painting, and in those who recollect and remember the Grand Old Man.

"Now Thou Dost Dismiss Thy Servant, o Lord"

In August 1984, Irina Korovay sends a telegram to Nukus to Museum's address with the urgent request of isyryk⁸⁶. She knew that in Karakalpakstan isyryk was used to ward off evil spirits, and this telegram was our agreed upon sign that Savitsky was at death's door. And I did not have money either for the trip to Moscow or even to go to Tashkent to see my children that I have not seen already for a year. Savitsky was aware of my poor living and suggested, “Won't Luda take one more work at the Pioneer Palace?” I answered that my wife had a weak sight and had to avoid tension, thus she could not work at the kinder-garden and at one more work.

Should I go to the Ministry of Culture and ask for the travel money? I did not even think about this after my refusal to go weeding the cotton after the order from the Ministry. Arslan offered me the money. But I was slow, I was horrified, I could not and simply did not want to watch Savitsky dying.

The Minister of Culture called for me, Jolybay Izentaev, Marat Khudaibergenov and told us to receive at the bookkeeper's, if I am not mistaken, two thousand roubles to pay for Savitsky's transportation to Tashkent. In Moscow, we settled at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Bolshaya Polyanka Street in Moscow. The Mission officer rendered great assistance to us. I was in such a state that I did not remember his name but remember how he helped us to order a zinc coffin at the funeral home in Taganka Street, and helped us with the documents to transport Igor Vitalyevich to Nukus.

There was Savitsky in the oxygenation center already. When we came to Efuni, he gave me a cool welcome, perhaps, because Savitsky did not manage to wait until I came. Ira Korovay also blamed me, “I have hinted you, and couldn't you understand that Savitsky was at the death door, he wanted to see you, to tell you something that was important for him”.

We received Savitsky's body at the mortuary in a cold rainy morning. The coffin was very light. We took it to Nikola Cathedral in Khamovniki in a yellow bus. We carried in the coffin and placed it next to two more deceased. Irina Korovay said that Savitsky allegedly asked to read the Orthodox burial service. (Most likely, it was her decision, a deeply religious Orthodox Christians).

The priest put head fillets with praying on the heads of the deceased. Savitsky lay in the same grey suit in which he came to Moscow. His face expressed deep and inviolable peace. Huge forehead, sunken eyes, crossed hands with venous nodular and big worker's hands rose above the coffin. In youth these hands worked at the plant, then turned mountains of ground at the excavations. His lips were protruded ahead and stuck with something. I understood that something was put into his mouth “for appearance” as one tooth was missing. There was a candle in his hands. Reading was held by a stout elderly priest. I heard the old women whispering that he served the colonel in KGB but left to the church to repent of their sins in God's service.

86 Capers, peganum or steppe rue.

Nukus artists left the church and asked me if they, Muslims, could attend the Christian ritual of reading. I do not remember what I said but we entered the church. The chorus was very beautifully singing, "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, in peace».

The civil burial service took place in New Arbat at the Artist's House. A big crowd gathered and Marinika Babanazarova delivered a speech. There were many people both in the church and at the funeral including Savitsky's fellows from the Khorezm expedition. Elena Nerazik and Grigory Potanin with his wife, Katenka, stood next to me. Nerazik meaningfully asked if he was from those Potanin-kazaks. "From those!" - proudly answered her Grigory, a strong, dark-complexioned young Kazak with the moustaches. That time he worked as an artist at the cartoon shop at Mosfilm, lived on the second floor in Favorsky's house. On the same floor, there was also the flat of Dmitry Zhilinsky, artist Simonovich-Efimova's nephew that in her turn was the niece of Valentin Alexandrovich Serov.

At the funeral, I saw the graphic artist Rudolf Khachatryan. In Nukus, I had a copy of the album with his works published in Finland on the beautiful glossy paper. Having no force to watch the ritual, rather Savitsky's corpse, I dared to come up to Khachatryan, greeted him, introduced myself and told him I liked his drawings very much. He objected, "I do not consider them to be drawings". Later, looking through that album I understood that Khachatryan found himself in big portrait works made in pencil on the levkas of drawing sketch-boards. Just like on the ancient Russian icons that were painted on the boards. By durability and great labor consumption, Khachatryan quite fairly refused to consider them drawings though in reproductions they looked like ordinary drawings. Yes, they do not comply with the drawing theory of Favorsky based on the theory of sculptor Adolf Hildebrandt about the so called screwdriving of the form into the space. From this point of view, Khachatryan's drawings looked amorphous and differed in their style from meek or monumental, mighty or ingenuous works of Favorsky, and exquisite female images of Nikolai Ulyanov from his series of the imaginary portraits. But Khachatryan's drawings had their recognizable and unrepeated voice. Moreover Khachatryan conquered Moscow with his art, and this is not given to all. In my taste, he is a somewhat elegant artist, but he is worth of the place in the history of arts.

Oleg Potanin stood aside and asked me if I had known Khachatryan before, and when I said I saw him for the first time, he got rather much surprised at my freedom of communication with him. I believe that Rudolf Khachatryan was pleased inside his soul that young artists from the outskirts of the country were aware of his oeuvre.

After parting with Savitsky at the Artist's House, we Nukus artists took Savitsky to the airport ... and delivered to the warehouse. My artist-colleagues, the most talented followers of Savitsky returned to Mission's hotel. And I went to Favorsky's house, to the flat of the only Favorsky's daughter, Mashenka, for the memorial. There was Pavel Kuznetsov's picture in the dining-room; under this picture, Shahovskoy (Mashenka's son, young Golitsin's couple and others were remembering Savitsky. Masha and Irina Korovay made a very delicious sauce from butter and garlic that we ate after the bitter memorial glass of vodka.

At dawn, we met our countrymen at the airport, brought Igor Vitalyevich on board to the luggage department, and landed in Nukus also at the sunrise. We were already waited for by the artists. The first to run up to me was Uncle Volodya Atabaev, a huge giant in teas and asked me as a helpless baby, "Edik, What shall we be doing without him?»

We brought Savitsky into Museum. All night long we were bustling about preparing the memorials, even Maria, the old Kvon's mother, came to help. I was exhausted and Arslan took me home to sleep before Igor Vitalyevich lifting.

In daytime under the bright lights more people came, even more than to the airport. Great artist Nikolai Pak was among them; he flew for the funeral from Tashkent. He was in the

Museum's yard; he was rebuking Kvon in the yard for stopping working and held Igor Vitalyevich as an example of industry, for some reason, comparing him with Lenin that "sometimes rested, but Savitsky had never done this».

In Moscow, during Savitsky's reading, the priest showed to me a paper cone with dry soil that he put into the coffin under the pillow, and said, "If you open the coffin after reading, use these ashes to make the cross on his chest to bless anew." All happened as he had said. At the cemetery all asked to open the coffin to part with Savitsky, although the coffin had a small window to see the face. They brought an axe, a chisel, opened the coffin and saw that his head was lying on the cheek. Atabaev adjusted the head. I started making the cross of the ashes that I had taken from under the pillow over his suit, but the Minister of culture moved me away, probably, to avoid the religious ritual during the "event". (The authorities of the then publicly continued to "profess" atheism, but were ready as well to publicly embrace Islam). When we began to cover the coffin with soil, Arslan noticed that I was tossing about; I could hardly stand on my feet; he took me away; we drank much and I fell asleep.

Igor Vitalyevich Savitsky was buried in 1984, in a small and meek Orthodox cemetery. Part of the cemetery in the East looking at the sunrise was yet empty. Together with Larisa Shtogrina we put up the sign with the name and date of birth and death of Savitsky, improved and covered with fresh soil the hill over him. Externally I did not show my feelings, but my soul was mourning as I understood that the further goes the time, the more often we shall be recollecting him with the unveiled pain. And after 10 years the cemetery was already filled with crosses and grave stones of the Russian people brought to Asia from Russia by the wind of history.

The memory brought back the time when I was companying to the cemetery Natasha Glazkova, Director of the Tashkent House-Museum named after Tansykbayev. Early in the morning, we bought flowers and went to the cemetery. The taxi-driver, a Muslim, did not know where the Christian cemetery was, and I named the street on the way where the hospital, prison and cemetery are located. It seemed to me that Natasha hysterically laughed, "All is close to the man – prison, hospital and cemetery!"

But the memory again clings at the names. Tansykbayev died in 1974 in Nukus when he came to the Museum to take his early works for his jubilee exhibition. Savitsky then tried to avoid the meeting and delayed with the delivery of early pictures to Tansykbayev fearing that he would not return them. Whether the artists were too hospitable, driving the car at the wheel of "Volga" was long from Tashkent to Nukus but Tansykbayev's heart could not endure neither this no that. Tansykbayev was 70 years old.

In 1984, when Savitsky was in the Moscow hospital, somebody, nevertheless, sent those pictures from the Museum to Tashkent to Tansykbayev's 80-year jubilee exhibition. Savitsky then called up from Moscow and gave all a lecture. But the pictures came back to the Museum.

In a month after Savitsky's death another artist, Muzaffar Eshchanov died; he was married to Gulaiym, niece of Kdyrbay Saipov. Muzaffar was sent to his Motherland, to Tajikistan, hardly loaded on board a plane in the same wooden box in which we brought Savitsky. Already after his death, Savitsky helped the artist.

One year later after Savitsky's death, the monument was erected on the cemetery on the money collected from the Karakalpakstan artists; a bronze boy playing a flute; a modest and heavenly melody was written by Damir Ruzybaev. There is a laconic inscription on the pedestal – "Igor Vitalyevich Savitsky" and dates "1915-1984". Sixty nine years of selfless life. The monument somehow reminds of the boy (Matveev's sculpture) on the grave of artist Borisov-Musatov. But that boy is sleeping.

Forgiveness and Farewells

There was everything between us – alienations and reconciliations, quarrels and friendship, but I have always respectfully maintained that invisible border that I did not cross and did not allow familiarity for myself. I was even a little afraid of him especially during his last years when his character worsened because of sufferings caused by the disease and odiousness of the directorship. Particularly during the last years we did not manage with the Grand Old Man. We quarreled, frankly speaking. I wanted to write, to become a painter, and he wanted me to serve a “warehouseman” at the Museum and restore someone's picture in place in order to write my own.

But during my last visit to Moscow with Savitsky, he threw out a hint to me that he had never spoken directly about relations between him and somebody else), “It seems to me, Edik that the black cat crossed our way”. I believe that he used these words to tell me everything that he was both parting with me and that he had forgiven me.

How late I came to the idea that we all come from nonbeing and will leave for nonbeing, and during this wink of life we must love each other because we shall be everlastingly lying apart in graves. There, in the dark trench, nobody will hear the words of friendly sympathy, will not feel the caressing touch of the arm. And how lately people understand that one must live by filling your life with love to the closest and in such a way that there was no place for remorse, despair and melancholy caused by pain that you afforded to your closest who had expired before you.



I remember all my dreams about him. In the last one, he entered my room, hanged the jacket onto the back of the chair. I got up and put on his jacket but it seemed to be so unusually heavy, I doubled over and could not straighten myself so heavy was the “Monomakh⁸⁷ jacket”. He took the jacket, easily threw it upon the shoulders and left. He was going and was happily laughing. I said after him, “Igor Vitalyevich, haven’t you died!” – “No, Edik, I haven’t, I am alive!” Probably, this dream was called up because looking through my clothes; I saw his jacket, pullover and several kerchiefs that he was putting on the head at the excavations. All this I got at his commemoration feast where his things were given as a memento to Museum’s employees.

He grinned at his death. Once after his next talk about his death, I tried to flatter saying, “Igor Vitalyevich, when you die, they will build a mausoleum for you like for Lenin, and there

87 Reminiscence of Boris Godunov’s phrase from the eponymous tragedy by A. S. Pushkin. Monomakh’s Cap is a crown, symbol of the Tsar’s power.

will be a large queue standing there. He joked back, "Just watch that they built the toilet near it, otherwise they will put soil on the entire grave. When I was in Nukus last time and came to the cemetery, a small brass boy with a flute was still standing on the pedestal. And there was garbage, garbage and garbage around, neither mausoleum, toilet nor queues to them, But the Museum nevertheless looks like his mausoleum and there is a toilet, a pay-toilet frankly speaking.

When I last was at his tomb I recalled his words about the toilet near the mausoleum and suddenly wanted to pee, went behind the fence and recollected how he joked once about the flowers on his grave and my "hose" when we were painting the fence on Gudkova's mother grave and started ... crying.

I confess I did not love him enough; I was young, arrogant, thought more about myself, about my creative work, about my family. And he... an Elder..., the Great Elder... loved me like a bad egg...

My time is also coming to the end. More and more often I hear the approaching chorus louder and louder sounding, "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, in peace!".

Soon, soon, peace will descend on my soul⁸⁸ and leave me finally that damned cough.

Afterword

As in mysterious ways, and thy works, O Lord, so bizarre and trails and your destiny, man! I understand how and why the people are carried around the world, how and why they met in a small oasis in the Central Asian desert – the grandson of a Kiev nobleman and a grandson of the ishan from the Kazakh steppe. I cannot understand who has dropped a sparkle to burn down their lives in the course of servicing their mission? Perhaps the one, who will answer this question, will answer the question about the essence of the human life.

88 Maybe I shouldn't mention this, but I am still feeling so sad that my brother never found peace. After I sold the apartment where he had lived for 16 years with several thousand his books and paintings, where nobody of his relatives could live, and where everything reminded of him, prosecutors smelled big money. Somebody, - on their behalf, - offered me a bribe to help avoid exhumation, however, I told them "FY". If I had taken this bribe it would have been an indirect proof of my admission that I was guilty for his death. As a revenge, the prosecutors conducted exhumation.