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Zhennya Kudlowaka

Escaped three months ago from a Russian scientific research ship.

Lives at 108 Durie St., Toronto 9, Ont., Canada with a couple named Haluk. Tel: 762-5496. Zhennya is 23-24 years old, about 5'2", dark brown hair, dark brown eyes. Has an older brother (married with children - one daughter is in Grade 11) living in Toronto. Zhennya teaches Ukrainian school in the evenings at Runnymede Collegiate and goes to English classes during the day-time.

I met with her three times: Jan. 5, Jan. 8, and Jan. 12. The first two meetings took place at her home and we were alone for the most part; the third meeting took place in my house where she met a number of my friends.

She had been told about me by the director of the Ukrainian school at which she teaches - that I am in some way connected with Suchasnist and would like to meet her because I had heard that she was interested in writing. When I telephoned to arrange our first meeting she was quite friendly and willing to meet me, although rather straightforward: to my rather formal ~~introduction~~ "I'm looking forward to meeting you", she replied, "We'll see".

In general Zhennya is neither shy nor extremely outgoing. She listens and let's the other person do quite a bit of talking before she allows herself to be drawn into more than the most superficial conversation. Once started, she gives the impression of great sincerity, and becomes quite intense when speaking of her desire to write. There is a lot of the romantic about her; she gets carried away when speaking about certain types of music, flowers, etc. In other words, there is very little of the "sophisticated cynic" pose about her. In spite of her apparent sincerity, she can talk a lot and say little, and is very imprecise about things in answer to direct questions. She seems eager to meet people who are interesting, with whom she can talk about literature, music, the theatre. At present she is still quite homesick and depressed because she feels left out due to the language barrier.

Zhennya was born in Halych (or in the vicinity thereof because in answer to "What city are you from?" her first reply was "I'm not from the city, I'm from the village", then later she answered that she was from Halych). Presumably her mother still lives there, but she has not seen her for some time. She told me that she had not gone home for some time in order not to implicate her mother in her escape.

After completing high-school, she worked in a library and took an extension course in library science ("I thought I would obtain several diplomas") After two years of this (she explained that after high school, it is necessary to work for two years before one can apply to the faculty of journalism), she entered the Faculty of Journalism at Moscow State University. She had completed her third year of journalism before her escape. Journalism in the S. U. is a six-year course: the first three years consist of general subject matter, while the second three years concentrate on journalism.

Throughout the time of her studies, Zhennya visited Kiev occasionally (very imprecise on this subject) and got to know the editors of "Perets". She became very close with one of the writers - someone ~~by~~ whose first name is Yuriy.

When ~~asked~~ asked why she escaped, she answered that from the time she was a little girl she had wanted to be free to think and express what she liked. She was baptized a Greek Catholic and claims that she attended church regularly - not out of extreme religion but because it was frowned upon. Since arriving in Canada she attends services regularly.

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Zhennya insists that her defection was not the result of an impulse - "naturally, it didn't come about spontaneously". ~~At~~ With escape in mind she obtained a job through "connections" on a scientific research ship which was to dock at a North American port. She says that originally she intended to escape in the U.S., but the ship anchored at St. John's, Newfoundland, and she escaped there. The day that the boat was due to leave, she went shopping with an officer from the boat. While he was looking at something at one of the counters in a department store, she walked out of the ~~xxx~~ store and down some side street hoping to reach the edge of town where she could hide until after 4 p.m. ~~when~~ at which time the boat was to leave. Knowing no English (she had studied German as her second language), she did not know how to approach anyone to ask them to take her to the police. When it was quite dark she finally went to one of the houses on the edge of town and somehow managed to convey to the man who answered the door that she was cold and that she wanted to be taken to the police. Brought there, she discovered that the boat had not left and that the police were looking for her. By means of sign language she somehow convinced the police that she did not want to return to the ~~xxx~~ ship and that she wanted to remain in Canada. She spent the night in the St. John's jail and next day was taken to Halifax where she was given a Pole for an interpreter and questioned by the RCMP. The Soviet consul came to talk to her - aside from trying to convince her to go back, he kept pressing her to tell him whether the escape was her own idea or was it arranged by some organization, was she part of some organization, and so on. Since her arrival in Toronto she has received a letter from the KGB asking her the same thing. She came to Toronto because that is where her brother lives. She does not seem extremely worried about her mother who was left in Ukraine. She claims that she did not go to see her mother for a long time so that she would not be implicated in any way.

Zhennya wants to visit the U.S. and asked whether this was possible. The Canadian authorities told her that she probably could enter the U.S. but she can expect to be interrogated for several hours at the border.

Zhennya had travelled outside the S.U. prior to her escape. She had been in Warsaw at a Youth Festival (very vague about dates) - her opinion of the Poles is that those who live in Warsaw are "pleasant people", but those who once lived in Ukraine, hate the Western Ukrainians because they still think of Galicia as their own territory. While at Moscow University, she, along with another boy from the faculty of journalism and another boy from some other faculty, was sent to Paris (The trip was a prize of some sort. But when asked directly when she was there, how long she stayed, and what she did there, she answered only that "naturally we had a job to do - not really spying because there are professionals for that, but we had to write something. Of course, that's simple - you see something and then just write on and on about it, relying on your imagination. Nobody really cares about the facts." At this point she added, "you see I was a trusted person, so my escape came as a real shock to them."

We talked a lot about the ferment and forms of protest in the S.U. But she tends to generalize, talk a lot about the need for the people as whole to react - not just the intellectuals. Yet she says very little that is specific.

Student ferment: Had read Phoenix '66 but considered the material poor - from the literary point of view. Did not mention taking part in any protest actions and in reply to direct questions about this, turned the conversation to general topics about literary value in writing anything. Considers Daniel and Sinyavsky - men of true courage. They knew that once caught, they would have to pay the penalty. Claims to have read many proscribed books but mentioned only Orwell's Animal Farm by name and that because I was comparing Morez's treatise to something that Orwell might have written. Said that she missed the heated discussions about forbidden subjects - "It was exciting to talk about dangerous things, never quite sure that you wouldn't be punished for it."

Honchar: Considers Sobor a rather poor novel - unfinished. There are some striking moments in it but on the whole it is over-rated by Ukrainians abroad. She disagrees with the theory that Honchar tries to voice a strong protest against the regime in this work. She thinks that he is sincere in defending "historical monuments" but that that is as far as his protest goes. In reply to my question - why the high praise in the Ukrainian Soviet press immediately after the publication of the novel - she answered that there are always people who will hurry to praise anything which is ~~slightly~~ even slightly better than the average product of socialist realism.

Chornovil: At first mention of his name she said that he truly did not know why he was arrested and sentenced for what he had done. In her opinion he had protested against the infringement on individual rights and only in self-defence did he later compile the materials written by the Mordvinian prisoners. Most of the materials in the Chornovil Papers she finds of very low literary quality (she judges them as literary works, rather than as protest literature).. Some of it is, in her opinion, degrading - particularly Karavansky's petition to Gomulka: "Why should he write to a foreign government to plead for intervention against Russification? How naive to think that Gomulka would do anything. We must rely on ourselves and not always beg others to help us." She showed me one of Karavansky's poems reprinted in an emigre publication and pointed out with disgust what a poor poem it was - "and here it is praised as great literature just because Karavansky is in a prison camp." When I asked her whether she had heard of and read Chornovil while still in the Soviet Union she simply answered, "Both there and here." Later she added that she was in Moscow most of the time so she was somewhat removed from what is going on in Kiev.

Russification: She was angry that someone she had met here was trying to tell her that 90 % of the schools of Ukraine taught in the Russian language. She claims that these statistics are simply lies - she herself had gone to a Ukrainian school and most Ukrainians did the same - except maybe in Odessa. No one will ever Russify Ukraine. In the cities many people speak Russian just because they feel inferior to the Russians, but they all know how to speak Ukrainian and do so among themselves. In the villages everyone speaks only Ukrainian. In Moscow they refer to Ukrainians as ~~kh~~ "khakhly". She herself resents this attitude towards the Ukrainians: "The whole nation must get rid of this inferiority complex."

Dzyuba: Although she didn't answer directly, I got the impression that she has not read D's Int. or Russ., and knows very little about Dzyuba altogether. At first mention of his name she was very unenthusiastic about him: "I don't know about Dzyuba. Why does everybody think that he is doing something special?" But later she mentioned him again and this time said: "So there are a few Dzyuba's - but they are too far away from the people. They have to reach the people and make them conscious of what is going on. At this stage, after years of great hardship, everyone is simply happy to have enough food to eat and to be able to buy a few extras. They don't think of 'freedom'".

Ukrainians Abroad: Finds it difficult to accept the various political differences in existence here. She was taken to some SUM gatherings by Lesia Bandera and Iryna Boykivska, told about PLAST and various other emigre ~~youth~~ youth organizations. She is neither vehemently critical nor overly enthusiastic about any of them. Partly she may be unwilling to voice her criticism because she feels that whenever she says anything critical about life abroad people take it badly. Several persons have told her not to voice her criticisms of she will be suspected of being an agent provocateur.

Her greatest disappointment with regard to Ukrainians abroad is in literature and the use of Ukrainian. Of all the Ukrainian books she has read so far the only one she liked and considered well written (as far as the language is concerned) is Mykola Ponedilok's Smishni Slyozyny. She asked me to obtain his address so that she could write to tell him how happy she was to find his book when she felt most homesick. She thinks very highly of satire as a literary genre, and especially likes Ponedilok's type of humor.

She is not quite sure what she wants to do with herself here. First she intends to learn English - to become fluent enough to enter university. But she doesn't know what she will study. "I want to become materially secure so that I can write" seems to express her goal in life. When I asked her what she wants to write - her answer was "everything".

She expressed some interest at the prospect of writing something for Suchasnist but wants to familiarize herself with the magazine first. She told me she had seen and issue or two but she couldn't mention any article off-hand. However, she asked me to send ~~xxx~~ her some issues if possible. She finds books very expensive here and at present cannot afford them. I told her I might be able to obtain some for ~~xxx~~ her.

She has read Samchuk's last book, Na tverdy zemli, and thinks it very poor. Wants to read his Volyn because she heard that that was his best book. Said that she had heard of him in Ukraine.

At one point she mentioned that she would like to subscribe to some Soviet magazines and newspapers but is not sure that this would be a good idea because people here might misconstrue this. "At least I would know what is going on. I feel so cut off - unable to read the English press, I find the Ukrainian emigre newspapers so badly written that I just don't like reading them."

She has very little to say about Communism as such. At the beginning she told me that she had not wanted to join the Komsomol because everybody told her that she had to and I understood that she had not been a member. But in a later conversation she told me she had been a member of Komsomol. She thinks that there are many good things in Marxism-Leninism in theory, but in practice it has become an oppressive system under which it is impossible to live and work as she wants to. When in a conversation someone mentioned that a friend was writing a book about "positive Communism" and wondered what that concept could mean, Zhennya laughed and ~~xxx~~ said that she had read things which tried to make Jesus Christ a "positive Communist" but that all of this was nonsense - "there is no such thing as positive Communism".

Zhennya knew about the Shevchenko demonstration in Kiev in 1967 but had no comment to make about it. Whenever I asked her for examples of other protest demonstrations and such, she avoided the question by answering that she had lived in Moscow and did not really know what was going on in Ukraine. From her conversation I got the impression that she knew a lot of people from the film-making and theatre world in Moscow. But she didn't mention anyone by name.

In general she does not seem to regret her escape. She admitted that she had expected a more ideal world in the West, but in her words "I suppose I now know that there are no ideal places to live, but this is better than where I came from".

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