

Zannis, especially chapters 1 to 3.

14. *Evening Times-Globe* (Saint John), 18 July 1980.

15. James D. Young, *The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class* (Montreal, 1979), p. 18.

16. See Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1978).

## A DEFECTOR'S VIEW OF THE SOVIET UNION<sup>1</sup>

*Introduction by Maurice Tugwell*

The views and opinions of defectors on arrival in their new country have always to be taken with a certain amount of salt. Some may do their honest best to speak the truth, but as no one has access to all the facts or is entirely objective in assessing them, such utterances should be accepted with caution. Others, anxious to ingratiate themselves with their adopted countrymen, may say what they think these people want to hear, thus straying into the realm of speculation. Finally there is the "plant", who is not a true defector at all, but an agent of the old country's secret service passing him or herself off as a fugitive. In this case, we have to be on the lookout for "disinformation"<sup>2</sup>, but as we are unlikely to know which, if any, of a score of defectors belongs to this last category, distinguishing between honest reporting, exaggeration and lies will always be difficult.

The news media have recently published articles on several Soviet defectors. We have accounts of how Miroslav Butynets jumped ship at Halifax, Nova Scotia, "to find liberty from the terrible reality of Soviet life where there is no future for the individual"<sup>3</sup>, of Galina Orionova's defection from her relatively privileged life as research fellow at the Institute of the United States of America and Canada,<sup>4</sup> of the dissident writer Vasily Aksyonov who left Moscow last July,<sup>5</sup> and about the Soviet fighter pilot Viktor Belenko who flew his top-secret MiG-25 "Foxbat" fighter to Japan and has since found asylum in the United States.<sup>6</sup> David Martin's book, *Wilderness of Mirrors*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue, describes the difficulties facing intelligence analysts when assessing defectors' stories.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the London *Times* published an interview with Ilya Dzhirkvelov, a former KGB officer and *Tass* correspondent who defected to Britain in April 1980, which is reproduced below. Dzhirkvelov had never been a dissident. Indeed, as a 34-year member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, he has recalled with animation how he joined the KGB — at that time the NKVD — in 1944, in the first flush of youthful enthusiasm. Readers may see in Dzhirkvelov's motives for defection some similarity with those of Bill Haydon, the fictional villain of Le carré's novel, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.<sup>8</sup> Both seem to have been attracted to power, and to have abandoned their former loyalties when they perceived that power was slipping out of the hands of their erstwhile governments. Be that as it may, Dzhirkvelov's observations — taken with the necessary pinch of salt — provide valuable insights into the problems facing the Soviet leadership.

## INTERVIEW WITH ILYA DZHIRKVELOV

by a *Times* staff reporter

### **Soviet Reactions to the Afghan Invasion**

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan surprised and dismayed many middle-ranking Soviet officials, some of whom privately welcomed President Carter's call for a boycott of the Olympic Games in the hope that it might make the Kremlin think again. This emerges from an exclusive interview given to *The Times* by Ilya Dzhirkvelov, a former KGB officer and Tass correspondent who defected to Britain at the beginning of April 1980.

Most recently Dzhirkvelov held the post of information officer at the World Health Organization in Geneva. But he was also in charge of the Soviet propaganda effort in all the Geneva international organizations, and after the invasion of Afghanistan, had the dual task of spreading the Soviet version of events among his Western colleagues, and relaying their reactions to Moscow.

In the version laid down by Moscow for dissemination abroad, the invasion was dictated by the Soviet desire for peace and by the need to defend the interests of socialism against foreign — mainly American — interference. Approval of this line however was "hard to find" among Western officials in Geneva, and Dzhirkvelov and his colleagues were — not for the first time — placed in the position of having to tell the Kremlin what it wanted to hear rather than the true state of affairs. Their task was made doubly difficult by the fact that they themselves did not believe the official explanation they were required to impress on the West. Not having been given warning in advance of the invasion, Soviet officials abroad were taken aback. "When we discussed Afghanistan among ourselves", Dzhirkvelov said, "we simply could not understand why the leadership (in the Kremlin) had felt it necessary to take such a senseless and irrational step. We thought it was complete madness".

Mr. Dzhirkvelov himself, who was for many years a Soviet intelligence expert on Iran and Turkey, can see no strategic or economic justification for the invasion. "If it had been Iran we could have understood it — there would have been an economic motive, the securing of oil and gas supplies, as well as the political advantage of controlling Tehran. But why Afghanistan? We have enough mountains in the Soviet Union already". The Russians, according to Dzhirkvelov, are not equipped or prepared for mountain warfare. He believes the Soviet Government's action is all the more inexplicable in view of previous Soviet experience of long and bloody fighting against anti-Soviet nationalist rebels (*basmatchi*) in central Asia during the early years of Soviet rule. The *basmatchi*, he argues, were as wild and as poorly armed as the *mujahidin* (combatants in a holy war) of Afghanistan, yet it took the entire might of the Red Army, fighting on its own ground, to crush them in a protracted struggle.

The Soviet troops now in Afghanistan, he maintains, are in a worse position, and are likely to become permanently bogged down in a war they may never win on foreign soil. This is an especially bitter prospect for what Dzhirkvelov calls

“people of my generation” — Soviet men and women who were in their teens or early twenties in the Second World War, and are now well entrenched in Soviet society. “How can you justify to Soviet mothers and fathers the deaths of young Russian lads in Afghanistan? If they were dying for some high political motive that would be another matter, but Afghanistan poses no threat to the Soviet state”.

So why did the Kremlin do it? Dzhirkvelov said that in his view it was to show the world — above all Washington — that they could get away with it. He and his colleagues in Geneva see the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan as “proof of the contempt of the Soviet leadership for the United States President and world opinion”. The Politburo — including President Brezhnev, who played an “important but not decisive role” — wanted to test Western reaction to see how far they could go before the West took firm action in response, up to and including military action. For this reason many Soviet officials of his age and rank were privately relieved when President Carter called for a boycott of the Olympic Games as a reprisal, since it might have forced the Soviet leadership to reconsider and revert to a “stable rather than emotional policy”. The breakdown of détente, they believed, was Russia’s fault rather than America’s, and struck at the heart of their hopes for a steady improvement in Soviet life through contact with the West.

The Kremlin had, out of “self-regard” and over-confidence, undermined at a stroke the carefully-erected structure of stability between the United States and the Soviet Union, all for a purpose which brought “no conceivable gain whatever” to the Soviet Union politically, and even less to the Soviet people, whose economic plight Dzhirkvelov describes as “catastrophic”. The Soviet man in the street, he says, regarded the holding of the Olympic Games in Moscow as a grim joke in circumstances where even the most elementary foodstuffs are “dim memories”. Even in the 1960s, he claims, many privately opposed the idea of siting the Olympic Games in Moscow — and economic conditions were, “better than they are now”.

Mr. Dzhirkvelov explains how the KGB made plans to isolate foreign visitors to the Games from ordinary Russians. “Soviet citizens”, he notes with a smile, “have dealings with foreigners for only two reasons: either out of sheer necessity, or out of sheer fool-hardiness”. In Dzhirkvelov’s view, the Soviet Government has always sought to avoid contact between Russians and the West, even during a period of détente, and their conduct at the Olympic Games was no exception.

Mr. Dzhirkvelov expects to be called a “traitor and slanderer” for saying so; but he is convinced many in Russia share his view that the Kremlin is so isolated from its own people, and receives so distorted a view of the outside world from its agents abroad, that it believes it can survive both the disapproval of world opinion and a deteriorating economic situation at home.

### **The KGB and the Media**

All Soviet correspondents abroad are agents of the KGB, to a greater or lesser extent. But according to Mr. Dzhirkvelov, the information they send back to Moscow is often tailored to suit the Kremlin’s view of the world. As a result the

Soviet leaders receive and even act upon a distorted picture of world events. Dzhirkvelov was a full-time KGB officer until 1956, and after a spell with the Union of Journalists in Moscow became a correspondent of Tass, the Soviet news agency, overseas, first in Zanzibar (subsequently part of Tanzania) in the mid-1960s, then in Sudan at the beginning of the 1970s. But, as a Tass correspondent he "never lost touch" with his former colleagues in the KGB, and worked for Soviet intelligence both in East Africa and subsequently as information officer at the World Health Organization in Geneva, his last posting before his defection.

According to Dzhirkvelov, some correspondents are what he describes as "pure journalists", while others are simply KGB agents who use journalism as a cover. "Pure" journalists send their information to Tass, which distributes it as it thinks fit, while "KGB" journalists have their own channels. In the final analysis both perform the same function, since both act as an arm of Soviet foreign policy. A Soviet journalist, Dzhirkvelov says, is by definition an agent of political intelligence, whether he works directly for the KGB or not. While what reaches the Soviet press is tendentious and selective, what reaches the authorities tends to correspond more closely to the true state of affairs. But Dzhirkvelov maintains that the authorities prefer an "interpretation" of events which reinforces their belief in the gradual advance of the Communist — or at least, Soviet — cause throughout the world, and tend to ignore less palatable reports and inconvenient facts.

When he was a correspondent in both Khartum and Zanzibar, Dzhirkvelov tried — according to his own account — to alert the authorities on a number of occasions to the fact that the situation was not as favourable to the Soviet interest as was believed. His instructions in both cases were to form close ties with members of the Government, especially those thought to be sympathetic to Moscow. "I was obliged to get to know leading personalities, find out the balance of forces, report back what changes were in the wind and so on. As a journalist I could ask questions a more obvious KGB agent could not". In Khartum, Dzhirkvelov reveals he had a meeting every morning at nine o'clock with a regular KGB agent, at which he reported in detail his conversations with Sudanese figures. He also undertook intelligence missions on request. He was dismayed to discover in 1971 the Moscow took the quite unfounded view that Sudan was ripe for a pro-Soviet coup, with results which are described later in this article.

After the Sudan debacle, Dzhirkvelov served for several years as chief foreign editor of Tass in Moscow. He was by now identified with the KGB in the minds of African leaders, and was refused entry to Zambia by President Kaunda in 1975 when appointed by Tass to be their correspondent in Lusaka. In 1977 he was seconded to the World Health Organization in Geneva as information officer. It is KGB policy, Mr. Dzhirkvelov confirms, to infiltrate the United Nations and other international organizations. But he feels too much attention has been paid to highly placed Soviet agents in the United Nations bureaucracy, such as Mr. Geliy Dneprovsky, the head of United Nations personnel in Geneva. Mr. Dneprovsky, Dzhirkvelov says, is important because of his access to the files of United Nations employees. But all Soviet citizens in Geneva are — like

Tass correspondents — agents of the KGB in some sense, and all report back their conversations with Westerners. “Geneva is a huge centre of international espionage, the Tangiers of our time”.

When he arrived at WHO, Dzhirkvelov was told by his Soviet superior that his work would be judged not by its contribution to the United Nations, but by the amount of information it yielded for the KGB. “The more you report”, he was told, “the better your work will be — and the better you will feel”. Geneva is not, on the other hand, a particularly effective espionage centre for the Soviet Union. This is partly because Russians there report what they think the Kremlin wants to hear, including conversations which never took place. Another reason is the enclosed, hothouse atmosphere in which the Soviet community works. Nepotism is rife, and this creates bad feeling. Also, Soviet agents in Geneva compete with one another to satisfy the KGB, with the aim of feathering their nests in Moscow once their tour of duty in the West is over.

The result, Dzhirkvelov said, is even more “disinformation” in the Soviet propaganda and intelligence system. This is a situation which he feels cannot last, especially as the gap between objective truth and the Soviet version becomes daily more apparent to Soviet people through Western broadcasts in Russian. Ninety-nine percent of those Russians interested in politics listen to the BBC or Voice of America, as indeed do the Soviet leaders themselves, Dzhirkvelov says.

“More often than not we heard the news from the BBC rather than our own correspondents, and when our people do file we always check what they send against Reuters to see what is really happening”. With the “immense growth” in the influence of the BBC and VOA in recent years, the Soviet authorities have reassessed their propaganda effort. Last year a Central Committee directive in Pravda called for a more “persuasive” approach, and less “grey” attempts at “window-dressing” in the Soviet media. There was, it said, a “propensity toward verbal babbling and propaganda clichés”. A committee was formed under the former director of Tass, Leonid Zamyatin, to liven things up. The machinery remains, however, in Dzhirkvelov’s view, clumsy and permeated with “disinformation”. There were red faces in both Tass and the KGB, he says, when Mr. Robert Mugabe was elected Prime Minister of a democratic Zimbabwe, an event which Moscow had insisted the “British imperialists” would never allow.

### **Ideology and Strategy in Africa**

Mr. Dzhirkvelov believes that Soviet strategy in Africa has failed, largely due to Moscow’s inability to comprehend African conditions and the African cast of mind. In the 1960s and 1970s Soviet strategy, according to Dzhirkvelov, was to take advantage of anti-colonial sentiment in Africa and gain political influence over African countries by tying them to the Soviet Union economically. Zanzibar was regarded as the “gateway to Africa” because of the openly pro-communist regime which took power there after the Zanzibar revolution of 1964. Under its President, Abaid Karume, Zanzibar was hostile to the West, while receiving vast amounts of aid from the Soviet Union, East Germany and China.

It was partly to moderate this Marxist radicalism on his doorstep that President Nyerere in neighbouring Tanganyika proposed the united state of Tanzania. But Zanzibar continued to pursue pro-communist policies semi-independently. President Karume told Mr. Dzhirkvelov when he arrived that Zanzibar was to be an "island of freedom" on an analogy with Cuba in the Caribbean. The number of Soviet advisers in Zanzibar rose during Dzhirkvelov's time from under 300 when he first arrived to well over 400 by the time he left.

Mr. Dzhirkvelov soon became aware that Soviet control over Zanzibar was not increasing in proportion to the economic contribution. This was partly because the Zanzibar leaders capitalized on the Sino-Soviet split by playing the Chinese off against the Russians. Of the two models of communism on offer, says Mr. Dzhirkvelov, President Karume preferred the Chinese, on the grounds that Chinese technicians and workers were happy to live in hostels and receive low pay. The Russians began to "lose their position". Soviet difficulties, Dzhirkvelov discloses, were compounded by errors in economic planning. As an example he cites what he now thinks of as The Great Tuna Fish Disaster.

The Russians advised President Karume to diversify the Zanzibar economy, which depends on the export of cloves. Since Zanzibar is an island, the Soviet advisers proposed the construction of a tuna processing plant. It became known, however, that the fishing vessels supplied by the Russians were slower than the tuna fish, and the necessary equipment would have to be bought from Japan, since Russia did not produce it. The cost of building the new port complex was in any case prohibitive. Existing port facilities were being used for loading spices. "The only result", says Dzhirkvelov, "would have been that the fish would have ended up smelling of cloves and the cloves smelling of fish".

He has other examples of what he calls "economic adventurism" by the Russians in East Africa. In 1969 he learnt from the Soviet ambassador in Mogadishu that the Russians were building a huge dairy complex in Somalia because there were cows feeding near the proposed site. The dairy was completed, at considerable cost, but by then there were no cows left to be milked, since Somali farmers are nomadic and the herds had moved elsewhere.

But the principal Soviet mistake in Africa, says Dzhirkvelov, is serious. The Russians, he argues, have very little understanding of African agrarian and tribal societies, and assume that socialism on the Soviet model is suitable and inevitable. In Tanzania the Russians were encouraged by President Nyerere's espousal of a socialist philosophy, but failed to grasp that he was an "educated man in the Western mould", and his socialism was unique to Tanzania. Mr. Dzhirkvelov denies that miscalculations of this kind arise from a condescending or even racialist attitude on the part of Soviet officials in Africa, although such attitudes undoubtedly exist, he says, within the Soviet Union. But in Africa, he believes, Soviet blunders are attributable rather to the rigidly ideological Soviet approach. The Kremlin, he says, often backs the wrong horse in African politics. In 1970, for example, a number of Tanzanians were put on trial in Dar es Salaam, charged with having conspired to overthrow the Government. The accused included (in absentia) Oscar Kambona, the former Foreign Minister. There was speculation, unconfirmed at the time, that the Soviet Union had

supported some of the alleged conspirators. Dzhirkvelov has confirmed that there was indeed a "Moscow connection", and that Soviet officials in Dar es Salaam were "extremely worried" that this might emerge at the trial. Some of the accused, says Dzhirkvelov — though not Mr. Kambona — had "close ties" with the Russians. Dzhirkvelov attended almost all of the trial, with instructions to report to the Soviet Embassy any mention of Russia. Fearing exposure, a number of KGB agents in the embassy left Tanzania before the trial ended, indirect proof of Soviet involvement, to which the Tanzanian authorities turned a blind eye.

As for the Sudan, Dzhirkvelov recalls an even greater miscalculation, when the Russians supported, and perhaps even inspired, a communist coup against President Numeiry in July 1971. Dzhirkvelov, who was in Khartoum throughout this period, foresaw that if there was such a coup it would undoubtedly be crushed, and the Sudanese Communist Party would be destroyed. He made this plain, he claims, both in dispatches for Tass, which were passed on to the KGB and in person to Mr. V.V. Kuznetsov, a member of the Soviet leadership, who visited Sudan in March. But the Soviet authorities including the embassy in Khartoum, believed that a communist coup would succeed. It took place in July, under Major Hasim al-Ata, and was put down within three days. President Numeiry was returned to power on a wave of popularity. Relations between Khartoum and Moscow, which until 1971 had been warm, sunk to a low ebb, from which they have never recovered. The Soviet ambassador was asked to leave, with many of his staff. Dzhirkvelov stayed on as Tass correspondent for another year, with the difficult task of presenting what had happened for Soviet readers as a "victory for progressive forces".

Looking at Africa as a whole, Dzhirkvelov sees a catalogue of setbacks for the Soviet Union in contrast to the high hopes of the 1960s. The peaceful settlement of the Rhodesian issue was, he says, a disaster for Moscow, which had completely failed to foresee the election of Mr. Robert Mugabe as Prime Minister, and had once again backed the wrong horse in Mr. Joshua Nkomo. Somalia and Zanzibar, Dzhirkvelov points out, have both expelled their Soviet advisers. Egypt, which expelled all Soviet personnel in 1972, was regarded by Moscow as a safe Soviet domain to the last moment. Six months before President Sadat's expulsion order, a member of the Politburo, Mr. Boris Ponomarev, visited Cairo, and was impressed by what he construed as the Egyptians' appetite for Marxist-Leninism, despite warnings from Soviet officials in Cairo that the Sadat Government was going in an unmistakably pro-Western direction. The Soviet Union, says Dzhirkvelov, has spent millions of roubles in Africa, with very little result. Mr. Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, President Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia and Dr. Milton Obote in Uganda were all at various times the object of misplaced Soviet hopes.

Ghana was once the main KGB base in Africa, but no more, while Zambia "does not want and never did want" Soviet help. As for Uganda, Moscow even made what Dzhirkvelov considers the "appalling error" of backing Dr. Obote's successor, Idi Amin, supplying him with the arms and equipment to maintain a reign of terror. The Soviet military intervention in Angola and Ethiopia and the use of Cuban troops Dzhirkvelov sees as a gambler's throw to turn the tide. In

Africa, and in the Third World as a whole, Dzhirkvelov believes, the Soviet Union is at a disadvantage in competition with China and the West, and will remain so as long as it is blinkered by an inflexible ideology and the dictates of self-interest.

### **The Allure of Power**

Ilya Dzhirkvelov is not a dissident. As a former member of the KGB, he has little time for Soviet human rights activists. In his interview with *The Times*, which ranged from his boyhood years to the present, Dzhirkvelov reflected on the changes in Russia over the past 30 years in a tone which suggested little sympathy for the Russian democratic movement. What he and his generation want, says Dzhirkvelov — he is in his 50s — is a decent standard of living, a degree of personal freedom, but at the same time strong leadership, order and discipline.

Mr. Dzhirkvelov, who was a member of the Communist Party for 34 years, looks back to the days of Stalin even now with a degree of nostalgia. A stocky, suntanned Georgian with close cropped white hair, Dzhirkvelov recalls, to many people both inside and outside Russia the initials KGB or NKVD inspire fear and dread. But to young Ilya Dzhirkvelov, according to his own account, the Soviet security police was a fine, even glamorous organization, defending the state with stern but just measures, in the tradition of the revolutionary Cheka. It also offered a stepping stone to privilege and power. Only later, says Dzhirkvelov, did he understand that the victims of the secret police were the innocent casualties of a cruel, and arbitrary despotism.

His first task was to help round up the Crimean Tatars, some of whom had fought for the Germans during the war. Most of these had joined Hitler's army under duress, in order to avoid certain death in Nazi starvation camps. This did not, however, save them from equally certain death at the hands of Soviet firing squads. The remaining Tatars were deported at gunpoint to Siberia and central Asia by NKVD troops, among them the 17-year-old Ilya Dzhirkvelov. Many died en route. The descendants of the survivors have still not been allowed to return to their homeland.

The wholesale deportation of the Tatars ranks as one of Stalin's most horrendous crimes. But Dzhirkvelov only now realizes he was taking part in an act of inhumanity. "At the time", he says, "I thought the Tatar nation were traitors. I had not the slightest doubt that what I was doing was right." Doubts did enter in as he became aware of the gap between the ideals proclaimed by the regime and its cynical, self-interested conduct of affairs. Even as a youth in Georgia, he says, he was struck by the fact that those in authority evacuated their own families to the Iranian border as the Germans advanced, leaving lesser mortals to their fate.

Georgia, he notes, is especially corrupt among Soviet republics and has the additional distinction of having produced two of Russia's greatest monsters in Stalin and Lavrenty Beria, Stalin's chief of secret police. Dzhirkvelov saw Stalin at close quarters, together with Churchill and Roosevelt, when he was assigned to guard the delegates to the Yalta Conference in February 1945. For a young man of ambition, to guard the Big Three was to take part in an historic event.



And to be close to Stalin was to be in the presence of demi-god: "We thought he was Almighty, greater than the sun, more powerful than the Tsar."

Yet the doubts remained. In 1947 Dzhirkvelov was sent to Romania to deal with "Nazi collaborators", just as he had in the Crimea. But in Romania hostility towards the Soviet Union was open and unchecked. Russian officers were jostled and obstructed in the street. It took two Soviet guards with sub-machine guns to persuade a reluctant Romanian landlady to offer Dzhirkvelov and his new wife accommodation. When two United States ships appeared off the port of Constanta with an offer of American grain, there were ugly anti-Soviet demonstrations. The imposition of communism on Romania, *observes Dzhirkvelov, left a legacy of antagonism towards Russia which still persists*, as he himself found during frequent visits in subsequent years on behalf of either the KGB or Tass.

Outwardly, however, Dzhirkvelov was an exemplary citizen. He was now married to a fellow employee of the KGB. (They were later divorced; his second wife and their daughter are with him in the West.) As a reward for loyal service Mr. Dzhirkvelov was given a post in the First Chief Directorate of the KGB, which covers intelligence and counter-intelligence in foreign countries. He became an expert on Turkey and Iran, and was entrusted with undercover missions in those countries, helping to foment subversion by Soviet sympathizers.

However, the KGB was not without internal discords in these years, Mr. Dzhirkvelov revealed. He cites the case of a fellow agent who at a KGB meeting ridiculed the practice of vetting candidates for election to the Supreme Soviet. If there was only one candidate, and he had to be approved by the KGB, surely there was not much to be said for "democracy" in the Soviet system. The "dissident" was expelled from the KGB for "Trotskyism and opportunism", and Dzhirkvelov was himself chided for "short-sightedness" when he dared to discuss the case with colleagues. The incident also compromised the "dissident's" mentor in the KGB, Fyodor Bykovsky, father of the Soviet Cosmonaut, and like Dzhirkvelov a KGB intelligence agent in Iran.

But it was the death of Stalin in 1953 and the subsequent arrest of Beria which caused the greatest tremors within the KGB. With the passing of the dictator, many KGB operatives feared the demise of the system he had created, a system which depended on the KGB for its very existence. In the power struggle which followed, Beria's colleagues in the Politburo manoeuvred secretly against him, fearing that the secret police chief would try to seize power. When the plot was ready, the Politburo pounced and arrested Beria at a joint session of the Council of Ministers and the Party Central Committee. So powerful was their fear of the KGB, however, that the Soviet leaders enlisted the aid of the Army, who brought tanks on to the streets of Moscow to prevent a KGB coup. The secret police were neutralized and their chief was executed after a brief "trial".

Mr. Dzhirkvelov recalls how he and other KGB officers sat at headquarters in the Lubyanka on Dzerzhinsky Square in Moscow and heard the list of charges against their boss. Beria was accused of having been an "agent of international imperialism". This struck even the KGB as absurd. They were used to fabricating evidence of complicity with particular Western intelligence services; but to

shoot Beria for being in the pay of all of them was going too far. Dzhirkvelov's attitude to both Stalin and Beria is coloured by the fact that both were Georgians, like himself. Beria, he says, was on the whole "disliked" by Georgians, who considered him "cruel" even by their standards. Their attitude to Stalin was more ambivalent. When in 1956 Khrushchev made his "secret speech" denouncing Stalin, there were mass peaceful demonstrations in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. The demonstrators wanted to know why "their" Stalin was being removed from his pedestal. The authorities panicked and sent in troops, who opened fire, leaving scores dead. Because of what Dzhirkvelov calls these "tragic events", the disturbances in Georgia took an anti-Russian turn. He was sent by the KGB to Tbilisi — his home town — to find and punish the ring-leaders. The KGB, he says, arrested 400 people, but no "instigators" were ever found, since the Georgian reaction to Stalin's disgrace had been quite genuine and spontaneous.

All in all Dzhirkvelov retains a degree of respect and even admiration for Stalin, coupled with a hint of disdain for the leadership of Khrushchev which followed. He acknowledges that Khrushchev brought a welcome "breath of fresh air" into the enclosed, paranoid world of Stalinism. But Stalin, says Mr. Dzhirkvelov, was at least a strong leader. His "cult of personality" was a real and fearful one, whereas the self-glorification of both Khrushchev and Brezhnev have been pale and laughable imitations. Stalin, says Dzhirkvelov, did "great service" to the Soviet state — a remarkable statement from a man whose own father, the deputy political commissar of the Black Sea Fleet, disappeared in the purges of the 1930s. The death of Stalin, he says, was none the less the "beginning of the end" for "those who had served Soviet power long and loyally". The KGB still had a role to play, creating subversion abroad and repressing dissent at home. But it resented the curbing of its powers under Khrushchev, and missed its father-figure, Stalin. "We thought Stalin was a god: he turned out to be a bandit. And we thought to ourselves: why should we trust this Khrushchev? Perhaps he'll turn out to be a bandit as well".

What Mr. Dzhirkvelov hankers after — and, he says, "there are many who think as I do" — is a Russia with a strong central authority, but one in which a degree of personal liberty and expression of opinion is permissible. He looks back to the 1920s in the Soviet Union as an era when this combination prevailed. The fact that the KGB, which he is in some ways proud to have served, exists in order to stifle the challenge posed to authoritarianism by demands for freedom does not strike him as a contradiction.

### **The Threat of Economic Catastrophe**

According to Mr. Dzhirkvelov, Russia is run by an isolated, self-perpetuating "aristo-bureaucracy", cushioned from reality and unaware of the catastrophe facing the Soviet economy. And whoever succeeds Mr. Brezhnev as leader will have to take radical measures to stave off the collapse of Soviet society.

Throughout his career Dzhirkvelov has closely observed the ways of the Soviet establishment. It is, he says, a moribund body of unprincipled careerists, and nothing short of real change can save it. The bureaucratic disease was inherent in the Soviet system from the start. But under Mr. Brezhnev it has

reached epidemic proportions. There is, according to Dzhirkvelov, an unwieldy “new aristocracy” or “aristo-bureaucracy”, consisting of Party and Government organs at all levels, the KGB, the Army, local administrative officers and officials of all kinds, who between them control and suffocate all aspects of Soviet citizens’ lives. Mr. Dzhirkvelov acknowledges that he has himself benefitted from the system. As a Soviet official abroad with KGB connections he had two cars; a well-appointed flat in Moscow as well as in his overseas posting; frequent travel to and from the West; and access to special shops selling consumer goods and foodstuffs unknown to, indeed undreamed of, by ordinary Russians. Corruption at the top in Russia today, he says, surpasses anything known in Tsarist times: “Nicholas II was a poor man compared to Mr. Brezhnev”.

But like most corrupt elites, the Soviet establishment presides over a structure which is rotten at the centre. The Soviet system, Dzhirkvelov said, is in no way socialist in the true or original sense. It crushes every spark of human individuality, and depends for its survival on the suppression of free thought and creativity. For most of his career Dzhirkvelov helped to bolster up this repressive regime. But he became — according to his own account — increasingly critical of a system which was maintained only through fear and coercion. Dzhirkvelov was disturbed by what he regards as the ill-considered, even reckless policies pursued by the Kremlin. The invasion of Afghanistan was, in his view, an act which flew in the face not only of world opinion but also of plain common sense. This was the last straw in Dzhirkvelov’s growing disillusionment. When officials in the Soviet Embassy in Geneva tried to frame him by making a minor traffic violation into a more serious offence involving drunken driving, Dzhirkvelov realized the authorities must be preparing a case against him. He returned to Moscow, still hoping that friends in high places would intervene on his behalf. But most shunned Dzhirkvelov as a doomed man with whom it was wise not to associate. Seeing this as final proof that the system which had nurtured him was about to turn on him with all the ruthlessness at its command, Dzhirkvelov decided to defect to the West.

In one sense, Dzhirkvelov agrees, the Soviet system is strong, in that it is able to crush individuals and leaves those who — like himself — wish to break away from it no alternative but to seek refuge in the opposing camp. But the essential weakness of the system, he argues, is illustrated by its very inability to tolerate dissent or “betrayal”. Any system, he suggests, which is so afraid of ideas and external influences necessarily lacks inner strength. The regime’s response to the influence of the BBC and the Voice of America illustrates this: “We used to say: if our system is as good as our leaders say it is, what are they so afraid of? If what Western radio stations say is false, surely we can judge that for ourselves?” Why, Dzhirkvelov and his colleagues wondered, was there so much talk of the penetration of Russia by Western ideas, and so little about the reverse? The treatment of Soviet dissidents, he argues, is in itself a sign of insecurity. He is not himself sympathetic to the dissidents, but considers the exiling of Dr. Andrei Sakharov — “a member of the Academy, a great Russian scientist” — to be scandalous<sup>9</sup>. The ruling elite, he believes, is kept in power by the Army and the KGB, and “anything could happen” if they were to falter “for a single day”.

From this point of view, the question of who succeeds Mr. Brezhnev either as Party leader or as President (he holds both posts) could be important insofar as any new man at the top tries to tackle the Soviet malaise. The succession problem itself is, in Dzhirkvelov's view, "impenetrable". The "favourite candidate of the Western press", Mr. Brezhnev's protégé Konstantin Chernenko, Mr. Dzhirkvelov regards as an unlikely contender. His own money is on Andrei Kirilenko, who although older than Mr. Brezhnev is "stronger physically". But few predicted the rise of Mr. Khrushchev after the death of Stalin, and the post-Brezhnev era could throw up some equally unforeseen candidate for supreme power.

Whoever it turns out to be, he will in Dzhirkvelov's view, have to restore some credibility to the highest offices in the land. Mr. Brezhnev, he says, has made a "laughing stock" out of the leadership by decorating himself with ever more grandiose medals and awards. These include the Lenin Prize for Literature, awarded for Mr. Brezhnev's memoirs, which are now required reading in Soviet schools, and which Dzhirkvelov dismisses as "devoid not only of profound ideas but also of literary merit of any kind".

But above all, the new man will have to take steps to halt what Dzhirkvelov sees as the "economic and moral decay" of the Soviet system itself. Economically the country faces "catastrophe": except for the privileged few there is no meat to be found in the shops and very few other basic foodstuffs either. An economy of permanent rather than temporary scarcity has created "a huge number of possibilities for making money by dishonest means", and this has in turn led to large-scale corruption at all levels of Soviet life. Chronic shortages of food and housing have also led to poor health, since the unceasing search for the necessities of life, coupled with the daily routine of office or factory, means that people return home in the evening "completely drained both physically and morally". There was much concern about this, Mr. Dzhirkvelov discloses, among Soviet officials at WHO in Geneva.

Their worries — not shared with Western colleagues — included the spread of alcoholism in Russia, which they see as due to the pressures of Soviet life, coupled with the ready availability of cheap vodka. When Mr. B. V. Petrovsky, the Soviet Minister of Health, visited Geneva, he even admitted to a closed session of Soviet officials at WHO that if alcoholism continued to spread at its present rate in Russia, it would eventually lead to "the degeneration of the nation". Whereas in the past, says Dzhirkvelov, ordinary Russians complained privately about economic decay and political repression, nowadays more and more members of the ruling elite itself are voicing their concern. These, he says, include officers of both the Army and the KGB, "which after all are composed of people, many of whom understand what is going on only too well". Only the pinnacle of power is totally isolated from reality.

"It is not surprising if Mr. Brezhnev and his colleagues believe in the abundance of Communist society, since they live in it, even if nobody else does". So will some new leadership take the "radical, rational measures" Dzhirkvelov believes necessary, including a degree of democratization? Dzhirkvelov himself is not optimistic. If the Kremlin tightens up still further, he says, something could well crack; but if it allows liberalization, that too would

lead to an “unpredictable explosion”. Many Russians, he says, are fearfully asking themselves what will happen next. “The one certainty”, Mr. Dzhirkvelov concludes, “is that something must happen. We cannot go on as we are for much longer”.

#### Footnotes

1. A series of five articles in the *Times* (London), 20, 23, 27, 28 and 29 May 1980 based on an interview by a staff reporter with Mr. Dzhirkvelov, reproduced with permission.
2. See page 14.
3. See “From Russia, with Daring”, in *Atlantic Insight*, Oct. 1980, pp. 38-40.
4. See Nora Beloff, “Escape from Boredom: A Defector’s Story”, in *Atlantic*, Nov. 1980, pp. 42-50.
5. See “A Russian in New York”, in *Newsweek*, 8 Dec 1980, p. 64.
6. See William Lowther, “A Defecting Pilot Comes Down to Earth”, in *Macleans*, 15 Dec. 1980, p. 206.
7. See Review Article on page 47.
8. John Le Carré, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. (London, 1974).
9. See Andrei D. Sakharov, “Letter from Exile”, in *Conflict Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1980).

## BOOK REVIEW

### OF MOLES AND MEN

by

*David Charters*

*David C. Martin*

**Wilderness of Mirrors**

Harper and Row, New York, 1980

“This book,” the author advises his readers in the foreword, “begins and ends in mystery, with precious few solutions in between.” It opens in the 1940’s with America’s “loss of innocence” — its idealistic and, of necessity, hasty entry into the clandestine battles of the cold war. The story closes, still unfinished, in the mid-1970s with the resignation of James Jesus Angleton, for two decades the CIA’s enigmatic chief of counter-intelligence, and the death of William King Harvey, point man in the CIA’s secret war against the Soviet Union. Between these events, David Martin, one of the thoroughbred’s of *Newsweek*’s stable, picks his way deftly through a tortuous maze of spies and defectors, plots and counter-plots, deception and disinformation — a “wilderness of mirrors” — in which even the most credible source is inherently suspect. Nowhere are to be found the broad strokes of the political historian, painting the “major issues” of the time in historical perspective. Martin has chosen to leave that secure solid ground to others, focussing instead on the dark underside of the cold war, ruth-