

Solzhenitsyn: A Financial 'Statement'

*Russian
Consul*

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Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn has been deprived by Soviet authorities of all normal means of financial support. He is not permitted to publish in the Soviet Union. Funds due from abroad may be transferred only through the Soviet State Bank, which pockets a large per cent as "tax." Several American writers who have large sums of rubles due them in Moscow have offered these funds to Solzhenitsyn for his support. The following commentary, by the official Soviet Novosti agency, seeks to counter the facts of the Solzhenitsyn case, painting a picture of him living a life of "luxury and leisure."

By Semyon Vladimirov

MOSCOW—A Nobel Prize winner without a roof over his head or a cent in his pocket—such is the pathetic portrait of the writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn drawn by the American writer Albert Maltz. In his letter to The New York Times, Maltz offers to the allegedly starving author of "August 1914" a lump sum of money, true, not from his own bank accounts but from certain "Moscow fees" only he knows about.

Solzhenitsyn promptly responded to the offer. In his statement published in the West the "deeply touched" writer literally makes his readers shed tears over the gloomy picture of his "desperate" financial situation. For he has neither roof over his head, nor personal car, nor any means to buy,

as he puts it, "only a modest little house." "I am ready to borrow the money [offered by Maltz] although it is most embarrassing for me," Solzhenitsyn says at the end of his lamentful letter.

Is it not the natural embarrassment that a proud and deprived man must feel?

"No, it isn't," say all those who happen to travel the Moscow highway where, near the town of Narofominsk, the suddenly materialized dream of the "deprived" writer stands on the bank of a picturesque river amidst white birchs stripped of their green coats by cold.

This sturdy, two-storied building with a garage and a garden can hardly be squeezed into the "modestly little house" definition. This building is Solzhenitsyn's property which he calls Borzovka. The photographs of Borzovka were published in Paris Match and Stern, which, obviously, upset and irritated its owner.

At a closer look, Solzhenitsyn's "housing problem" disappears like a soap bubble. If the writer gets bored with his white birch idyll he may leave Borzovka and go to the city of Ryazan, located near Moscow. There his first wife, Natalya Reshetovskaya, is waiting for him in his two-bedroom flat which he received from the state. But if he doesn't feel like staying far from Moscow he may get there in three hours and join his second wife, the 33-year old Natalya Svetlova, in the comfortable four-bedroom flat in Gorky Street, the main thoroughfare of the city.

However, Solzhenitsyn prefers to live in other people's homes and continue to persuade the world that he has "neither house nor home."

Having so many residences, Solzhenitsyn, as it seems, must face the problem of transportation. But he solves this problem with amazing success despite his "desperate" financial situation. The officers of the State Traffic Inspection showed me register cards for three Moskvich cars. One of them (License No. 11-10 RYAI) was recently bought with his money at a foreign-currency shop by his first wife, and the second one (License No. 98-19 MKM)—by his mother-in-law. The writer himself, who claims literary laurels equal to those of Leo Tolstoy, does not ride Tolstoy's bicycle. True to his tactics of dressing up in rags and tatters of a poor man before the West, Solzhenitsyn pretended that he had sold his car (License No. 98-04 RYAI). But, actually, he continues to drive this car which now has the License No. 95-38 MKP.

This fact is most eloquent. Solzhenitsyn deliberately pretends to be deprived tearing his "last shirt" for the public in the West to see. I believe that a sharp fall of his scandalous popularity with the readers in the West makes him do it.

On Dec. 18 the UPI press agency circulated the following information from its Moscow correspondent: "Western diplomats who had a talk with the 54-year-old author several days ago, feel skeptical about his complaints. More than once they met Solzhenitsyn

at the Moscow stores which sell goods for foreign currency."

The diplomats did not mistake somebody else for Solzhenitsyn, it is easy to explain why this allegedly impoverished writer often visits such stores. As is known, Solzhenitsyn's capital deposited at the Swiss banks exceeds \$1.5 million, according to Western press estimates. Those who would like to have more precise information may address Fritz Heeb, a Swiss lawyer who looks after his capital and sends money orders to Moscow following the instructions of the owner. You may write to Fritz Heeb at the following address: Zurich, Switzerland, 8001, Bahnhof Str. 57C.

It should be pointed out that during the divorce procedure Solzhenitsyn declared to the court that he would pay Natalya Reshetovskaya a lump sum of money he had at the Soviet savings bank, by way of compensation. Later, as Reshetovskaya's friends very well know, he gave her several thousand dollars fearing that she would demand half of his million-worth capital.

In one of his articles devoted to the writer's calling, Albert Maltz said: "Life is not a puppet performance," and spoke with indignation about the superficial observers who studied the reality through thick window panes. It is a pity that Albert Maltz has been drawn into the puppet performance in which a very poor Pierrot is the main character.

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