

ГОСУДУЩА "УКРАИНА",
МОСКВА

1st Dec., 68.

Dear Alan,

My apologies for the delay in writing - it's the usual thing - time is too precious. I hope you received the letter which Raskin Kungarov and I wrote to you - sorry about the official tone and all that but how else can you write such a joint letter - I look forward to hearing from you.

Well, life in Moscow is quite amazing - you cannot imagine just how different life is from the West. For me, in fact, life is not dissimilar from what I am used to in Cambridge, but I am sheltered from the rigours of real Russian life by living in a 1st class hotel and by having friends among the intelligentsia. As a result, life is very exciting and different aspects of life here are always being uncovered.

Work is centred on the Sebelev Institute, the Sternberg Institute and the University, although it is difficult to get into the last since one always needs permits and passes. Ginzburg is quite amazing - he runs a seminar on General Physics every week which

He dominates - he claims to know all physics except elementary particles and I believe him after his recent performances. He with Mikheyev and Zeldovich form a very formidable triumvirate and the fortnight's seminars at the Sternberg Institute have really to be seen to be believed. Each of these three use complete characters and the collision of any given permutation of the 3 is absolutely hilarious, although everyone here takes it very seriously - I feel very embarrassed when an inappropriate guffaw bursts out from M.S.H. in the middle of a heated debate - it is very interesting this contrast of techniques between here and say, Cambridge - but then of course anything would be different compared with Cambridge - it is very good to get away and have a good hard objective look at the place - God, it does need shaking up.

Do you know Zeldovich at all - he is quite fantastic and recently I have been doing some work with him - he is very small - like Alf Garnett without a moustache and with classic national health spectacles - but he is

Very very bright. An example of his energy and dynamism was his recent invitation for me to come to breakfast with him to discuss astrophysics!! He gets up at 5 or 6 every day and so was on top form by the time I arrived at 8.30. We then talked until 11.00 and he went off to a meeting - leaving me to write a paper - he returned at 1.00 and immediately he said we had to do exercises - this involved very strenuous contortions ending up with us standing back to back with arms interlocked, tossing one another up in the air. Zeldovich admitted he was frightened I would toss him right over my head and I realised that it is not really policy to throw Academicians around too violently!

The musical activity here is tremendous - I have been many times to the Bolshoi and also to concerts, ballets plays (yes plays - news that for confidence in one's Russian) The productions are uniformly lavish and I am getting very familiar with all sorts of little known operas which one hasn't a chance of seeing in England - when was the last time

you saw "The Tale of the Isaac Sultan", "Khevanakhia" or
"War and Peace" - Unfortunately, old Wag. does not seem to be
very popular because of his Fascist leanings - however, it will do
me good to have a gear off the old wizard.

I have already been to Georgia for the 5th International
Gen. Rel. conference which I was quite fun - Georgians are
amazing people - hospitality quite unbounded - Georgian wine
also unbounded - I have seen many really famous names in their
cups now - very funny.

^{My} future plans include Serpukhov, Leningrad, Erevan,
Crimea - scattered throughout my stay. Russian winter is
now closing in in earnest, the temperature now constantly about
-5°C (memories of Edmonton) but I am prepared for it this
time.

Best wishes to you and, to quote the Daily Telegraph,
your lady wife,

write if you have time,

As always,

Malcolm.