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Political Trials in USSR and Kids.

The Late Breznev Era. Death of Bella Subbotovskaya-Muchnik.

Introduction.

According to the leaks of information, the Party Decision to restrict the accessibility of jews to the most prestigious Universities has been made in 1969. A lot of important antidissident and antijewish decisions have been made in this Central Committee meeting. Mathematics was especially mentioned. Very soon we could see several confirmations of that leaks: My friend Venya Myasnikov was scientific secretary of the mechanics part of mech-math, the head of it was Sedov. Venya was Member of Party. He called me during the Fall 1969 and said following: "I am officially sick now but I know from some friend that a secret new instruction was received in first Otdel of Department: It says that we should restrict hiring of people whose nationality is dominating in the countries–enemies of USSR. I am, in process of hiring some jew, it is almost done. Only after that I intend to visit Department's first Otdel and officially sign in to read this new instruction." New dean of mech-math was appointed by the very high level order. He started to organize math "brigades" for the special treatment of jewish kids trying to enter Mech-Math.

Rector Petrovski could do nothing. Very soon he died.

A completely new structure was created. In the past times antisemitic exams existed, but many clever jewish kids were capable to overrun them. Besides that, antisemitic entrance exams for future mathematicians were either in physics or in literature, not in mathematics. Besides that, there was no global organization, everything depended on the concrete person.

The new Breznev's approach was based on the idea that the community of math students should be created by mathematicians, not by physicists or experts in the literature. It is physics which should be decided by physicists. But people should respect the General Party Line. As a corollary jewish kids trying to enter mech-math were collected in the special groups for math exams where these brigades worked giving them special math test problems. This system was constructed in early 1970s.

These brigades were created in all Universities. They started soon to sell their activity for money, of course. Finally the whole classical system of entrance exams died.

There were 3 people organizing public activity against the discrimination of jewish kids in process of the entrance exams to mech-math: they were Senderov, Kanevski and Bella Subbotovskaya-Muchnik who finished mech-math simultaneously with me and my wife. Senderov was a leader, he was a math teacher and a devoted revolutioner. He was an organizer. Bella used to be a roommate of my wife in the student dormitories many years ago. She made her PhD in the Lupanov and Yablonski seminar. So she especially had a strong "guilty complex" concerning the role of her teacher Yablonski in the campaign against jews. Yablonski was originally a pupil of my late father. His creative abilities were very modest but he had an interesting seminar. His best pupil was Lupanov. There was a number of jews in his seminar. Bella was one of them. Her results were seriously quoted in his (second) doctor dissertation. No doubt, he was a KGB member, under the Keldysh command. At the same time, several antisemitic impulses were visible in his behavior: he openly hated Gelfand and many others but was careful concerning people in his own area. Keldysh pressed my father to help him to defend ASAP his second doctor dissertation saying that he needs to appoint him as a head of Otdel. It was done finally in the first half of 1960s. Unexpectedly, Yablonski became a terribly aggressive antisemitic activist when he was promoted by Keldysh after the famous letter defending Esenin-Volpin. He became a center of antisemitic administrative activity in the math department of Academy. He loved to bite people. Apparently it gave him a lot of pleasure. It was Yablonski who managed to attract Pontryagin to this activity. Obviously, the promises from Keldysh played leading role here. Lupanov became a dean of mech-math later, in 1980, promoted by Logunov. He was passive, never loved to bite people and did nothing himself, silently allowing to surrounding antisemites to do their job—until it was cancelled by the highest officials at the late Gorbachev Period. In 1980-81 he became a center of antijewish "intellectual genocide" in the eyes of Bella.

Bella worked hard organizing an illegal "underground university" mostly for jewish kids, attracting the lecturers like Fuks, Vinogradov, Sosinski. She entered our family as an old friend. It happened about 3 years before the crucial year 1981. She told me about that underground teaching activity. I warned her that this activity may have very-very bad end—not only for her but also for this good mathematicians. All of them were my personal friends. She became fanatically devoted to the revolutionary activity. Her family broke with her. She became a 100-percent revolutionary. As a cover Bella visited us to teach my son Petya musics (violin). In the Summer of

1981 the situation became dangerous for us. In particular, Bella wanted to attract everybody to her activity. After the entrance exams to mech-math my daughter Ira decided to visit the dean Lupanov, to make a strong protest and decline mech-mat studentship. Somehow I found out her intention in proper time and managed to catch her before entering deans office. My friend Solomon and his son Mark spoke to her as Mark reminded me recently. They told her that she should not feel herself guilty for the other people's crimes. Anyway, we stopped it just before it actually happened. We broke relations with Bella. My wife spoke to Senderov by phone. He personally promised not to make revolutionary job in my family. But our daughter Ira was unhappy. It was very good that all her jewish friends entered some reasonably good institutions. However, it was only an introduction.

Step 1: The first year: The action of revolutionaries and preparation to the trial.

In the August-September 1981 Senderov, Kanevski and Bella made presentation at some western "Voices" about the "intellectual genocide" in the Soviet mathematics. I forgot which radio it was. After that KGB certainly had all this activity "under projector", observing every slightest move. I am aware that this process was ruled by their people. Who were they? The understanding of that happened to be crucial for the defending of our own kids. Let me remind you that this kids were 17 years old in 1981, no political trial against them was allowed by the Soviet Law. KGB worked with 18 years old people, or older. The whole Winter 1981/82 Luisa Kirillova actively worked to collect all this group of boys and girls as a company in her apartment. They were students now in the various institutions.

The Fall 1981 and early Winter 1982 were very special. Dictator Breznev was very sick. Let me present here what Moscow people spoke to each other at that period. Breznev strongly suspected that everybody around him (especially Andropov) are waiting for his death. Kosygin already died. Some "Voices" said that KGB investigator mentioned the name of Breznev's daughter Galina during the interrogation of the circus actor Tsigan, one of her lovers. Tsigan was arrested for something like smuggling. General Tswigun whose responsibility was to look after the Breznevs kids, was completely lost and made an important mistake: he visited Suslov in order to ask him: what to do? Suslov was terribly frightened, told him to go away. He was sick and died very soon. Of course, the rules in such dark dictator-type structures required Tswigun to speak only to Breznev, his host, concerning his family. Anyway, Tswigun was killed. They officially announced that he committed

suicide. Andropov was restrained from the position of the KGB Chairman. He was shifted to the position of the Second Secretary of Party which is formally higher, but his real base KGB was taken out of him. New chairman of KGB was appointed. It was V.Fedorchuk from Kiev. His wartime illegitimate son V.V.Fedorchuk is a mathematician working in mech-math, expert in the General Topology. His biological father always was officially mentioned in his documents. It was allowed until Stalin forbade to do that after 1944, but he was born earlier. Rector Logunov (who always was our enemy trying to prove that Einstein General Relativity is wrong) wanted to make him a successor of Paul Alexandrov as a head of Topology in the Mech-Math. Alexandrov was very sick. He wanted me to become his successor. So we carefully investigated this situation and found out that old Fedorchuk does not support his bastard son completely, did not include him in the list of relatives for Politburo. However, at the low levels this official connection could be effectively used sometimes by the Logunov people. Small people don't know whether old Fedorchuk support his son or not.

I was elected an academician at December 1981 and became a person which KGB would like to control. There was a big difference between the state attention to academicians and other scientists—even corresponding members of Academy were watched much less than academicians. Their phones contained permanently installed listening devices.

Luisa already worked hard last 3 years to increase contact of our families, but her activity drastically increased in the late 1981 year. She started to visit Chernogolovka with her family since January 1982, to attract more actively my daughter to her "club" of kids. My friend Solomon Alber and I discussed this business in Chernogolovka at the Spring,— March-April 1982. He was very experienced, spent already 7 years as a refusnik. He waited permission to leave Soviet Union totally 13 years. Solomon helped a lot to Natan Sharanski during his trial and after that. Natan attended his burial in US in 1993. I spoke to Natan—he was a very interesting personality, told me, in particular, that there were 18 regimes of feeding in the Soviet Prison, from 1a to 9b, to press inmates physically and psychologically.

Solomon pointed out to me that some features in the behavior of Luisa look unnatural. They contradict to the publicly declared image of that family. I was not experienced enough but decided to be careful. I pressed my daughter to stop visiting Kirillov's where this club was regularly collected. Ira made scandals, was unhappy. However, very soon her opinion changed, and she became very frightened.

Step 2. The Preparation of trial.

In the late June 1982 really dramatic events started. During the half-year period from January to June most kids of that company became 18 years old, and KGB started the final business. Iliya Gelzer was arrested. Papers were found in his apartment looking like especially designed for the trial. I don't know who gave them to Gelzer. Anyway, he was careless. Nina Duduchava was interrogated several hours. She probably typed Gelzers materials, a typing machine was found by KGB. Both were classmates and friends of my daughter. Mandelstam was interrogated 12 hours. We heard later from friends that Gelzer and Mandelstam distributed some antisoviet "listovkas" in the peoples personal mailboxes. They both were students in the Theoretical Physics Abrikosov Group at the Institute of Steel. The Mandelstams aunt told my wife later that she found occasionally some antisoviet material in his room at home few days ahead of the first arrests and interrogations, made scandal and burned it. So KGB found nothing: they were aware that there is something, indeed, became angry and interrogated him very long time, but unsuccessfully. Senderov was arrested. Kanevski also was arrested few days later when he returned from some trip, as people told me later. So he was not a KGB spy as I thought at first. A lot of other kids from that company were interrogated. My daughter was not called by KGB for interrogation. We did right thing with Solomon, exactly in time, removing her from the contacts with that club couple of months prior to the arrests and interrogations started.

Let me tell you story which looks funny now (but did not looked funny in corresponding time): My wife received in September 1982 an "otkrytka" from KGB ordering her to come to Lubyanka. It was signed by "Colonel Malov".

I was in Chernogolovka. She came to me with tears, showed it and said "Don't tell about it to anybody". This kind of reaction of soviet people was standard. "No, I am not going to keep silence" – I answered, already prepared not without help of my friend Solomon. I made a first call to the friend of my late father, a painter V.V.Domogatski originated from the noble family. Its history was going back to the famous litvanian Prince Daumantis=Dovmont who was an invited Prince-ruler at the Pskov republic in the late 13 Century. He was baptized under the name Timofei and canonized as an orthodox saint for his victories over germans. V.V.Domogatski was son of the well-known russian sculptor whose art is broadly presented in Tretiakovka. I asked his advice. Several best russian painters of the younger postwar generation

highly respected his opinions in the art and considered themselves as his pupils (Birger and Mitlyanski between them). He told me following: "Boris Birger received such invitation, he did not attend and was taken to them with help of militia. So, there is no choice".

After that I visited Solomon and discussed with him what to do. Solomon's advice was completely different. He told me following: "Birger is a unique person, participant of the Stalingrad battle, broadly known by his views and by the famous collision of artists with Nikita Krushchev many years ago. He dropped officially his Party membership after that. He is acknowledged as one of very best painters in Moscow. Probably there was a very high level order to speak to him. But the case of your wife is different: no known activity. It is simply a provocation against you."

We decided after discussion that KGB probably would like to "zaverbovat" me, now an academician—that would be valuable for them. They successfully did that with biologist academician Baev attracting his daughter to the icon-stealing trial, her husband was a priest. Finally Baev became their man. His career became very successful. His views drastically changed to what we call the Party-based views. But how to do that? The answer is the same as in the case of Baev. They should try to act through the family, to provoke them. Probably Luisa tried to make preparation of that business for them through the naive inexperienced daughter, but her approach failed. It could be that Luisa became angry and reported to them that it was my wife who ordered to daughter to avoid trap, to stop visiting her "club".

"Now they decided to use another approach based on your wife"—said Solomon. "It might be that they are trying also to frighten her, as a punishment for the failure of the project if they already reported to some superwiseman that academician Novikov will be "na kruchke" soon. Don't keep silence"—Solomon recommended.—"Make noise. The noise works for us, the silence works against us. Sakharov knows that very well. It looks like Shafarevich does not have good advisers and does not know this specific rule, in particular."

Let me make some additional remark clarifying this statement: My late friend Andrei Tiurin (very good mathematician later elected as a corresponding member) was very close to Shafarevich. He told me at that time (in 1982) a very interesting story from the period of the Shafarevich-Sakharov interaction in the first half of 1970s where the very same family participated. Shafarevich started to do a dissident-style activity in 1971, jointly with Sakharov. Luisa became his close friend, helped him with dissident ma-

terials. At the Winter 1972 or 73 Shafarevich went to West Ukrainian resort for skiing, I forgot which one. A lot of people visited these nice places at that time (Yaremche, Worohta,...). Luisa arrived immediately with kids. Few days later a couple of "typical KGB men" appeared in this place. Somehow Shafarevich observed that Luisa met them secretly at the backyard of hotel. He left this place by train to Moscow at the very same day. Only Tiurin was informed by him about that, Shafarevich did not distributed this information publicly. I realized that Shafarevich made mistake which we discussed with Solomon: he kept silence in math community about that KGB approach. It turned out later that he fully paid for that typical mistake of the old-fashioned soviet citizen educated by the Stalin's period: KGB increased pressure. With very high probability they used several times this typical soviet weak point, described above. They worked several years. Later they pressed him also declining first attempt of his son's entrance to University. Finally they reached their goal successfully as it seems for me.

I knew that all my phones were "listened". It was reality of the academicians life in the Breznev period. I started to call friends loudly saying about that "besobrasiyе", made many phone calls. I demonstrated that I am ready to speak about that everywhere.

Another point: Solomon pointed out to me that this "otkrytka" from KGB deserves more careful investigation: In spite of the frightening signs printed in this sheet of paper, it was sent from the ordinary street post box, not from the KGB building. If my wife appears, colonel Malov will present officially that she came voluntarily. I asked Solomon: "Why cannot he send such mail through KGB officially next time?" "O", Solomon answered," some his supervisor might tell him: "Malov, you are going to order here all Moscow intelligentsia. You are not ready yet to make delicate work in Moscow. Very good place in Mongolia would suit better your abilities."

I burned this mail. Nobody repeated it. I blame myself for that stupidity: Would be nice to preserve this "otkrytka" as a memorial.

It was September 1982. One month later Breznev died. Andropov took power. He removed Fedorchuk from KGB and changed approach of Politburo: No more illegal killing of dissidents. We do not want to transform USSR into criminal organization as Breznev did. We should create necessary laws and legally try our enemies. Kids should be reeducated by KGB: one should persecute older people who are responsible: Senderov's trial was very severe, he got at least 5 years in prison. The kids trials essentially were stopped. Gelzer was "zaverbovan" and was used as a valuable witness. He officially

got 2 years on parole, but KGB helped him to recover student position. He finished Steel Institute, but did not become physicist. In the late Gorbachev period Gelzer became a successful member of the rich KGB-connected group, in particular, as their expert. He continues successfully doing some US-Russia business. Duduchava fled with her father to Georgia, Tbilisi. Her father died soon: his weak georgian heart did not survive these dangerous circumstances. She returned later to Moscow but her life was seriously broken as she told her former schoolmates many years later. Many kids who were interrogated by KGB in 1982 never completely recovered psychologically. They always felt themselves unsecure in Russia and immediately left it in early 1990s.

Paul Alexandrov died one week after Breznev. All corrupted bureaucracy immediately became terribly afraid of Andropov. Using that we annihilated (with help of Bogoliubov) an attempt of A.Tychonov to deprive mech-math departments in Universities from many research programs in favor of the new applied departments organized by him. He had a lot of dark and deep connections in the high-level bureaucratic circles surrounding Breznev: Immediately after the fall of Nikita Khrushchev his uprising became very rapid. This story looks like some sort of mystery: How we found very soon after the Breznev's death that a secret meeting with representatives of the most Universities (but not from MSU and LSU, -Moscow and Leningrad Universities) is going on at the Ministry of Education; How Tychonov's people do not allow anybody to leave it until final decision will be formulated and signed by the vice-minister Egorov; How Alexandryan (a dean of mech-math in Erevan, pupil of Sobolev) managed to leave it secretly through the toilet and called me; How I and my closed friend in math department of Academy made urgent search for Bogoliubov and finally found him in Dubna; How we succeeded to present an official protest of Academy to the Head of Ministry of Education before anything was signed. By the way, Tychonov's force fell immediately after the death of Breznev, he tried to use a moment of indefinicy during the first weeks after the Breznev's death. His influence was briefly recovered during the Chernenko period when he made second attempt of the same kind but also failed. He punished Lupanov and Yablonski who did not support him in this affair.

I took the Alexandrov's chair at mech-math. General Topology was removed from this chair: a special chair of General Topology was organized by Logunov with V.V.Fedorchuk as a head. So an agreement was found between us finally.

Death of Bella Subbotovskaya-Muchnik.

Bella was invited to Lubyanka at the Summer 1982, as people told me. I don't know the exact date. She came with materials of math exams "for jews", trying to enter mech/math, showing them that these exams were falsified. Either the problems were much more difficult than normal or the answers were evaluated incorrectly. She wanted to come next time, to bring more materials. The KGB "ludowed" probably reported to higher officials that nothing can be done with her. Nobody can reeducate her. No way to make trial against her as well. She was killed one month before Breznev's death "in the car accident". This car never has been found. Clearly there was an order from Politburo: don't be naive, all killings in the late Breznev era were ordered by Politburo. KGB had no right to decide such things. They were executioners and advisers only. They could recommend but final decision was not theirs.

The practice of Politburo ordered killings, made by KGB, essentially was finished, it was gone with the death of Breznev. However, the tale about KGB killings even of some low level undesirable antigovernment people by the order of highest power (performed both-inside of Russia as well as abroad) is alive until now. There were cases in the present 21st century when it was used by the European Democracy for framing.

Everything changed when the "free democratic period" started in the late Gorbachev era: killings also became free, not ordered from the government level, a lot of former experienced KGB workers became members of various mafias, some leading experts were hired by the West. Money started to dominate everything in Russia including killings. It is difficult for younger people to make judgment about Breznev period. The realities of the new era became completely different.

Concerning the Breznev period, good to ask following question: Who killed king Charles the First in England—was it Parliament (with moderate members excluded by the Cromwell company) or simply an Executioner?

Andropov's period was short and strange. It helped us. We saved mech-math from Tychonov, the antisemitism became milder. It became easier to appoint jew as a head of laboratory; My pupil Buchstaber found out this change on his own example: He waited appointment few years in his applied institution, but it was done only 2 months after the death of Breznev. Immediately an impression appeared that this question lost status of the main interest for the new dictator. Some hopes appeared to save University from Logunov. He was already warned by the new Politburo Member comrade Gei-

dar Aliev that he will be removed soon as we heard. We knew that Aliev (not without permission of Andropov) saved a chessplayer Kasparov's championship. Knowing armenian-azerbaidjani relations and strong antisemitism in the USSR of that period, we can say that certainly it was a demonstration of "internationalism" from the former Azerbaidjani Party Secretary to do that for half jew and half armenian Kasparov (fathers name Weinberg). No doubt, Kasparov became "their man" in 1982/83. Using the corrupted Party Burocracy Karpov (a favorite of Breznev) organized pressure on Kasparov to cancel his match with Korchnoy on the base of artificial political reason, so Kasparov already was declared defeated. Karpov was afraid of Kasparov but not of Korchnoy. But Breznev died, and new dictator allowed to pay serious penalty in order to recover Kasparov-Korchnoy match. It is interesting that Korchnoy agreed. Probably he hated Karpov and knew that he will not be able to defeat him, but Kasparov might. Next steps of that story happened already after Andropov's death. We will not discuss them here. Andropov probably was the last idealistic communist as a USSR dictator. He probably believed that problems can be solved on the base of "discipline" and strong anticorruption activity organized by the community of professional KGB officers (not by KGB secsots between scientists, engineers and teachers, workers and peasants, burocrats and generals, and others— these people are only servants).

Andropov also promoted Gorbachev as a 3d person in Party after him and Chernenko. But very soon he became sick and lost his second kidney. No more than half year of life remained for him. The Party Burocracy stopped to listen the dying secretary general's orders, they simply kept silence doing nothing. Let us try to understand something. Andropov certainly hated corrupted Party Burocracy, he started to hunt it. There were rumors that already in Breznev time Andropov established strong anticorruption regulations in the narrow circle of real professional KGB officers, even A.Sakharov acknowledged that. Andropov had very bad relations with the corrupted head of militia—Tshelokov—who was supported by Breznev during his last years. He was arrested after the Breznev death. There was also a serious anti-Andropov suspicion in the Breznev's head during the last year of dictators life. Andropov was lucky that Breznev died before he was removed from Politburo: one month left to the "Important Plenum" of Central Committee already announced by Chernenko. However, no traces of plot surfaced later concerning the Breznev's death which looks suspicious.

There is no doubt that all killings were done by the order of Politburo (i.e. Breznev). But they always were attributed in the international propahanda

to KGB only. There was a "Demonization" of KGB in the worlds opinion, it still exists now as an image of "KGB for Idiots" using US terminology for the popular literature. It would not be surprising that Andropov and other high ranking KGB people did not liked that. Besides that our experience tells us that the most famous leutenants of dictators like Beria, Khruchev and Andropov did not considered themselves really guilty for the whole nasty collection of deeds which they made in time of Stalin or Breznev. "It is him who is guilty" – probably was their real opinion. "I am going to show my real political image only when I will became a Head of the State".