

March 13, 1968

Dear Shri Warriar,

We are planning to bring out a collection, in book form, of contributions from the eminent Indian journalists who visited our country on the eve of the jubilee celebrations. Each contribution may be of about 4000 words. May I have your suggestion about the specific topic you would like to write on. I shall be highly obliged to receive an early reply.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(G.L. KOLOKOLOV)  
Editor

Shri Krishna Warriar,  
MATRUBHUMI,  
CALICUT  
(S.I)

INFORMATION DEPARTMENT  
OF THE USSR EMBASSY IN INDIA

25, BARAKHAMBA ROAD, POST BOX NO. 241  
NEW DELHI-1



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भारत में सोवियत समाजवादी जनतंत्र  
संघ के दूतावास का सूचना विभाग

२५, बारहसम्मा रोड, पोस्ट बाक्स न० २४१  
नई दिल्ली-१

March 13, 1968

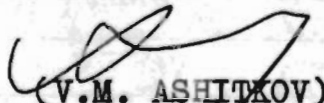
Dear Shri Warriar,

In pursuance of our letter of January 9, 1968, ( a copy of which is attached herewith) may we remind you that we have not received your suggestion yet.

We shall be highly obliged if you can send the same by the end of this month.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

  
(V.M. ASHITKOV)  
Editor

Soviet Land Booklets.

Encl: 1

Shri Krishna Warriar,  
"MATRUBHUMI",  
CALICUT  
(S.I)

25 April, 1968

Mr. V.M.Ashitkov,  
Editor, Sovietland Booklets.

Dear Sir,

With reference to your letter of 13 March, 1968, I am sending herewith an article, "Three Soviet Friends" which is a translation of an article which was published in the Mathrubhumi, Calicut, Kerala State on 5 November, 1967. If found suitable, this may be included in the collection of contributions by Indian journalists who visited the Soviet Union on the eve of the Jubilee celebrations.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

N.V.Krishna Warrior,  
Asst. Editor.

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"MATHRUBHUMI"

P. O. Box No. 46

CALICUT-1

18 March, 1968

Dear Mr. Kolokolev,

I thank you for your letter of the 13th inst. I am glad that you are planning to bring out a collection of contributions from Indian journalists who visited the Soviet Union on the eve of the jubilee celebrations.

Some time back I had published an article on THREE SOVIET FRIENDS in the Mathrubhumi Weekly Supplement. Based on my acquaintance with three Soviet citizens, a Circus artist from Dagistan, a Taxi driver of Leningrad and a Kazakh schoolboy, I had tried in this article to depict the beneficial influence of the Soviet system on the common man.

I shall be glad to send this article - an English translation, of course - for inclusion in your proposed book. On hearing from you I shall send it. If, however, you want me to write on any other aspect, please inform.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely

(N.V. Krishna Warrior)

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THREE SOVIET FRIENDS.

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(N.V. Krishna Warrior)

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If a tree is to be judged by its fruit, is not a social system to be judged by the men and women it creates? In this article I shall deal with three ordinary soviet citizens with whom I had occasion to come into contact during my short visit to the USSR in August, 1967. I feel it is possible and also legitimate to form an estimate of the Soviet system on the basis of these three individuals.

We went to a Shapitho- a touring circus- in Leningrad. Now most of the Soviet cities have their own permanent circus troupes. But during the summer they will be usually touring the provinces. To fill the void left by them Shapithos are organised with artistes drawn from various troupes. It was the performance by such a shapitho, held in a canvas tent, that I went to see in Leningrad. The greatest attraction of this show was the performance of seals and sea-lions trained by the great animal trainer, Natalia Durova. But it is not about Madam Durova, but about Comrade Qurban Qurbanov, that I have to say something.

A tight horizontal wire 30 metres high. A slanting wire from the ground to one end of this wire. Qurban is a circus artiste who has to walk along the slanting wire to the horizontal wire and walk there backwards and forwards, turn somersaults on it in the same way, kneel on it and ~~in place~~ place his own kerchief between the toes, take it again, sitting in the same position, and in the end walk down to the ground along the same slanting wire, and perform similar feats. While this young man of about 35 years was performing I did not think him worthy of any special consideration. Of course his performance was neat, easy and graceful. ~~His~~ His physique too was strikingly beautiful. But that day Qurban did not show any feat that is not usually performed by ordinary circus artistes in India.

At about 11 p.m. after the show when we reached the hotel, the dining hall was closed. Yet we were admitted into it as we had made prior arrangements. There, around a table were seated Qurban, Comrade Alexander who was the weight lifter in the same Shapitho and another young man who, we could know later, was a factory worker in Leningrad, whose twin hobbies were massaging and photo-journalism. We occupied a nearby table and during dinner we picked up a conversation with these three. That was how I was to be able to have a peep into the life of Qurban.

Comrade Qurban Qurbanov was born in Dagistan in Asian Russia north of Iran, on the northern slopes of the Caucasus mountains. Before revolution Dagistan had a large number of wandering circus artistes. Hearing Qurban describing these artistes, I thought of village circus artistes of my own State Kerala known as "Kurikkal", who throng ~~in~~ our market places and temple festivals with their wives and children, perform various physical feats, collect donations from spectators and thus eke out a precarious livelihood. Qurban's father who was a Moslem, died quite young. Orphaned Qurban joined his



uncle's troupe of tight-rope-walkers in his eighth year, and gradually was absorbed in State service. Qurban told us that in the Soviet Union there are more than 3000 circus artistes who have their own central organisation. Like all industries the "Circus Industry" also is State-owned. There are also Circus Institutes under state management to train young circus artistes. A student who joins as an apprentice has no salary, but is paid when he is called for performance elsewhere. Once he proves his worth, the student is employed on a regular basis on a salary of about 130 Roubles a month (1 Rouble is 8.30 Rs). There are circus artistes in the Soviet Union drawing as much as 3000 Roubles a month. Those who have the misfortune to meet with accidents during performances are paid the entire amount of their salary as pension for the rest of their lives.

Qurban has 23 years' service in Circus. Therefore he is paid a pension. His salary is in addition to that. His republic has recognised his services presenting him the titles "Honoured Artiste" and "People's Artiste". These titles carry along with them a raise in the pay. In his 35th year, if he so wanted, he could retire from service and live on his pension for the rest of his life. Yet he is continuing in service because of his love for the art of circus. Moderately tall, well-built and handsome Qurban is proud of being an Asian. He told us that the people of Dagistan are as fond of entertaining guests as we Indians are and requested that to perpetuate this moment of our mutual acquaintance we should have some vodka, though the hotel had already closed for the day. He was sorry that the famous wines of the Caucasian slopes are not available in Leningrad! Though he has yet to visit India, Qurban had seen many regions of the world. He was very proud of counting Fidel Castro among his friends. He was positive that if not himself, Soviet Circus artistes who are more renowned than him would visit India and earn the approbation of the Indian people. Once he starts climbing upon the taut wire, his attention is focussed on the people who are sitting around with bated breath. Qurban spoke with fervour ~~about~~ about his joy at the thought that thousands of spectators are thronging in the dim light below with upturned faces and throbbing hearts, their only concern for the time being his safety up there on the high wire. From there he could distinctly hear every sigh and every exclamatory sound of the spectators. His own heart would then beat in unison with the heart of these thousands of men, women and children. He is one with them ~~XXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ This awareness of unity, he said, is the supreme reward for an artiste. Qurban has two sons. His ambition is to make both of them greater circus artistes than their father.

During all this time I was thinking of the wandering village circus troupes of Kerala. Almost daily they come to the vacant lot near my office in Calicut in the distant state of Kerala in south-west India. I used to watch them from the balcony of my office. They spread a dirty towel on the ground, perform various physical feats to the accompaniment of a drum and a pipe, and then beg for money from the spectators. If Qurbanov's life is different from that of these mendicant acrobats, the thanks are due to the glorious social-political-economic revolution which took place in the Soviet Union fifty years ago. Who can find fault with a system which has transformed a vagrant ~~XXXXXX~~ <sup>man</sup> acrobat into a distinguished <sup>talented</sup> artist, a highly cultured citizen, a man of such great self-respect which enables him to tap on the shoulders of world-leaders with natural sense of equality and above all a ~~XXXXXX~~ gentleman of exalted instincts? Is not this <sup>man</sup> an indisputable triumph of the Soviet system?

with whom I am acquainted

My second friend is a taxi driver named Tamara. It was she who took us round the Winter Palace and other tourist spots in Leningrad and drove us to Puskin, a small town near Leningrad. Tamara might be 40 or 45 years old, and unlike the majority of Soviet women she is slim. Her face was sun-tanned, hair cropped. I was attracted towards her red-jewelled earrings, for I had a pair of ear-rings exactly like in my childhood. I also noticed a device above the indicator panel of the taxi cab for keeping books and newspapers. Evidently she was an avid reader. From a truck driver Tamara turned to driving a taxi because, as she said, taxi driving enabled her to get into contact with people of all types and thus to lead an ever-new life. In Soviet Union all taxis are state-owned. Drivers are paid according to the work they turn out. Tamara told us that during the previous last month she could earn 415 Roubles. This is equivalent to Rs. 3444.50. She could well manage her family expenses with this income, and Tamara's family is comparatively big. She has two children, mother and a younger brother. Mother is invalid. She has not been able to do any work during her entire life. Therefore she gets only the State pension which is 30 Roubles. She is not entitled to get anything from the social security scheme. Though invalid, the mother would look after children and keep the home. The father of Tamara's children was a taxi driver. He is in jail, where he has to stay for another year. Tamara did not say why, but we surmised from her remarks that he got drunk and had involved himself in a nasty accident. She shrugged her shoulders saying that it was God's will. Tamara has no religion; she could not say whether her mother too believed in religion. Still she used the phrase about God's will! For some crimes the punishment is very light in Soviet Union, something like our security for good conduct. Yet they view traffic rule violations seriously and the punishment for them have to be borne. If the culprit so chooses he can during that time go to a labour camp and work there. In that case the punishment will be commuted. The labour camps also provide human contact and friendly treatment. Therefore many of those who are convicted for crimes prefer ~~taxs~~ labour camps to jails. Tamara's elder son is studying in the 5th standard. He is 12 years old. Younger daughter is only 18 months old. She is not being sent to the Creche, for there is Tamara's mother to look after her. Tamara pays a rent of about 8 Roubles for her apartment. She is an avid reader of newspapers and books. She knows that the present Prime minister of India is the daughter of the great Nehru, but she does not remember the Prime minister's name.

The City of Leningrad is known to Tamara as her own palm. She had something to say to all the taxi drivers she chanced to meet on the road. Sometimes she would stop the car and exchange a cigarette with them. It appeared that Tamara played a prominent part in the taxi drivers' association. Though slightly built, this woman had muscles of steel and opinions as strong as that metal. It was by chance that we got into Tamara's car. She was nothing more than an ordinary taxi driver, an ordinary member of the working class. Yet in her were evident a large store of self-confidence, a great pride in the social system that they themselves had built up, an immense spirit of adventure, a burning curiosity and the readiness to question everything. Leningrad had been surrounded by the Nazis for about 900 days during the second world war. More than half of the town was destroyed and 700000 men, women and children died of hunger. Tamara's eyes burned like embers while she spoke of those dark days. Though she was a child then she remembers all those experiences well. It was during those days that her father, who was a shop-keeper, died of cancer. To prevent the recurrence of such a calamity, a war of such magnitude, Tamara is prepared to ~~undergo~~ sacrifice anything. I felt that this taxi driver was a daughter of the Russian revolution in the true sense.