

# The Writing on the Wall

NIKOLAI ZLOBIN

In the fall 1994 and spring 1996 issues of *Demokratizatsiya*, some material representing political humor of the Communist era in the former Soviet Union was published. Due to popular demand, we are again publishing material of this nature with several goals in mind: The first is to preserve examples of how people caught in Communist totalitarianism were able to find the strength and bravery to see some humor in the forced official propaganda of “socialist” life. Political jokes and satire of the authorities exist in any country—even the wealthiest and most democratic. With all of the socioeconomic and political change in modern Russia, these are different times with a different kind of humor and different jokes, so we have included several examples of this also.

Our other goal is to use these examples of sociopolitical works as the objects of historical, political, and cultural analysis. It would be difficult to overestimate the role that political humor played in the cultural identity of the former USSR. It seems that any study of that culture would not only be incomplete, but false, without considering this aspect.

Political satire developed and evolved along with the Communist system. What is astounding is that the reaction of the public was always immediate and merciless. Even more astounding was that the huge punitive mechanism of the KGB was never able to find the authors of these deadly jokes. Were there even authors? More than anything, the author was life itself in the USSR—with its incredible stupidity, its hypocrisy towards reality, and its silly propaganda machine.

Finally, the transition to democracy and a free market, especially in a country such as Russia, is incredibly complex and at times hypocritical. This complexity and the mistakes made have made the population insecure. For that reason, many in the former Soviet Union are nostalgically looking back to communism. It is important to remind them, however, of what communism really was. The political humor of those times is a good, reflective reminder.

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It is October 1917. The granddaughter of a Decembrist hears noise outside and sends a servant out to see what it is. In a half-hour the servant comes back and says:

“Baroness, it is a revolution!”

“Oh, a revolution!” shouts the Decembrist’s granddaughter. “That’s wonderful! My grandfather was a revolutionary! What do they want?”

“They want to eliminate the rich!”

“Strange . . . I don’t really understand . . . My grandfather was trying to eliminate poverty . . .”

Stalin lost his famous pipe. He calls Lavrenty Beria and says:

“Comrade Beria! I lost my pipe. Put all of your force to recovering it. You will answer with your head.”

“I hear you comrade Stalin.” At the end of the day Stalin opens the bottom drawer of his desk and sees his pipe in a pile of papers. He calls Beria and says:

“The pipe has been found, you can end your search.”

“Congratulations comrade Stalin,” answers Beria. “But how are we to punish the six people who have confessed?”

“What is the easiest way to explain communism?”

“With a fist.”

Capitalism: the exploitation of people by people. Socialism: the other way around.

A kolkhoz has received a new pair of boots. Because of this, all of the workers get together for a meeting. The first half-hour is spent thanking the party for this concern for them. Then the director of the kolkhoz speaks:

“There is a motion to give me possession of the new boots. Who is for this motion? Who is against the Soviet Union?”

“Dad, who is Karl Marx?”

“Karl Marx, son, is an economist.”

“Like Aunt Sarah?”

“No, Aunt Sarah is a head economist.”

For the centennial of Pushkin’s death, they decided to commission a statue in Moscow. A contest was held. In fourth place was a statue of Pushkin reading one of his own books. Third place was Pushkin reading a book by Stalin. Second place was Stalin reading a book by Pushkin. Finally, first place was Stalin reading a book by Stalin.

Stalin has been informed that in some small village his exact double has been found.

“Shoot him,” orders Stalin.

“Maybe we could shave his mustache and change his looks a bit?” asks a reluctant lieutenant.

“An excellent idea! Shave off his mustache, change his looks, and then shoot him.”

“Who can we consider a Communist?”

“Those who read Marx, Engels, and Lenin.”

“What about an anti-Communist?”

“Those who try to understand what they wrote.”

Brezhnev is saying goodbye to an American politician at the airport. They hug and kiss for a long time. Finally, the American leaves. Brezhnev is almost in tears. Gromyko says to him:

“What’s wrong Leonid Ilyich? Stop crying! He’s just a minor politician with little weight in his own country.”

“Yes,” answers Brezhnev, “but can he kiss!!”

Two party workers are having a conversation.

“Can you imagine,” says one, “I was recently on a business trip to Berdichev. I am on the trolley, and who do you think I see walking down the street? Karl Marx himself!”

“Are you serious?” the other asks in amazement. “I don’t believe it! It cannot be!! You mean they finally put a trolley in Berdichev?!”

During Easter, Brezhnev is walking down a corridor of the Central Committee of the Communist Party headquarters. A member of the committee is walking towards him and says:

“Christ has risen, Leonid Ilyich!”

“Thank you,” answers Brezhnev” In a moment he encounters another member of the Committee.

“Christ has risen!,” the other member says.

“Thank you,” answers Brezhnev, “I have already been informed.”

In a political economics class, the teacher asks:

“Did the USSR exploit or support other socialist countries?”

“The USSR exploited them,” answers a student, “to the point that they needed to be supported.”

The secretary of the regional committee of the Communist Party calls a kolkhoz and asks the director:

“How is the harvest going?”

“Bad. Very bad.”

“Don’t embroider the truth, tell it to me how it is!!”

A Soviet and an American are arguing over where there is more democracy—in the United States or the USSR. The American says:

“We have complete freedom. One time I even urinated on the Capitol building.”

“So?” answers the Soviet, “I once urinated on Red Square, right in Lenin’s mausoleum.”

“Really, I did it,” answers the American, “so no one would notice, of course.”

“So did I. I didn’t even unbutton my pants . . .”

God asks a person:

“You have believed in me all of your life. I have decided to give you your biggest wish. What do you wish?”

“Make it so that on my way home the streets are lined with graves, and in the graves are Communists.”

“But there are all kinds of Communists, good ones and bad ones . . .”

“All right then, make it so the good Communists are in good graves and the bad ones are in bad graves.”

The wife of a Communist Party worker is walking down the street and sees two dogs making love. The daughter asks:

“Mom, what are they doing?”

“Well,” answers the mother, “how shall I say . . . The doggy on top is tired and needs help. The one that is below is helping him out. It is a very kind dog.”

“Just like dad says,” sighs the daughter, “that’s how life is, if you are kind, everyone who is not too lazy screws you.”

Leonid Brezhnev is speaking at a meeting:

“They say that I cannot say a word without it written down in front of me. That is ridiculous! Ha, dash, ha, dash, ha, dash, ha, dash.”

Brezhnev says to his personal physician:

“I need some advice. Every morning at seven I always have a bowel movement.”

“Well, what is the problem Leonid Ilyich?”

“I never wake up before eight.”

The secretary of a neighborhood Communist Party chapter calls a church.

“Father, can you lend us some chairs from the church? We’re having a big meeting.”

“Last time your people broke half of the chairs. I will not lend them to you any more!”

“Oh, You won’t lend them? Then we will increase your voluntary donation to the peace fund!”

“You’ll increase our fee? Then you won’t get our members for your Saturday meetings!”

“We won’t get your members? Then you won’t be able to get your car fixed at the party garage!”

“You won’t fix my car? Then you won’t have church wine for your banquets!”

“We won’t get wine? Then you will no longer go to our doctors but to the regular clinics!”

“That is too much! Then you will never get our nuns for your steam baths after your meetings!”

“No nuns, huh!? For that father, you are no longer a member of the party!”

Leonid Brezhnev is talking to his grandson:

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”

“I want to be the general secretary of the CPSU!”

“That is not a very good idea,” says Brezhnev. “What do we need two general secretaries for?”

During the struggle with dissidents in the far north of the USSR, two Eskimos are talking. Around them is night and endless permafrost. One says:

“Do you want to hear a new joke—a political one?” The second answers:

“You better not. It’s dangerous. What if they send us away!”

In the 1970s, some factory workers are discussing politics in the smoking lounge.

“They say that they are going to raise the price of meat,” complains one.

“Yes, I heard that, too. They say that the price of butter and milk is going up, too,” says a second.

“They do what they want,” says a third. “I even heard that they plan to raise the price of vodka!”

“No!” exclaims the first. “That cannot be. The academic Andrei Sakharov would not allow it!”

An old woman, with much difficulty gets through a crowd onto a bus, rests for a moment, and says:

“Thank God!” A man standing near her barks:

“That is not the right thing to say. Not thank God, but thanks to the Communist Party! Do you understand?”

“And what if they get rid of the Communist Party, what then?”

“Then you should say Thank God!”

When Brezhnev wakes up in the morning, he goes out on the balcony and sees the sun. It says to him: “Good morning dear Leonid Ilyich! What a wise leader you are!” At the end of the working day Brezhnev again walks out on his balcony and once again sees the sun. This time it stays silent, so Brezhnev asks: “Sun, why is it that you see me and yet say nothing?” “Go to hell you old fool!” answers the sun, “I’ve already made it to the West!”

China drops a nuclear weapon on the Soviet Union. Five million people die. In Beijing, they await the return fire. The minister of defense of China runs into the office of Deng Xiaoping and yells: “We’ve been monitoring the Soviet nuclear weapons, but the Kremlin decided not to use them. Instead, two hours ago they dropped a rubber bomb on us. Over fifty million people have already been killed and it’s still bouncing!”

A Soviet television journalist appears on screen: “Our report today is from Fifth Avenue in New York City. Let’s talk to some passers-by.” The reporter stops someone on the street and asks him in English, “What is your name?” “My name is John,” he answers. “Here you see,” says the reporter in Russian again, “His name is John, he has not eaten in five days and has not had a roof over his head in two years.”

The secretary of the Communist organization at a factory asks a worker, a fellow

Communist, “Comrade Petrov! Why weren’t you at the last party meeting?” “I would have definitely come,” answers Petrov, “had I known ahead of time that it was the last.”

The unthinkable happened in the Kremlin: Leonid Brezhnev refused a decoration. Brezhnev is on a platform speaking: “Comrades, all of you know of my attitude toward honors and decorations. Nevertheless, this time, after being advised by Suslov and Gromyko, I decided to refuse a decoration of the highest honor from a friendly nation . . . cough . . . cough . . . cough. . . . The decoration is a golden nose ring.”

Brezhnev is speaking at a meeting of the Politburo:

“Comrades! We need to eliminate from our ranks comrade Gromyko. He is too old and does not even know his own name. I ran into him in the hall yesterday and said: ‘Hello comrade Gromyko,’ and he answered, ‘Hello Leonid Ilyich—but I am not Gromyko.’ Can you imagine this? So I say to him, ‘You are getting too old, we are going to have to remove you from the Politburo,’ and he says, ‘I am not a member of the Politburo.’”

At a store there is a long line for sausage. Someone begins to complain:

“What kind of administration is this? There is nothing, no meat, no fish, no sugar. . . .” Two men in uniform come up to him, take him to the side, and say:

“We advise you to be quiet! In the thirties you would have already been shot!”

The consumer returns to the line and quietly says:

“You see, they don’t even have bullets.”

A joke from the 1970s: If there was a major earthquake in Leningrad, what would be left?

“Saint Petersburg!”

An American tourist walking around in Moscow falls into a manhole. He climbs out and complains:

“Couldn’t such a dangerous place have been blocked with some red flags?”

“Mister,” says a passerby, “when you crossed the Soviet border, didn’t you see the red flags? What else do you need?”

From a KGB analysis of the situation in the Baltic states (1982): “All of the citizens of Baltic states are either optimists, pessimists, or realists. The optimists are studying the local language. The pessimists are studying the map of Siberia. The realists are studying Kalashnikov rifles.”

Suslov, a member of the Politburo, has died. His relatives, friends, and colleagues have gathered for the wake. Suslov’s doctor is sitting in the corner. Brezhnev is very intently watching him. There is a long pause. The doctor cannot take it any more; he stands up and yells:

“Yes, comrade, we need to remember that our main enemy is Alzheimer’s disease.” Brezhnev cannot hold back and angrily says:

“No! Our main enemy is not Alzheimer’s, but irresponsibility. We are all here for Suslov and have been waiting half an hour and he still hasn’t shown up!”

An Eskimo has returned from a Communist Party meeting where he heard Brezhnev speak and is telling his friends about it:

“I finally understand what the banner on our main street means, the one that says ‘In our country, everything is for the individual, for the welfare of the individual.’ But the main thing is, I finally saw this individual.”

The wife of an employee of the Central Committee is complaining to her doctor:

“Whenever I eat red caviar, red caviar is what comes out. Whenever I eat black caviar, that is what comes out. . . . Help me, doctor!”

“If you eat shit like everyone else, that is what will come out.”

In a rural hall, a lecture on patriotism is announced. Nobody shows up. The next day the flyer reads, “Tonight, a lecture on love. Slides will be shown.” A half-hour before the lecture, the hall is packed full. Finally, the lecturer comes out:

“Comrades! There are four kinds of love. The first is when a man and a woman love each other. That is not our subject for today. The second is when a man loves another man. Today we will not be talking about this either. The third is when a woman loves another woman. This subject we will save for next time also. Finally, the fourth kind of love is when an entire nation loves their party and its leaders. This is what our lecture will be about today.”

It is the final exam for medical school. The professor asks:

“In front of you there are two skeletons. What can you say about them?” The student thinks for a long time then blankly shakes his head.

“Well,” says the professor, “say at least a sentence!”

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know? What have you been taught all of these years in medical school?”

“Are those the skeletons of Marx and Engels?”

A Jew is picked up by the KGB. They say to him:

“We know that you have been studying Hebrew. Do you want to go to Israel?”

“No, I don’t. I read in the scriptures that in heaven they speak Hebrew.”

“Why do you think that you will end up in heaven instead of hell?”

“I already know Russian to go to hell with.”

A grave digger comes home and gives his wife three times as much money as usual.

“Were there that many funerals today?” she asks.

“We buried the local head of the KGB today and they asked for three encore burials.”

“First there were the pharaohs and the Jews. The pharaohs died out and the Jews remained. There were the Huns and the Jews. The Huns died out and the Jews remained. There were the Crusaders and the Jews. The Crusaders died out and the Jews remained. There were the inquisitors and the Jews. The inquisitors died out and the Jews remained. There were the fascists and the Jews. The fascists died out and the Jews remained. Now there are the Communists and the Jews. . . .”

“What are you trying to say with this?”

“Nothing. Just that we made it to the finals.”

At an economics lecture in the USSR, the lecturer is speaking:

“In city A there was recently a huge power plant built—” From the audience:

“I was there recently and there is no huge power plant!” The lecturer continues:

“In city B a huge chemical factory was recently built—” The same voice from the audience:

“I was there two weeks ago and there is no such factory!” The lecturer again:

“In city C a new modern train station was built—” The same voice:

“I was just there. There is no train station!” The lecturer cannot contain himself and says:

“You, comrade, need to wander around less and read more newspapers!”

During Gorbachev’s visit to the United States, he and Reagan decided to wager on whose security force was more dedicated and ready to put their life on the line. When they are on top of the Empire State Building, Reagan calls the head of his security force over and says:

“If the president of the country orders you to jump off of the roof of this building, would you jump?”

“No,” answers the officer. “How could I? I have a wife and two kids at home.”

Gorbachev calls over his officer and asks:

“Will you jump?” The officer, without a word begins to run toward the edge of the building, but at the last moment he is stopped. Reagan is amazed, and asks:

“How could you do that? It is certain death.”

“How could I not jump?” answers the Soviet officer. “You see, I have a wife and two kids at home. . . .”

From the journal of an American pilot participating in a joint learning program with pilots from the USSR: “Friday: Drank with the Russian pilots. Saturday: I almost died. Sunday: Drank with the Russian pilots. Monday: It would have been better had I died on Saturday. . . .”

After Gorbachev began his fight against alcoholism the police started to search people’s homes for stills. In one home, after a long search, the police found one. The officer tells the owner:

“We are going to prosecute you for making your own alcohol.”

“But I did not make any alcohol,” answers the owner.

“That is not important,” answers the officer, “you are still in possession of the equipment.”

“Then,” says the owner, “prosecute me for rape.”

“Who did you rape?”

“Nobody. But I have the equipment for that also.”

A consumer walks into a store and asks:

“Comrade, do you have razor blades for shaving?”

“No!” When the consumer leaves the other salesperson in the store asks:



“Why did you tell him we did not have razors? We have plenty of them.”

“If he calls me comrade,” answers the first salesman, “then let him shave with a sickle.”

In 1985, a seventeen-year-old man comes to the Ural Factory for work. He is told:

“Fill out this form and sign at the bottom.”

“I cannot write,” he answers.

“Then, we cannot hire you.”

In 1996, in front of a jewelry store on Broadway, stops a beautiful Rolls Royce. A young man and a beautiful girl step out and enter the jewelry store.

“My dear,” he says to her, “pick anything you like.” The girl points to a diamond ring.

“How much?” asks the man.

“Half a million dollars, sir,” answers the salesman. The man opens his brief case, counts out half a million dollars, and buys the ring.

“Excuse me, sir,” says the surprised salesman, “How can you carry such fantastic sums with you? This is dangerous and inconvenient. You could have written us a check.”

“Dear sir,” answers the man, “if I could write, I would have been working in a factory for ten years.”

During the peak of Gorbachev’s perestroika, a consumer walks into a grocery store and asks:

“Can you please weigh out half a kilogram of meat?” The clerk answers: “Of course. Bring it in and I will weigh it.”

In a middle-school Russian language class, the teacher asks:

“Who can explain the difference between sad and disastrous?”

“Something sad is if Gorbachev is walking on the Kremlin wall and falls to his death.”

“Then what is disastrous?” asks the teacher.

“A disaster,” says the student, “is that he hasn’t fallen yet.”

In the years of perestroika, scientists were able to revive Lenin. Lenin asked for the back copies of *Pravda* for the last year. “‘Breakfast at the Kremlin,’” he reads, “‘Lunch at the Kremlin. . . .’ ‘Reception at the Kremlin. . . .’ ‘Lunch at the Kremlin. . . .’ What is this, a menu?!”

On Red Square, the day after the Mattias Rust plane had landed there, a foreign tourist lights up a cigarette. A police officer walks up to him and says, “You cannot smoke here.” “I understand,” says the tourist, “no smoking on the runway.”

A son asks his father, “What is perestroika?” “How can I explain it?” says his father, “Let’s say we live poorly, we don’t have a good apartment, we have no car, no summer home, and we cannot leave the country. . . . Now, they give us a nice apartment, a car, more money.” “What is glasnost?” asks the son. “This is when you can say anything you want and talk about anybody.” “And nothing will

come back to me?" specifies the son. "That's right," answers his father, "nothing will come to you—no apartment, no car, no summer home, no money. . . ."

Many years after the accident at Chernobyl, a grandfather and his grandson were walking through a Ukrainian forest and came upon a huge, crater-sized hole in the ground. "What happened here grandpa?" asked the grandson. "There used to be a nuclear power plant here, but they had an accident," answered the grandfather and patted him on the head. "And now everything is normal?" asked the grandson. "Now, everything is normal," answered the grandfather and patted him on his other head.

A consumer walks into a store. He sees that the shelves are empty and there is absolutely nothing to buy. He starts to complain loudly:

"This is outrageous! I feel sorry for our people! We cannot buy anything! The bastards!"

Two men in uniform come up to him and take him into the corner. "Who are you cursing, sir?"

"What do you mean, who? The Romanovs!"

"What do the Romanovs have to do with anything?"

"What do they have to do with anything? For three hundred years they ruled our country and couldn't leave a surplus for a mere seventy years!"

At NASA, they are investigating the reason for the accident with the Challenger Space Shuttle.

"Everything was checked over a hundred times; our equipment is the most advanced and dependable. It is a complete mystery why that damn left thruster blew up!"

At the same time, the KGB is holding a conference over the Challenger accident. A rocket scientist is giving his report:

"Everything was checked over a hundred times; our equipment is the most advanced and dependable. It is a complete mystery why that damn left thruster blew up when it was supposed to be the right one!"

The American government has bought the body of Lenin and placed on top of a skyscraper in New York. Lenin soon comes to life, gets up, looks around, and yells:

"It's just as I imagined it!"

At a meeting of all of the national deputies, one of them shows Gorbachev a fist. Gorbachev answers by twirling his finger at his temple. The deputy shows a fist again and Gorbachev, again, twirls his finger at his temple. A bodyguard comes up to the deputy and asks:

"Why are you showing Mikhail Sergeevich a fist?"

"I show it to him all the time, telling him to take the country into his hands and he signals me that he doesn't have the brains."

At a meeting of the national deputies, Karl Marx shows up and asks to say a word. After a long debate with him, Gorbachev finally agrees:

“Alright Comrade Marx, you have one minute.” Marx comes up to the microphone and says:

“Workers of the world, forgive me!”

Gorbachev’s grandchild is born. The whole Politburo has gathered to look at him.

“Look,” says General Yazov, “at how he kicks his feet. He is marching. He is going to grow up to be a general.”

“No,” says Pavlov, “look at how he is grabbing with his hands, bringing everything to himself. He is going to grow up to be a minister of finance.”

“No, no!” says Yeltsin, “He has soiled himself and is laughing. That means he is going to grow up to be president!”

There is a meeting at a kolkhoz. The director is speaking:

“We need to make a decision about raising rabbits. They multiply quickly, can provide a lot of meat, and we can use the skins for hats. It would be pure profit for us.” Everyone votes yes. Then Abraham takes the podium.

“I have an announcement. If you all will allow me I would like to emigrate to Israel. I will leave the kolkhoz my house—you could turn it into a library. I will leave my summer home on the Black Sea that you could all use as a vacation house. I will also leave my car, television, and furniture. I will leave you everything if you allow me to go.” From the back row an old man gets up and says:

“Who needs these damn rabbits! Let’s raise Jews!”

Gorbachev and Bush are meeting. Gorbachev says:

“Mr. President, our country would like to buy a large quantity of food from the United States.”

“All right,” says Bush.

“We would also like to buy some construction materials and automobiles.”

“All right.”

“We would also like you to sell us some of the most modern computers and some of your technological patents.”

“All right,” says Bush.

“Couldn’t we,” says Gorbachev, “put all of this in one inclusive contract?”

“Why not?” says Bush. “Let’s put together a contract where the United States is obliged to build up communism in the Soviet Union.”

Yeltsin and Lukashenka are on a plane. Yeltsin asks:

“What do you think? If this plane crashes, where will they cry more, in Russia or Byelorussia?”

“I think they will cry most in the Ukraine.”

“Why?” asks Yeltsin.

“Because Kuchma is not aboard.”

Two friends whose fathers work for Yeltsin’s government meet.

“Why are you so down?” asks one.

“Work, work . . . From dusk till dawn. Nothing but work.”

“Have you been working long now?”

“I start the day after tomorrow.”

Two New Russians meet in the street.

“Look at my tie,” says one. “I bought it in Paris for \$1,500!”

“You idiot,” says the other, “That’s nothing to show off about! I bought one just like that in Rome, but not for fifteen hundred, but two thousand!”

A New Russian, travelling in the Middle East, comes across a magic lamp with a genie inside. He rubs the lamp and asks the genie:

“Well genie, what would you like me to give you?”

“How do you open a Ukrainian parachute?”

“It opens automatically when it hits the ground.”

A New Russian is buying a grey Mercedes at a dealership. The salesman asks him:

“Excuse me please, sir. I would really like to know why, for the fourth time this month, you have bought a Mercedes and always grey? If you like this kind of car why do you keep replacing it, and if you do not like it, why do you keep buying them?”

“What!?” says the New Russian, “The Mercedes is an excellent car. I like them enormously. Only one thing wrong with them—the ashtray is too small; it fills up far too fast.”

“Excuse me, but do you belong to the Russian Patriotic Party?”

“No, but I still can always enjoy a drink.”

Yeltsin is visiting a psychiatric hospital. A man comes up to him and says:

“Boris Nikolaevich! They are keeping me here by force. I am completely healthy. My last name is Rabinovich and I am a butcher in the central market. Please help me.” At the end of his tour Yeltsin says to the head doctor:

“. . . and one more thing. A butcher named Rabinovich from the central market talked to me. He complains that—”

“Boris Nikolaevich,” answers the head doctor, “this is not Rabinovich, but Sidorov. He is a doctor of science and a professor at the university. He just has an inflated ego.”

After the independence of the Ukraine was announced, an old Ukrainian man runs into the kitchen and yells to his wife:

“Where is my hunting rifle?”

“What do you need your rifle for, old man?” asks his wife.

“I just saw three Russians going down the next street over. I am going to go shoot at them!”

“What if they shoot back, you old fool?” yells his wife.

“Shoot at me?” asks the old man, confused. “What have I done?”

A deputy of the Ukrainian Parliament from the Defenders of Nature Party walks in:

“Our government does not care about nature at all. They drain the rivers, cut

down the forests; soon there won't be a single tree in the whole Ukraine. Whenever we need to hang a Russian, there will be no place to do it."

Some delegates of the Russian Parliament are returning from a foreign visit. "Did you notice, last night at the reception," says one member to the other, "the diamonds that the wife of the secretary wore? Those were actual antique diamonds, they are practically priceless!" "Really?" asks the other. "Show them to me!"

The Communists bring Stalin back to life and ask him what to do.

"We must hang Yeltsin!" says Stalin. "And we must paint the Russian White House green." Everyone falls silent. Finally, one of the Communists asks:

"Comrade Stalin, why do you want to paint the White House green?"

"I will explain that later," answers Stalin. "But the main thing here is that we are unanimous on the first point."

A Jewish man calls the nationalist organization Pamyat and asks:

"Did you write that the Jews sold out Russia?"

"Yeah, we did! What do you want?"

"I just wanted to know where I could pick up my share."

A Japanese businessman just finished a trip around Russia. Right before his flight home Chernomyrdin asks him:

"Well, what did you like most?"

"Russian children!"

"Well, what else?" persists Chernomyrdin.

"Children, children, and again, children!" answers the Japanese businessman. "But everything you make with your hands is just awful!"

After a very long study, the Institute of Political Sociology sent President Boris Yeltsin their long-awaited report, part of which says: "There are two ways by which we can make the transition to democracy and a free market. First, the more realistic method: if Martians come and do it for us. Second, the fantastic method: if we do it ourselves."