

## The Golden Age of Russia

Translated By

STATUTORILY EXEMPT

James (Jim) Holbrook

Upon retiring from the Army, he accepted a position in the private sector. Because of his educational background and his near-native fluency in the Russian language, he was named senior researcher for Russian Affairs in the Denver office of the San Diego-based Scientific Applications International Corporation, a job which has necessitated trips to the former Soviet Union and Russia. On one of his more recent trips, he was interviewed by a representative of Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star), the official newspaper of the Russian military. The interview was published in the 10 March 1994 edition of the paper, a translation of which follows:

James Holbrook:

### THE GOLDEN AGE OF RUSSIA

He has subscribed to our newspaper for over thirty years. And today it crosses the ocean, destined for this man's office, among other addressees.

#### AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER

A gala event: In the Moscow Movie House a middle-aged man holds out a copy of *Krasnaya Zvezda* to the Russian national artist Oleg Lundstrem for his autograph. It's the very same issue in which we carried an article about the concert of the famous orchestra and its leader. One of the guests graciously offers his back, and the maestro leans over the newspaper. Without hesitation I go up to the stranger and ask, "Are you one of our subscribers?" "Yes, for nearly 33 years." We get acquainted. James Holbrook – retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and Vietnam veteran; his country's assistant military attaché in Moscow from 1979 through 1981; holder of a Ph.D. in Russian and applied linguistics; presently the senior researcher for Russian Affairs for Scientific Applications International Corporation (SAIC). And as a long-time subscriber, having completed a business trip to Russia, he graciously consented to an interview in our editorial offices prior to his departure for home.

— *Mr. Holbrook...*

— Please use my first name. It's much easier that way.

— *Very well, James. As a starter, allow me to compliment you on your Russian pronunciation.*

— You know, perhaps my whole life I have been paying myself much the same compliment. (He laughs.) But it's not just a matter of pronunciation. In many respects I owe my military career to the Russian language and to your literature and history. I'm a country boy from the small town of De Soto, Wisconsin. It has 300 residents, including dogs and cats. My father was a railroad man, and my mother a postal worker. I took a great interest in foreign languages while attending the U.S. Naval Academy (which I soon left because of that very reason). I easily mastered Italian, and then my professor suggested that I take up Russian, too. It was 1959, the age of space satellites. The professor sold me on his recommendation by saying, "If you master Russian, you'll always have a job." So I studied...

— *Where?*

— At the Army School of Foreign Languages in Monterey, then at American University, and then Georgetown. I taught Russian to the cadets at West Point. I completed military intelligence school and the U.S. Army War College.

— *And all this without a break in service?*

— Certainly. I served as an enlisted man in West Berlin. I went to Vietnam as an officer and commanded an intelligence detachment which was an element of an infantry brigade. Another tour in Germany, this time with the U.S. Military Liaison Mission, which was attached to the commander in chief of the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany. Fate presented me with the fortunate opportunity to become acquainted with the man who was then your commander in chief, General of the Army Yevgeniy Filippovich Ivanovskiy, a highly cultivated man of powerful intellect. Finally, an assignment to Moscow. I was truly happy. I was looking forward to the opportunity to add to my home library, which is quite large and occupies the whole first floor of my house in Denver. Russian literature and books about Russia comprise eighty percent of it.

— *And who are your favorites?*

— Lomonosov, Derzhavin, Radishchev, Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, Dostoyevskiy, Chekhov. But most certainly Tolstoy heads the list. Having gotten to Russia, the first thing I did was to visit Yasnaya Polyana.

— *One has to think that in the Moscow of those years you most likely didn't have much time for literary pursuits.*

— To my great regret. I worked in your capital when the "cold war" was in full swing. The incursion of Soviet troops into Afghanistan, the situation surrounding the Olympic games, events in Teheran... Your readers are well aware of all this. During those years *Krasnaya Zvezda* was for me the only really reliable, solid source of information. (It is understandable that J. Holbrook's use of our newspaper in his role as assistant U.S. military attaché for military-political affairs was not idle curiosity, but an integral part of

his analytical work in gathering intelligence data. — V.K.). And in the area of economics and politics — *Izvestiya* and *Pravda*. By the way, my collection of *Krasnaya Zvezda* files starts from the year 1939. It is a mirror of the most important events of your most recent military history, and I frequently use these files.

— *James, you've been out of the military for quite a while now. But you don't part company with Russia. Why?*

— Probably because it is not without pride that I consider myself a link in the human bridge connecting our countries. And I continue to build that bridge. I am interested in everything that happens in your country.

— *Did you accomplish a lot on your current trip? Was there time for cultural events?*

— I managed only to get to the Tretyakovka Art Gallery and to hear Lundstrom's orchestra. There was no time, what with trips to Yekaterinburg and Saratov and meetings at various enterprises and institutes around Moscow. We came as a Stanford University "team" on resources of the Carnegie Foundation. There were reports to give, seminars to organize. Judging by the whole avalanche of questions put to us, our experience is of interest to those who are directly involved in the process of privatization and conversion.

— *May I make a short digression? I imagine you are rather well-informed as to how wide the spread of opinion is in our society regarding conversion. From a categorical "yes" — we are beating swords into refrigerators and washing machines — to a no less categorical "no" — they say it's a terrible sin to crush intellectual potential, to break off rolling production for years, and to put the industrial elite of the country on starvation rations. Are these pressing problems in the U.S., and to what extent?*

— Regarding some companies and geographic regions — yes, our problems are a lot alike — for example, southern California, Seattle, and other areas with an abundance of military enterprises. Conversion, necessary as it is, is rather painful. It is the fate of individual people and entire families. It's their present and their future. And here is where I think we have something in common.

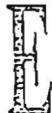
— *For example?*

— Well, let's say you've embarked upon a total reformation of production management levels. The features are essentially the same: boards of directors, chief executives, presidents. The need arose to manage the stock market, too. That's one sphere of problems. Another one — how do we socially protect people in the new economic conditions? How do we create pension funds and a lot of other things for them? I want to emphasize that we are not taking the role of mentor, but we are always ready to pass along the experience that we have gained. We are ready to propose definitive programs and to develop them together.

I am deeply convinced that, from an economic point of view, Russia is a young country with tremendous scientific and human potential, a country very rich in natural resources. It has still not developed all of its talents to the fullest, frequently not knowing how to use

# Золотой век России еще впереди

Он выдвигает нашу газету дальше тридцати лет. И сегодня она пересекать океан, чтобы среди других адресатов оказалась и в офисе этого человека



Многострадальный астроном

...и астрономический журнал в частности. Далеко не случайно, что в этом журнале публикуется перевод статьи Рюрика Луизурю для астрономической конференции в Париже. Там, конечно, в первую очередь речь пойдет о науке, а не о политике, но в последние дни в газете появились заметки о состоянии науки в нашей стране. В них — 300 слов, выделенных жирным шрифтом, и много выделенных слов. Это, конечно, не случайно. В них — 300 слов, выделенных жирным шрифтом, и много выделенных слов. Это, конечно, не случайно. В них — 300 слов, выделенных жирным шрифтом, и много выделенных слов. Это, конечно, не случайно.



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— Но разве вы не видите, что мы стоим на пороге величайшей реформы? Мы должны ускорить процесс реформирования нашей страны, чтобы она могла конкурировать с другими странами. Мы должны ускорить процесс реформирования нашей страны, чтобы она могла конкурировать с другими странами. Мы должны ускорить процесс реформирования нашей страны, чтобы она могла конкурировать с другими странами.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF RUSSIA

them. Your golden age is still ahead. When you, the creators of many world-standard technologies, find social, economic, and political stability, you will be transformed into a gigantic Japan, although this comparison is possibly not totally apropos.

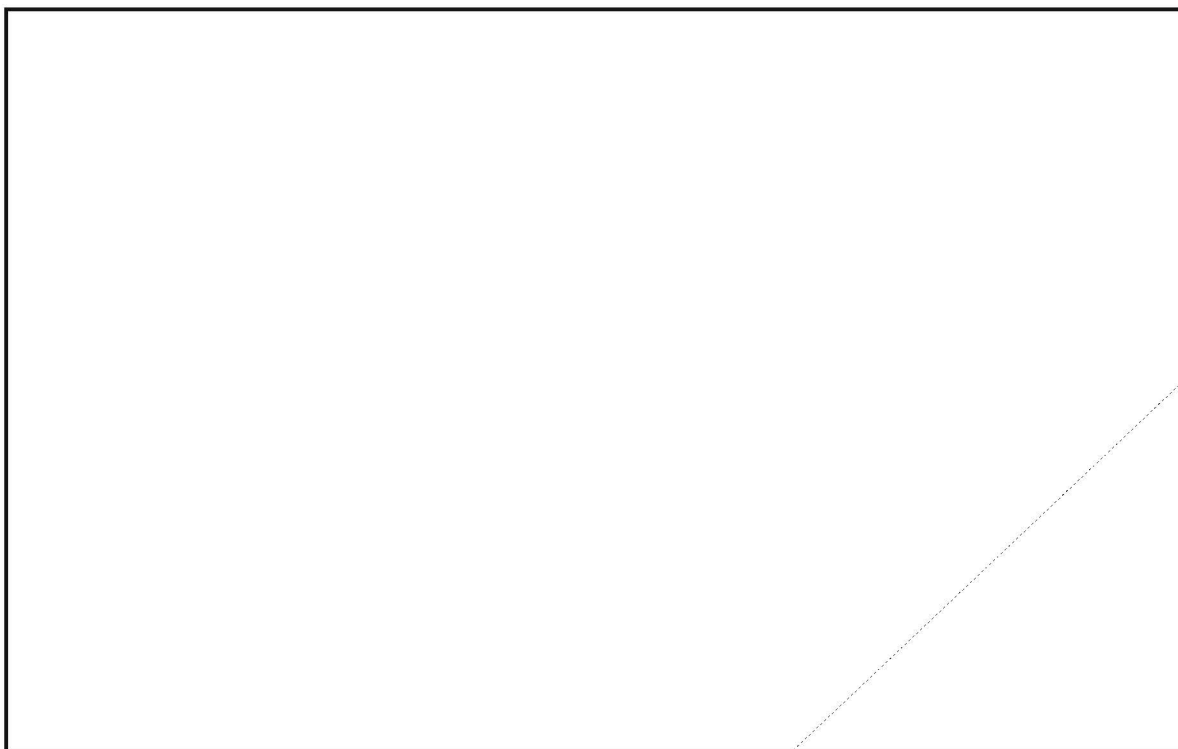
— *Enviably optimistic. Do you think you understand Russia?*

— Perish the thought! I totally agree with Tyutchev. You can't understand Russia with the mind. And to this day there is a lot in it that I don't understand, though I'm trying. But your country is a part of my life, and, believe me, a very bright part.

— *Will you receive this issue of Krasnaya Zvezda in the States?*

— Yes. And I'll meet it wearing my *Krasnaya Zvezda* T-shirt which you here in the editorial offices gave me. I'll wear it with the special pleasure of an old subscriber and, believe me, an old friend.

Interviewer  
Vladimir Kaushanskiy,  
*Krasnaya Zvezda*  
Sergey Ushakov  
Photographer



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