

Aleksandr Pavlovich Shevyrev

My Canadian Diary

According to an exchange agreement with Moscow State University, Brock University occasionally invites one of its history professors to teach here for a semester. Our second visitor was Aleksandr Pavlovich Shevyrev, an associate professor (dotsent) with the section for nineteenth and early twentieth-century Russian history. He spent the Winter 2008 semester at Brock, during which he kept a diary. I have somewhat abridged my translation.

David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye
Brock University

It all began with a mishap: the Americans deported me! The thing is that I didn't get a work permit at the Toronto airport's immigration office when I flew in from Moscow. The Canadian embassy there had given me a visa with a piece of paper that was attached in such a way that it was impossible to turn it over. I could only make out two words on the back, "work permit." I decided not to worry about it, reasoning that whoever needed to would tear it off. But it turned out that, upon entering Canada, I had to report to Immigration and get a work permit on the basis of this document.

I didn't want to return to the airport [about 100 km from St Catharines], and so I went to Niagara Falls, crossed over the bridge, and surrendered myself to the American authorities. It obviously wasn't the first time. Within five minutes, after duly taking my fingerprints, they gave me a document that certified I had been denied entry into the US. I was reassured that being deported would have no lasting consequences for me in the future. I crossed the bridge back into Canada and received my permit at the border.

Then I started to look for a place to stay. After looking for some time, I couldn't find an apartment and so I took a room with a lady slightly older than me. Her apartment is lovely: eighteen m² bedroom, modest kitchen twelve m², living room, dining room, balcony, two bathrooms, and there is a 100 metre balcony on my floor with a barbecue. The building also has a fitness centre, sauna, pool and a room with a washing machine. My landlady takes good care of me now: She is always giving me some snacks, takes me shopping, didn't ask for a down payment, and even lent me the money to buy a phone card to call home back in Moscow.

I began to work. I am mostly in the library, which is a pleasure. Of course the size of their holdings does not compare to Moscow, but the convenience [...] First, it is open until 11 p.m., on Friday up to 8 p.m. and on Saturdays and Sundays up to 9 p.m. Second, almost all the books are open access. You just look up a call number in the electronic catalogue and find it on the shelf. Since the books are arranged

according to some sort of system (whose logic escapes me), you can readily see a number of other books on similar subjects.

I gave two lectures [for a second-year course on modern Russian history]. The first one was about Russia's geography. A girl asked me what I was doing in 1972. I immediately understood that she wanted to know whether I remembered the first encounter between our hockey team and Canada's professional players. It struck me that even girls know the score. And none of the students had even been born when it took place. I realized that this had been an event of historical significance to Canadians. Can you remember how the series ended?

The second lecture was about Paul, Alexander I and 1812. When I talked about the law of succession and pointed out that the tsar could appoint his successor, just as in Russia today, no one understood my irony. I discovered that no one knew that this was an election year in Russia. At least some students had heard of Putin.

I also have seminars. During one of them I showed *The Barber of Siberia*, which we discussed in the next one. I explained that the director, Nikita Mikhalkov, was teasing his audience by exaggerating all of the foreign stereotypes about Russians. Yes, yes, the students said—no human being could drink so much vodka in one go. But I countered that there was nothing unusual in that respect: after all, three shots and those of 100 grams [about 110 ml] each. On Tatiana Day [25 January, Moscow University's holiday] we drink no less than half a litre and only one or two of us can't deal with it.

I have some mixed feelings about my stay. Time here is like a train that just carries you along. I haven't experienced this feeling of not needing to rush anywhere for about forty years. On the other hand, I have to do a lot to prepare for my classes: find texts in the library, photocopy the pages I need, and submit a seminar package to the library. It's reasonable, but still a little annoying. Preparing for lectures is very time-consuming. For every one of them I have to prepare fifty PowerPoint slides with the main points, dates, terms and, most important, pictures. Finding them requires some effort. Furthermore, you have to make a very detailed lecture plan. It is not like in our university, where you discuss the basic facts according to the day's theme and improvise. PowerPoint deprives you of any spontaneity.

I have already made two outings, not counting the waterfall. On one of the first weekends I bought a ticket for the annual ice wine festival in the nearby village of Jordan. Curiously, Canada is wine country and it is renowned for its ice wine, which, I am told, is the best in the world. It is made from grapes that are harvested after at least three days of temperatures below -10° . There was a bus from the university at noon, so I got on the 11:45 to Brock from downtown. The busses run on a fixed schedule here, and I got to the end of the line at 11:57. But it turned out that I had caught the wrong one. Although I had been standing on the platform for buses to campus, this one took me to the shopping mall. Since it was the weekend, the next bus would leave in an hour and I couldn't find a taxi. So I tried to comfort

myself by doing a little shopping and bought a sweater on sale, but it didn't really cheer me up.

Getting back home I decided that the only option was to drink. On the Internet I found a bus that would take me to Jordan at about five o'clock that afternoon. I arrived in Jordan at just two minutes past six, but no one would pour me a single glass. Everything had closed at five! And there wouldn't be a bus back to town for another two hours. It was nine below and just as windy as on the New Arbat. And so I walked ten kilometres back home. Thanks to the wind in my back, I made it quicker than the bus.

To make up for it, I celebrated Tatiana Day in style. David Schimmelpenninck, the History Department's chairman, organised a carouse at his home. This was preceded by the so-called Humanities Tea. Every Friday afternoon, members of the Humanities Faculty gather for whiskey and sherry. Not a drop of tea was to be had. The chairman then invited everyone back to his house, with instructions for each to bring a bottle and explain its merits to the others. Of course, I brought vodka, "Russian Standard," and was accorded the honour of being the first to present it. I was so inspiring that we finished the whole bottle right away, before going on to the next one. We then had Polish vodka, Finlandia, Croatian slivovitz, Italian grappa, French Calvados, cognac. Thank God we didn't get to the ouzo. I returned home at two a.m., happy and satisfied. As we write in our compositions at school: Winter is so wonderful!

The next day I went to Toronto. I walked about in the centre, and did some shopping. The sales now are crazy and are impossible to resist. Down the street I read a memorial plaque about the first department store in Toronto, or even Canada, that had opened here a century earlier. As a historian, I wanted to see a department store that was more than a hundred years old. It turned out that nothing of the interior had been preserved, but I saw the prices! I had to buy a jacket.

And then I got to the Hockey Hall of Fame. When I went inside, I now understood everything about '72. Hockey is for Canadians like Pushkin is for us. There is a monument in front of the hall surmounted with the medal commemorating the victory, and it is engraved with the names of all of the Canadian team's players. The museum is cool: I even trained launching the puck at a goal with a virtual goalkeeper. I scored two goals out of six shots!

As for the city centre—It's Manhattan in miniature. But the population—A real Babylon. I heard so many different languages on the street! English is only one of them. Talking to the local inhabitants, I discovered that so many are of mixed parentage. Basically a person all of whose grandparents were born in Canada is a great rarity.

02.02.08

Yesterday, I finally decided it was time to work for myself, since in all of the previous three weeks I had worked exclusively for Canadians. I got ready to go to the library this morning. I opened my inbox and saw a notice from the university that all classes were cancelled on the occasion of inclement weather and the library was closed. I went outside—the weather really is not happy: neither rain nor snow falls from the skies. It is more like ice. But has the university really shut its doors? Obviously, the university is afraid that a student might slip on the ice, break a leg, and be stuck with the bill. Then again, maybe this is really out of humanitarian motives?

At first I was upset because the library was closed. But then I turned on the computer, looked through the library's catalogue on the Internet and busied myself with bibliographic research. I wrote down all of the call numbers and will simply take the books from the shelves. I ordered those books that aren't at the university from other libraries, mostly the one at the University of Toronto. A piece of cake.

04.02.08

Yesterday, for the first time in my life someone offered me her seat on the bus! The bus was full and 10 people were standing. I, too, stood and looked around and eventually rested my eyes on a girl who was sitting. Purely out of male curiosity. She stood up and invited me to sit down. I was most embarrassed, but she reassured me by saying that she was getting out at the next stop. I had to sit down. It appears that to Canadians I look like I am old enough to be a pensioner

I should say something about the library. This is my most striking experience in Canada. I have already explained how it works. Now some words about how it is organised. There is a pillar on the first floor marked "Circulation," behind which there are usually three people to answer questions, check out books, sell cards for the copier and printer, pens, notebooks and other office supplies and lend laptops. There is never a queue. The copiers are great, you can copy as much as you want and it costs 10 cents a page.

There is also the so-called "Reserve," where every instructor can arrange for books and seminar texts to be taken out for a short period. This is necessary to make books available to all students, since normally you can borrow one for up to three months, which would deprive the others of being able to read it in time. Therefore, instructors put them on reserve and limit the borrowing period from three hours to two days. Those who return them late pay a fine. As for the seminar texts, they cause me headaches. I have to make a list of all the assigned texts, indicate which pages must be read (about a hundred a week), Xerox the pages in batches, so that there is one copy for 4-5 students, and give the lot to Reserve. The procedure for borrowing the seminar packet is surprisingly simple: you go to the desk, write the call number on a slip and within 30 seconds you have the desired text. The librarian scans your ID and prints out a slip of paper with the time it is due. You can then take the text anywhere you want, even to a pub (although it's not easy to find one on campus).

The books are on the upper floors, the more serious the higher. History is on the 9th. On the top floors there is a zone of absolute silence, and you can talk quietly on the 5th and 6th. There are also sets of computers to go online and do whatever you want. There are photocopiers and printers on each floor as well. Books are all open access and are easily found according to their call numbers. Having found the one you need, you will also appreciate seeing a number of books nearby on similar topics. Once you take the book off the shelf, you can borrow it for up to three months by scanning your ID card at Circulation or reading it in the library. It's true that you have to carry along your coat into the library, since there is no place to check it, as well as all of your bags, books and computers. It is forbidden to bring hot food, alcoholic drinks and beverages in an open container.

If you decide to stay in the library to read, you can sit at a desk in the form of a box without a lid, which provides some insulation against outside distractions, or you can simply take it to your office where you can leave your things overnight. Returning the book is simple: if you take it out of the library, you throw it into a slot marked "Return," and if you read it there, you simply put it back on a shelf according to call number. I can leave the library five minutes before my bus leaves. Simply crazy time savings! (Просто катастрофическая экономия времени!)

08.02.08

Wednesday classes were cancelled again, but this time only in the evening. It was snowing, the wind was blowing, and the roads were slippery. In Moscow, at the bus stop by the University, it's always wet and slippery, but it's no big deal—if you fall on the way to work, you simply get up and continue on your business.

All courses here are electives. Each student enrolls in a certain number of courses in a particular field. All second year students have to take some Humanities electives, among which is the History of Russia. Some sixty students chose this subject. I lecture to all of them and then I have a seminar with one of three groups of twenty. There are two fifty-minute lectures and one seminar a week. I don't lead the seminar. The students take turns doing so and I just listen. If the student who is leading talks too long the students barely have time to say anything, so I leave myself only three to five minutes at the end for a summary. In general, a profanation. However, I have to admit that, at least they are learning to ask questions, and at the fourth-year course the level is quite professional.

More about the fourth-year course, which is about a specific topic. These are only seminars, and they last for three hours. Here I can allow myself to barge in. Sometimes I do give short, five to ten minute lectures. This seems to surprise the students, but happily so: The professor chats, you relax. I also give them regular *politinformatsii* (political briefings), in the literal sense of the word. I tell them about the upcoming presidential election and the last Duma. Among our political leaders they know only Putin, but two of them have heard of Kasparov.

11. 02.08

Yesterday, Heidi invited me to her home. She does all of the History Department's administrative work, i.e. organising the timetable, as well as being academic secretary and quartermaster—all rolled into one. She invited me to a party for the Grammy awards. When I arrived, I was led to her living room where there were eight older people I didn't know. I assumed that they were all professional musicians who would judge the Grammy nominees, none of whom I know either. I begin to chat with my neighbour, who is a retired phys-ed teacher at the university. We talked about the retirement age in Canada and Russia. His wife turns out to be Polish. *Trochę porozmawiałem z panią po Polsku*. Then the hostess arrived and she asked me if I had been downstairs. I quickly got up and gladly went to the basement where, it turned out, the History Department people were hanging out. Then I learned that Heidi composes music and a Polish-Canadian jazz band had been nominated for its performance of one of her polkas. This is why she was having the party. At 8 pm the hostess announced that she hadn't been awarded the Grammy, but this did nothing to dampen the mood and everyone continued to have fun.

14.02.08

How should I get dressed here? It is difficult to judge according to the weather. But first, about the climate. The most unpleasant aspect is that there are sudden changes and frequent blasts of wind. January was nice: mostly mild, plenty of sun and almost dry. But in February the winter was like it is back home in Moscow: some snow on the ground, but in small piles and therefore unpleasant. February is mid-winter and therefore the nastiest month. The temperature ranges from -7° to $+3^{\circ}$, with gusty winds.

I was surprised at how the Canadians dress for this chilly weather. The first example: it is -8° , windy and very cold. A guy riding the bus is just wearing a sweater. When I stand right next to him, I can see that he is freezing. After he gets out, he walks about 300 metres home. Because he is outside for only about three minutes, he doesn't bother with a coat. But this is like walking from the Humanities Faculty building at my university to the clinic in -15° weather.

The second example. I am on the bus in the evening. During the day all the snow banks were melting in the sun, then they froze again once it was dark, so it's pretty dank. I see a girl wearing a t-shirt and what looks like a pair of sneakers. She has a light jacket, almost a windbreaker, on her lap. She gets up, without putting on her jacket, gets off the bus and disappears into the darkness.

A third example. Today, with the mercury at -2° , a boy rides the bus wearing a thin sweater.

The fourth example. The temperature is around -5° . A young girl is sitting on the bus with pants only down to the knee, mid-calf boots and no tights! Her legs are completely bare from the knees to mid-calf.

I **always** go outside with a warm jacket. And this despite the fact that I don't like to wear heavy coats and hats. And here I am all wrapped up, but the wind is so

strong. Speaking of hats, there is something strange here. No one wears them, but on campus half the boys wear baseball caps or tuques. In seminar today I noticed that six out of ten of the guys were wearing caps. It doesn't make sense. Are they Jews wearing hats in their temple, in this case, the temple of science? But hats indoors really bother me.

Women here don't wear skirts. After having been here for a month, I can count the number times I've seen a girl wearing one on the fingers of one hand. At least they don't bare their bellies or upper backsides. The fashions here are plain, modest and utterly uninteresting (I'm not talking about the covered midriffs). I noticed also the absence of short haircuts. I then looked at all of my female friends on VKontakte [a Russian variant of Facebook] and noticed that short haircuts are probably now out of fashion. But among them at least about 12% of them wouldn't have enough hair for a bun, while here it's not more than 1%.

29.02.08

I haven't opened my diary for ten days, first since my social life was so much fun, then because I was suffering from the consequences. I will try to reconstruct everything in chronological order.

On February 20 David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye (who is the History Department's head) invited me to a lecture he was giving at a local military unit, the Lincoln & Welland Regiment. His talk was about Russian military intelligence before and during the Russo-Japanese War. The first thing that struck me was that there was no guard at the building's entrance. Second, no one took any heed of a stranger walking around in civvies. When I asked where the officers' mess was, a brave soldier kindly helped me find it. Third—the room is like an officer's club. Russian Guards regiments before the Revolution probably looked like this. There are battle paintings on the walls, flags, silverware and trophies, and, in the middle of one wall, a portrait of Her Majesty. Everyone wore a jacket and tie, even a lady of venerable age. They all sat with their mugs, quietly sipping their beer. After the talk there was a small buffet. David went right back home and I talked with the veterans, for a long time, all the while gathering valuable intelligence.

I learned much about the Canadian Army's deployment and the regiments' weapons. I asked someone with the artillery regiment where they practise with their guns and was told that they go to a site about 200 kilometres away. Then I asked a more important question.

—Anyway, all guns are just toys. Now all artillery regiments have rockets. Do you have any?

—No, we don't have any missiles in Canada.

—Well, surely you have anti-aircraft defences?

—No, we don't have anti-aircraft missiles.

—So how are you going to defend yourself, if our bombers fly here?

—The Americans will protect us.

—But the Americans are to the south, and our bombers come over the North Pole, which wouldn't give the US missiles any time.

The gunners thought for a while and it occurred to them that their generals hadn't considered this. Aha! I thought. Here is a weak spot in their defences. I suppose that the Canadians will install a missile shield in the Yukon now so that our bombers can't get at them.

One veteran was so keen to talk with me that he invited me to his house the next day. I even gathered more information about the Canadian army there. My host was a retired commander of the regiment and a retired teacher. Of course, I assumed that he had served the Fatherland, resigned and then begun to teach. But what he told me came as a total surprise. It turns out that he had worked his entire life as a teacher and commanded a regiment on a voluntary basis. I realized how cool it is to serve in the Canadian Army. You spend the day at school, come home, have dinner, and kiss your wife, "Honey, thank you, it was very tasty, but duty calls me to the regiment." Go to the regiment, listen to a report and then go to the officers' club. Drink beer and whiskey there, chat with some comrades, watch some movies and generally have a nice time before returning back home: "Honey, I'm so tired, please bring me a blanket so that I can rest in my armchair before working in my office." In Canada the army is such a great toy: you can play war without the risk of getting killed. Now they do have a small contingent in Afghanistan. Every day the papers report on the debates in Parliament about whether they should withdraw from there.

There was something else about the colonel that struck me. He is of German descent, his wife—Ukrainian. But she hardly knows the language. It seems that he knows more Ukrainian than she does. He is a Freemason, has the Masonic sign painted on his car and, it seems, on his ring. He collects weapons (muskets and rifles from the seventeenth century to the present, all in working condition), decorations and medals. Finally, there is the house. I think that in Soviet times only members of the Politburo could permit themselves such luxury. Once I was at the apartment of the Party's regional committee secretary, and I can say that it was furnished more modestly than this representative of the Canadian middle class—and clearly not from its upper layer. I liked the fact that the luxury wasn't flashy, as is often the case in new Russian homes, where you feel like you are in a furniture store. This house was liveable, with a good table setting, a cozy bar with drinks for all tastes, interesting collections to look at. I spent the evening in this house with great pleasure.

03.03.08

I am trying to reconstruct last week's events. On 22 February David invited me to his home with two of his colleagues. He has his own house, though not as posh as the teacher-mason colonel. But his study is tastefully decorated and I spent over an hour happily going through his books while his colleagues were discussing their departmental business. Dinner was served. A few people asked me whether on 23

February I had roasted potatoes in the fireplace like Stierlitz. I responded to all of them that I hadn't roasted potatoes because David had made me buckwheat kasha, which he had prepared as a side dish. The Canadians didn't eat up their kasha (I have noticed that foreigners in general have difficulty dealing with buckwheat), but I was very touched. We spent the whole evening toasting: to Stierlitz, to David and to the Red Army.

On Sunday, David invited me again to a dinner with his sister. As a result, the next week I had to toil like a slave in the galleys. I only managed to catch up toward the end of the week so that I could go to Toronto on Friday. But more about that next time.

06.03.08

I should mention my disappointment at not being able to go to the States. In early April, Paul Bushkovitch, a distinguished Russian historian, will celebrate his sixtieth birthday, and on this occasion his students will organise a conference in his honour. Being well acquainted with Paul, I offered to visit him, and even got an official invitation from his university. I decided to get to know the procedure for getting a visa to the US. When I looked at the website of the US Consulate in Toronto, I learned that I would have to pre-register for an interview. I clicked on the link for the calendar to make an appointment, but it turned out that all dates over the next six weeks were already taken, and you can't book any earlier than six weeks ahead of time. So, you have to get up before daybreak to register for an appointment forty-two days from now. And on a website, you can't stand in line all night like at our district medical clinic to get an appointment with a specialist who is there only once a month. You really have to be a hacker to get a US visa in Canada if you are from abroad (Citizens of Canada and the EU don't need one). Then you could just block the site and calmly make an appointment. Just for fun, I looked up the American consulates in other countries. It turned out that in Moscow you can sign up for an appointment in six days. The best case is in Ouagadougou, where it only takes a day for an appointment and you get your visa two days later. So long, America!

[perhaps indicate here that the trip to Toronto has been excised – or eliminate the foreshadowing about the trip that is then not described?] The latter. I cut out the first clause in the paragraph's first sentence.

11.03.08

I have been neglecting my diary again, but this time because I was sick. It's worth a mention, because it gives me a chance to talk about Canadian medicine. I began to feel unwell on Wednesday evening, i.e., 5 March. I didn't have any cold medicine. The only folk remedy in the apartment was vodka. I had 100 grams with dinner and thought I would go to the sauna before bed. But when I went downstairs, I discovered that the sauna is only open until 10 pm. So I went to bed with only the

vodka as medication. The next morning, I realised that it hadn't cured me and now I was really sick. I went to the pharmacy, where the pharmacist recommended Tylenol, and then picked up some juice, milk and honey, and began my treatment.

The problem was that I had a seminar and two hours of lectures that evening. Because I had a sore throat, I couldn't really contemplate two hours of lectures and decided to cancel the classes. But then the question arose of how to do it. I called David Schimmelpenninck, but he was neither at home nor at work and didn't answer the phone, and he does not have a cellphone. I looked for Heidi's phone number, but for some reason couldn't find it on the History Department's website. By now it was time to teach. Thanks to the milk and honey my throat was feeling a little better and I decided to go to the university after all. The seminar was hard, but the lectures revived me, as is usually the case. I almost felt healthy and briskly walked home.

The next day I had a runny nose and decided to stay home. On Saturday I went to the university to pick up a book from inter-library loan. The weather was terrible: a blizzard covered everything with snow. When I checked Brock's website I didn't see any notice about it being closed and so I went. All the same, the library was closed (it turns out that there are no Saturday classes and so the university felt no need to announce that the library had been shut). The trip was all in vain and, in my ailing condition I made my way back home through the snowdrifts. To make matters worse, snow got into my boots and my feet were wet. So on Sunday I just stayed in bed. And then I wondered whether I should call a doctor.

My landlady, Judy, enlightened me about Canadian medicine. If you need a doctor, no matter how sick you are you have to go to the nearest hospital and find the right specialist. Neither a temperature of 40°, nor severe pain will keep you from having to go to the hospital. Doctors here don't do house calls. Judy told me how, once in a semiconscious state, she drove herself to the hospital in her car at a speed of 10 km/hour, and then had to wait a long time because the doctors were taking a long time, working for their high pay. Then I asked whether it might be possible to call an ambulance. Judy went into a fit of laughter. She said that you only do that in very serious cases, when you are at death's door. It is very expensive. When you call 911, the entire rescue team comes to your home: ambulance, fire truck and police. Since the firefighters get there first, they get the patient ready for the ambulance. The police apparently come last, to deal with any deaths. I understood that, despite having insurance, I had to heal myself. To make it to a doctor you have to be sufficiently well.

Due to my illness, I missed a natural phenomenon, which I haven't even seen in our northern country. On Saturday, when I went to the library to no avail, a terrible blizzard was just beginning, which gathered full force that evening. The wind blew with frightful fury. Not only did it howl outside but also icy snow steadily crashed into the window. This went on for two days without cease. At some point, curiosity overcame illness, and I decided to see how much snow had piled up on the large balcony on my floor. I opened the door, and at that moment

realized that I had committed an unforgivable mistake: the wind immediately hurled a mountain of snow into the hall, which made it impossible to close the door. I thought about running back to the apartment to get some implement to clear away the snow from the door. But as soon as I let the door go even a little bit, the wind howled and blew more snow into the corridor. I had to keep the door shut, lest the neighbours need to evacuate their apartments as the wind began to blow away all of their movable and immovable belongings. I could only weep like the naked engineer in *The Twelve Chairs*, who had shut the door of his apartment and found himself on the outside staircase. I had the opposite problem—I couldn't shut the door. Gathering my last reserves of strength, I got on all fours and, holding the door with my backside, began to build a snowman. When I had transformed all of the snow in this way, I left him in the hallway (to throw him over the threshold was impossible—he would immediately be blown back). I stood up and with superhuman strength slammed the door against the wind. Hooray! The door shut. After that the only option was to take the snowman back home and let him melt in the sink.

Towards the end of the blizzard's second day I went outside. The snow didn't reach up all the way to the roof and on the ground it only went up mid-calf. The roads were fairly clear. The passing cars were completely silent: snow hides all sounds. The next day was right out of Pushkin: "And now [...] look out the window." But it was impossible to go out, not just because of the snow, but also due to the sun. I didn't bring any sunglasses with me (who would imagine that I would need them?) and it was impossible to keep my eyes open for more than three seconds. I was only able to venture outside on the following day, when the sidewalks had been cleared, revealing their grey concrete. This is what March is like on this continent at the latitude of Sukhumi!

20.03.08

The breaks between my diary entries are becoming longer, not because of work or illness, but laziness. After two months in Canada, life becomes routine and therefore quite boring. But time does fly pretty fast, because, oddly enough, it becomes shorter. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that work is becoming more pleasant: preparing for classes now takes less time. If in the first lesson I was trying to guess what is necessary, now I can teach what I want. Getting one lecture ready took the whole day, and sometimes two. Now I have a routine for the week: Tuesday seminar for three hours after lunch, followed by a half hour consultation and a free evening. On Wednesday, I spend the whole day preparing for my Thursday lectures. I continue preparing for them on Thursday morning, then at one o'clock a seminar, an hour's break, and two hours of lectures.

Just like back in Moscow, the weekend begins on Thursday evening. From Friday to Monday I have four days off. Actually, I only take one day off. On the other three, I work for myself. I spend one of them preparing for my three-hour

seminar on Tuesdays, another one reading up as well as putting any finishing touches on my lectures. The rest of the time I write letters, read student papers, talk on Skype, look at the news on the Internet, watch movies, and keep this diary [...] I hardly blink an eye and it's the Tuesday seminar again.

The routine of life here prompted me to do something I did not want to, but many people have done. I quit smoking. Doing it here is pretty simple. Aside from the fact that very few people smoke here, so there are few temptations, life here isn't very stressful. People aren't rude; there are no traffic jams, nor the need to do something today by yesterday. The only reason to smoke now is for pleasure, which loses its appeal because one has to look for the place and time.

When I arrived in Canada, I got to know the local cigarette prices and realized that I had to cut down and try to prolong the pleasure of the ones I had brought along from home. But it proved not to be too difficult, because everywhere you had to leave the room to indulge, which, as I have said, greatly lessens its satisfaction. Outside, you can only smoke in designated areas. I couldn't take the trouble to stay in the paddock and broke the law by smoking on the go, but I felt guilty. Despite curtailing my intake, the packs from home went quickly, and I decided to limit myself. I started to smoke just after a meal. Then I gave up smoking after lunch, leaving only breakfast, 5 o'clock, and dinner. When there were only three packs left, I smoked only the sweetest cigarettes—after breakfast and dinner. Finally, I was down to my last pack. And then I gave up the after-breakfast cigarette. Thank God it's not necessary to hurry in the morning and I could compensate for abstaining from cigarettes by preserving body heat since I now remained indoors during the cold morning hours. When four days ago I had my last Russian cigarette, I realized that after dinner, I could simply stay home.

I went to Toronto last weekend with David to a conference on Eurasian cities. When I got there I understood that "Eurasian" meant any city in the former USSR and the socialist camp: from Prague to Tashkent, mostly St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Odessa. There were some Canadians and Americans, as well as one man from Kiev. Of course, everyone understands Russian, but I used my native language only with those whose names suggested that they had not entirely lost the ability to think in Soviet-Russian. The papers were long: half an hour, but most of them were interesting, and sometimes—very. Only one session—in literature—was boring, and David and I fled to have a beer after the first paper.

We went to his military club. Even before the trip David warned me that we would have to wear a tie. When I got there, I understood why. If the officers' mess of the Lincoln & Welland Regiment reminded me of the clubs of the Russian Imperial Army regiments, this one very much brought Britain to mind (I am not aware if the Russian ones are similar, but perhaps they are).

No briefcases—you hand them over to the porter. In the cloakroom there are shoe-shining machines (of course a batman with his tools would be better). At the bar, drinks are recorded for the member's account (how he pays later, I don't know, and as his guest, it was awkward to ask). There are lead soldiers, buckles, and cap

badges in the display cases. The library has military and historical literature and comfortable armchairs. The rooms are according to service branch, and there is a large dining room. I liked all of it, but when I only saw two women the appeal immediately diminished. I thought that it was good we had escaped from the aunties who were talking about literary life in Eurasian capitals, and could enjoy comparing officers' mores in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian armies or in Canadian and Australian naval forces during the Second World War. But the ladies could appear at any time, and then we would have to change the subject, since it would not interest them. Another disappointment. The club had recently implemented a smoking ban. Although by then I personally didn't mind, it seems to me that a club without cigars is as unthinkable as seeing its members without ties.

23.03.08

This year I have two Easters: one Latin, the other Orthodox. Last night I decided to visit the Catholic vigil. I went to a church near my house close to midnight, but there was no one. I kept on wondering, where are the Catholics on the night before Holy Sunday? In Canada there are two Easter holidays: Friday and Sunday. I include Sunday because, unlike regular Sundays, all the stores are closed. The shops here have more civilised hours than in Europe. In Germany, for example, everything closes at 6 pm, and on Wednesdays or Thursdays, shops are open until 8. On Sunday, of course, *geschlossen*. Here, everything is open late. Even the wine shops, which are a state monopoly, are open until 9. But on a holiday everything is "closed."

26.03.08

About Canadian manners. They are even better than in England or Germany. I get on a bus, greet the driver, show my pass, and the driver thanks me. I get out, say thank you, again the driver thanks me and says, "you are welcome," followed by "have a good day." And so it goes. The intercity bus driver is a granny, a real granny, in a white, knitted beret, just like the one who always sits in front of the house next to mine back in Moscow and yells when I park in front of her. The granny-driver loads baggage into the bus's belly, climbs inside, looks at all the passengers and says, "what wonderfully cheerful people!" I don't mind going for a long, long ride with such a grandmother.

We have a saying: the commander takes out a map—then he will ask you the way. Here you can change this saying: the commander takes a map—now someone will show him the way. Indeed, if you open a map on the street, someone will immediately ask, "Are you lost?" In the supermarket, even in a cheap supermarket, like our Piaterochka, whenever I ask auntie/girl/boy where I can find the sugar/butter/pasta, she/he doesn't just point in the general direction, but drops everything and takes me right to the sugar/butter/pasta. No one shuts a door in front of you, even if you are five to six metres away. If a beggar asks for a handout and

you don't give him a coin, he will still thank you. And if you walk down the street and you meet a passer-by, he will certainly say hello, just like in the countryside back home. Then again, St. Catharines is of course a village, despite its 132,000 inhabitants, slightly more than in Serpukhov and three times larger in area. In Toronto, I read in the newspaper that an African-Canadian stabbed someone on a bus because he said hello. One frustrating aspect of all of this politeness is that I always have to check myself. You are walking down the street deep in thought and someone all of a sudden says hello. You become uncomfortable because you didn't answer immediately. And to hurry is impolite, so I am late. But that too is ill mannered in Canada. Therefore I am not always late.

04.04.08

It's time to talk about St. Catharines. The city, as I wrote last week, is neither small in population nor in area. The population is comparable not only to Serpukhov, but also to Kolomna, Odintsovo, Orekhovo-Zuevo. However, here there are only about three or four-dozen high rises and everyone else lives in one or two-storey houses.

I'm already well acquainted with the geography, since I regularly walk around everywhere. The downtown is unlike those in our cities. It is a bad neighbourhood. I live in the centre of Moscow and am quite happy. I love to walk on densely built-up streets, where there is at least some history. Here in the centre of town there are some shops but no food stores. The only one near my home—Giant Tiger—is cheap and quite tawdry. Even worse than our Piaterochka. I go there only for bread—for everything else I have to go to a larger and more expensive store. The shops here are in a so-called plaza, i.e., shopping mall. So at the plaza where the Giant Tiger is located there is the Beer Store, which sells beer and gives you twenty cents for every bottle you return. It has a steady clientele. And the clientele is representative of downtown.

27.04.08

I had absolutely no time to write in my diary over the last three weeks. And the main event during that time is that I have returned home. For this reason, the final part of my Canadian journal has been turned into my Canadian memoirs. But violating the genre has happened before. At least I am being honest.

The main reason I wasn't able to keep a diary was the usual one: the end-of-year pressure of papers and exams. I had to read about thirty-five essays of ten to fifteen pages each, as well as sixty exams, which are for three hours. When back in March or even February I found out that my exam was scheduled for 19 April, and my return ticket was booked for the 23rd, I asked David if I could move the date ahead, since it would be hard to grade sixty exams in just a couple of days. But he said that this was impossible and promised to help out. As a result, I ended up only having to grade twenty exams of my own seminar.

07.05.08

On Thursday, 10 April, there was a reception at the university to mark the semester's end. I didn't know many of the people and soon decided to leave. But before I did, I exchanged a few words with a pretty Chinese woman from the International Department, Cassidy. We talked about the Beijing Olympics and were still chatting after the other guests had left. We continued in her office and then had dinner. I would never have imagined that I could agree so much about the world and about politics with someone from China.

Four days later I began reading papers. Of course, compared to the ones at Moscow State University, ours are more detailed, scrupulous and profound, while the Canadians are bolder and more interesting. We rely on sources—Canadians don't (to be honest, there aren't many there about Russian history). But Canadians are independent. They come up with their own topic and find the relevant sources by themselves. Our students are assigned a topic. If the instructor doesn't assign the sources and the bibliography, at least he approves them. As for the bad Canadian papers, they are complete nonsense. The reason is obvious. We have exams to weed out the weaker students, whereas there anyone can study.

03.06.08

I must keep up my diary. Now that I am back home it's harder to write about what I experienced *then* rather than what is happening *now*. The diary is losing its relevance, and it is no longer interesting either to me or to those who are reading it. When I was away, I had a vague idea that I was revealing a secret. Now the romance is over. At any rate, I am not interested anymore in sending the diary to anyone else. It appears that distance matters, even in the Internet age. But I want to finish it before I have forgotten everything, even if only for myself.

09.06.08

The exam was on Saturday. It was impossible to cheat: students write in the gym, they sit at separate desks in alternate rows: historians, physicists and historians again, so that you can't talk to your neighbour. Everything, all electronic devices are turned off with their screens down under the chair, and in the gallery up above overseers patrol the room. Students write for three hours. First: ten identifications of dates and names. I gave them a list of 120, from which I chose ten. The second task was an essay comparing the Great Reforms to the Khrushchev era. The third, a biographical essay on your imaginary 100-year-old great-grand uncle, a retired general whose brother immigrated to Canada after the war. No one speculated about the circumstances surrounding his emigration. Most believed that the old general was glad about Perestroika and democracy. Only a few people thought that the collapse of the Soviet Union might not be a happy occasion for a Soviet general, and one student suggested that the individual might be happy about Putin and Ovechkin.