

Cotswold, Pinner Hill, Pinner, Middlesex HA5 3XY. 01-866 3081

29.11.89

Mrs Judith Burgess,  
Senior Producer  
Features, Arts & Education Radio

Dear Judith

Thank you for your letter  
of the 24th November.

I am sending you 10 of my  
"pieces", & hope to hear from you about  
them.

These are: -

1. Holiday Reminiscence — 1938
2. Blood & Gold — 1940
3. Parcels — 1940
4. When the War Began — 1941
5. Order of the Bath — 1941
6. Xmas 1942 — 1942
7. Telephone — 1943
8. Stratford — 1943/4.
9. Braude — 1946
10. Mark — 1946

Yours sincerely

Alga Cardozo

TWENTY-FOUR RUSSIAN MEMORIES

(Twenty-four episodes totalling 19,660 words)

Olga Cardozo  
Cotswold  
Pinner Hill  
Pinner  
Middlesex  
HA5 3YR

21st September 1989  
OC/baw

SUMMARY OF WORDS PER EPISODE

	Words	Pages
Introduction	126	1
The American Girl	1106	5
Blood and Gold	721	4
Braude	819	4
Christmas 1942	961	5
Goodbye to Leningrad	486	3
Leonidova	1236	6
Mark	970	4
Order of the Bath	826	4
Parcels	757	4
The Present	367	2
Probst	789	4
Rowena	922	5
Stalinism	812	6
State Examinations	787	5
Summer Holidays	453	3
Sylvia	1294	6
The Telephone	1300	6
Vava	1294	7
The Visitor	709	5
What a Pity!	377	3
When The War Broke Out in 1941	924	4
The Winter Forest	871	4
The Yar Market	753	4
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Totals:	19,660	104
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## INTRODUCTION

I went to the U.S.S.R. (Moscow) in June 1936 where I lived and worked as part of the Russian community. Although I did not speak Russian, I was not a 'foreigner,' as the newspaper correspondents and diplomats were. Mostly I taught English in the Moscow Institute of Foreign Languages.

During the war (1941-1942) I was evacuated with Russians to Omutninsk, North East of Moscow. As no one there spoke English, I was forced to learn Russian.

When the Germans retreated, I returned to Moscow and went back to teaching at the Institute.

After the end of the war I came back to England.

The 'pieces' I have written are incidents that happened; and are about people I knew, and places I went to.

CHRISTMAS 1942

OMOUTNINSK

It was the first Christmas after our return from war-time evacuation; the Germans were being pushed further back each day and we all felt we ought to celebrate.

But life in Moscow was austere, there were no goods in the shops, and we had finished all the food we had brought back with us from northern evacuation. There, where money had no meaning, we had bartered most of our possessions for food, including, to our amazement in that cold climate, seemingly useless foreign things such as flowered cotton blanket covers and even a silk nightdress.

The people in Omoutninsk were real peasants, with brown weather-beaten faces and straggly hair. Their hands were rough, the nails broken. There was no such thing as make-up, hair-dos or manicures. The women's figures were shapeless under bulky clothes. They wore long skirts, thick cotton stockings and heavy

overshoes. So, before our return to Moscow, when we went to the villages to barter goods, we took only practical things.

The pink nightdress had been left behind in Moscow by a tourist friend who had hurriedly flown back to England as war broke out. She had been unable to sell it at the Government "Commission" shop for foreign goods with most of her other unwanted clothes. There they had recognised what it was and there wasn't much sale for expensive undies.

It was fine and soft, and I had used it for wrapping dishes in, when we left for our distant evacuation. It was still wrapped round the dishes when I took them to the village to trade for some sort of food to take back to hungry Moscow. As I was unwrapping the plates, one of the women asked about the pink "dress". I told her what it was, but there was some confusion between the words "evening" and "night" and she was convinced that the pink crepe-de-chine garment trimmed with deep coffee-coloured lace was a fine evening gown and would make an excellent frock for their New Year's Eve party.

My reluctance to sell it only made the dress more desirable and we actually got butter - real butter - quite beyond our dreams, for the pink nightdress. We had run down the path, quickly to get away before the woman changed her mind.

Now, back in Moscow, the only place where any bartering could be done more or less legally, was an out-of-town open market at Serpuhov. I went there with an American friend who had recently received a package from the States, and wanted to exchange the shoes she had been sent, that didn't fit anyway, for, well, perhaps a festive chicken.

As I stood waiting for her to clinch her bargain, a pretty young girl approached me. She could see by my clothes I was a foreigner - but I had nothing to sell.

"Perhaps you have an evening gown at home to sell me?" and I remembered the green velvet dress still in my trunk.

When I had gone to live in Russia, I had taken with me only those things I knew I would need, mainly utilitarian clothes, leaving most "luxuries" behind. At the last moment, however, I had pushed into my cabin trunk my favourite evening dress and cape. It had been the first evening dress that I had actually bought and not made for myself; and I took it, perhaps as a remembrance of past good times.

During the early days of war-time inflation, when money no longer had any value, we bartered many things, but no-one had any use for an elegant velvet gown. I hadn't had it with me in Omoutninsk but I doubt whether dark green would have appealed to the local people.

But this young Moscow girl was different. I gave her my address, and when she came to see me, we made a deal - a bottle of Vodka - and the know-how to bypass the electric meter - in exchange for the dress and cape.

The girl's husband was some kind of war-time profiteering engineer, who understood electricity and meters. There was a fixed limit on the amount of electricity we could use. If we exceeded our allowance the whole flat was cut off for light and power. Each family was allowed only enough for one electric light bulb and none at all for heating or cooking.

Everything was hard to get. Rations were small; often they were not honoured, and many basic foods were supplied even on the ration. Other things were acquired usually by exchanging clothes for food, often by going into the country bartering with the peasants.

Vodka was the most prized commodity. Only army officers and important officials, could buy it legally in their closed shops. After vodka, came flour because it could be kept, and bread was the basic food. Potatoes were bulky, froze in the winter, started to sprout in the spring and went bad. And fats were just unobtainable luxuries.

We took the bottle of Vodka to a village some kilometers from Moscow and exchanged it there for a pood (36lbs) of flour. It



sounds easy, but the complications were immense. One had to have a permit to go out of town, and another one to travel on a train, even a local one. Flour was quite unobtainable in town.

But in the flat there was no gas and no way to bake anything. So, after another out-of-town expedition, the flour was changed for sacks of potatoes to keep for the winter.

And some of the potatoes were traded as part payment to my little old Russian dress-maker for making out of two dresses, a nice new dress for Christmas.

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That was our last lesson. I had no time for any more, and, anyway, I was preparing to leave the Soviet Union.

That's really the end. But would you like to know what happened to Vava Novikova?

She didn't fail her exams - her English was too good. But after I left and she had no-one to speak up for her, she was expelled for being unsuitably dressed for classes. No, she didn't wear the fox furs and the shoes with bells to classes. She was expelled for wearing trousers.

Some years later, I read a book by Nora Murray, a Russian girl who after great difficulty, had left early in the war with her English husband. She mentioned the "Russian Wives" as the girls who married Englishmen and Americans were called, and she wrote that Vava Novikova was sentenced to two years imprisonment for "not conforming to the registration formalities."

As she was no longer a student and had no work permit she must have lived illegally in Moscow.

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21st September 1989  
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Ref: LC/jl

12<sup>th</sup> February 2004

Ms H Bernstein  
Horizons  
Apt 503  
6 Three Anchor Bay Road  
Three Anchor Bay  
Cape Town 8005

Dear Hilda

Thank you for your recent letter. I believe that Stuart has recently spoken to Frances. I hope that you are now settled in Cape Town and enjoying the better weather and views. I have actually visited Cape Town and Durban, although not Johannesburg and I am going to be in Port Elizabeth for a couple of days towards the end of this month so my travels have taken me to South Africa and I do agree that Cape Town is a beautiful place although there must be some concerns regarding the crime and HIV rates! I hope you have now been reunited with your computer and that you will be able to continue to write and also perhaps draw and pain, although perhaps by now you have given up being an artist. We are all going to Breckenridge for a week as I am teaching on a reconstructive pelvic surgery course and it is the childrens half term so they and Stuart will be skiing for the week while I am working! I passed your message on to Melissa. She is growing up and becoming increasingly difficult! The other two are still tolerable but no doubt that will change with time. If there is anything we can do to help you please let me know. We all hope that you will be happy with your new life.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



*ML* LINDA CARDOZO  
Professor of Urogynaecology

# Professor Linda Cardozo

MD FRCOG

8 Devonshire Place, London W1N 1PB Tel: 0171 935 2357 Fax: 0171 224 2797

Our Ref: LC/lh

7th November, 1995

Mrs Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington  
Oxfordshire  
OX5 1HF


Dear Hilda

Here is Toni's original interview with Olga and a photo-copy (sent separately) I am afraid I did not have Toni's address so I am sending both of the copies to you. We do have an additional copy if you require one.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

  
Linda Cardozo  
Professor of Urogynaecology

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