

Vladimir Goes To Havana

The Strangers

Vladimir Andropournosin, veteran of the Soviet campaign for the liberation of the peoples of Afghanistan, after a period of convalescence in the German Democratic Republic, sat up in his hospital bed on a brisk February morning, put down the newspaper he was reading and rang the assistance bell next to his pillow.

The uniformed nurse arrived and supplied Vladimir with writing paper, a pen and an envelope.

Vladimir wrote

"To the advisory board for the Development of cultural visits to sympathetic States.

Dear Sirs, I have just read in last Septembers issue of Pravda that Doctor Mikhail Buggerovski, a colleague from the days of my lectureship at Moscow University, has been appointed as Scientific Advisor to the Soviet Delegation in Cuba for the promotion of soil mechanics at the research institute there.

Having survived the campaign of Afghanistan I am requesting that I continue my convalescence visiting Dr Buggerovski, assisting him in his work in Havana, for a period of time which the board deems fit.

Yours faithfully, comrade Andropournosin."

Methodically he folded the letter, placed it in the envelope, sealed it and addressed it.

Six weeks later Vladimir was standing on the deck of the SS Ivanitch, a black sea tourist cruiser disguised as a missile carrying cargo vessel to deceive the Americans.

Waiting at the foot of the gangplank was Mikhail Vladerovsky.

Immediately they went to a bar and drank several ice cold Slivovitzes to toast each others health.

Mikhail outlined his work in Havana, a research project he had initiated there and the success he had achieved.

In fact, it had been rumoured that he would receive a medal of honour from the Kremlin itself.

The more he heard the more enthusiastic Vladimir became, and he slept soundly that night, eagerly awaiting the start of his new appointment the next day. It was after the first week that Vladimir met Christos. One evening he was strolling in the humid streets of Havana when he stopped for a night-cap in one of several bars that lined the streets.

Christos sat there, proud, manly and astonishingly good looking,

but with a boyish look about him and a vulnerability that appealed to Vladimir.

Before even realising it Vladimir was in conversation with him using a crude mixture of sign language and broken English and Spanish.

After about an hour, Vladimir realised there had been something missing in his stay in Havana : Fun with a big 'F'.

It wasn't that he didn't find Christos attractive - everyone did - but Vladimir had been cured of that

illness, back home in the Soviet Union.

"many thanks to the Party that cares for its people" he thought.

However there seemed to be a new kind of energy in this bar.

People were talking non stop; their eyes seemed full of intensity.

After several hours Christos signalled for Vladimir to follow him into an adjacent room.

Christos then took out a big plastic bag containing white powder.

He shovelled a spoonful up his nose while inhaling strongly, then signalled for the perplexed Vladimir to do the same.

Suddenly everything became clear. Why of course, this was why there was so much sugar cane on the island, this was why everyone in the bar looked alert and intense, because they were sniffing the refined sugar, which gives you energy.

Christos winked, pointing to a bag of white powder.

"This is the reason we must get to Miami".

Vladimir pretended to understand, "but in order to get there we must be criminals and, or social undesirables, to benefit from a scheme set up by the American president, which our president is going to take full advantage of - ha ha ha!

- and so will we. You could say it is a foreign 'aids' programme! ha ha ha!