SOME REFLECTIONS ON ALEKSANDR ZINOV'EV'S GOMO SOVETIKUS AND MOI DOM — MOIA CHUZHBINA

Gomo sovetikus and Moi dom — moia chuzhbina were both published in 1982.¹ They reflect Zinov'ev's earliest experience as an émigré and they capture an important moment in Cold War history, namely the period when NATO was implementing its "twin track" policy of deploying cruise and Pershing missiles, while at the same time being ready to withdraw them if the Soviet Union withdrew its SS20s. They provide a snapshot of East-West relations at a point very near the end of what might be termed "classical Soviet Communism" and as such may well be esteemed in the future for their documentary qualities, as well as for their literary merits, in which case both works will remain as important landmarks in Russian émigré literature. Gomo sovetikus is a scathing account in prose of Soviet behaviour abroad and of the West's inability to comprehend the true nature of Soviet foreign policy with respect to the West. Moi dom — moia chuzhbina is a work written entirely in verse, most of which is devoted to an analysis of the ambiguities of the title. It contains some of the funniest moments in Zinov'ev's entire oeuvre.

Although the two books appeared in the same year, for some reason only Gomo sovetikus seems to have attracted the attention of reviewers. A search of this writer's own extensive archive reveals no record of any reviews of Moi dom — moia chuzhbina. But it will be useful to give a sample of what reviewers had to say about Gomo sovetikus.² John Dunlop, writing in the Times Literary Supplement of 11 October 1985,³ with reference to the English translation which had appeared that same year, is of the opinion that: "[t]he present work, Homo Sovieticus,⁴ is arguably his most signif-

¹. A. A. Zinov'ev, Gomo sovetikus (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1982); Moi dom — moia chuzhbina (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1982).
². Actually, one could devote an article to an analysis of contemporary reviews of Gomo sovetikus seen from the standpoint of today's post-Soviet reality, but that will be for another occasion.
significant book since *The Yawning Heights*. If one considers that between *The Yawning Heights* and *Gomo sovetikus* Zinov'ev had published *Zapiski nochnogo storozha*, *Svetloe budushchee*, *V preddverii raiia*, *Zheltyi dom* and *Kommunizm kak real'nost*, we have a measure of the significance of Dunlop's view. Anthony Burgess wrote a review in *The Observer* on 17 March 1985, without devoting a single judgmental word to the work itself, beyond labelling it a "sardonic meditation" on the USSR’s attitude to its émigrés and the West’s attitude to its immigrés. K. Pomerantsev, in *Russkaia mysl’* of 30 December 1982, wrote that the picture Zinov'ev painted of the émigré world was rather accurate: "создавалась картина эмигрантского быта с непрекращающимися спорами, дрязгами и доносами, увы, довольно верная." This view is corroborated "on the record", as it were, by Martin Dewhirst, a specialist in the field of Soviet literature who, in 1983, stated in a letter to Zinov'ev's British publisher that *Gomo sovetikus* will always remain the book about the "third wave" of Russian émigrés (this author's private archive). Another enthusiastic reviewer is Mikhail Geller, who devoted a substantial review article to *Gomo sovetikus* which appeared in *Obozrenie*, No. 2, of December 1982. His view is almost identical to that of John Dunlop, preceding it by three years: "Гомо советикс, опубликованный в 1982 г., на мой взгляд, самая важная из книг Александра Зиновьева после Зияющих высот.", In a later paragraph, Geller brackets *Gomo sovetikus* with *My* and *1984*. The latter two books define important stages in the history of the twentieth century. Zamiatin's book describes the future of the "gomosos", homo sovieticus. The diarist who is the first "homo sovieticus" in *My* writes: "Я уверен — мы победим. Потому что разум должен победить." About thirty years later, as Geller points out, Orwell described in *1984* the victory of reason. Winston Smith comes to

16. 'I am convinced that we will be victorious. Because reason must triumph.'