

# Yevtushenko Captivates the Imagination with His New Russian Approach

By R. T. Smith



Oh  
Yeah?

by F.N. Stewart

## Drinks Beer

Grandma drinks beer. Which is alright because Grandma lives alone and needs something for comfort. However, she does have two dogs, but only one of the dogs drinks beer. The other dog drinks water and other such things. Now when Grandma drinks beer, she is funny. She is funny because she has to take out her teeth because if she doesn't they may fall out later, and she is afraid that she will step on them when she is drunk. Once she stepped on her glasses, fell and broke a favorite flower pot. There was no flower in it because Grandma thinks that the pot is too pretty to put dirt in. Anyway she thought that until she broke the pot.

Grandma lives about seven miles outside of a small town in the western part of the state. Grandma doesn't drive. Well, Grandma doesn't drive anything but a tractor. And Grandma looks funny driving that tractor back from town with a case of beer tied to the seat. Grandma always had the storekeeper tie the case of beer there so that it will be out of the way as she is driving back from town. The case of beer fell off the tractor one time as Grandma was coming back from town, and the traffic backed up all the way to town because Grandma parked the tractor in the road while she picked up the cans of beer.

## Grandma and the Patrolmen

It wouldn't have taken so long except that a highway patrolman wanted to see Grandma's license. Grandma doesn't have a license. She explained to the highway patrolman that she didn't drive and therefore she didn't need a license. When he asked about the tractor she told him that anybody could drive a tractor and that a person didn't need a license to drive a regular old farm tractor. The highway patrolman disagreed with Grandma and then Grandma didn't like that. Grandma in an effort to calm herself opened one of the cans of beer. It was one of those beers that had been rolling along the highway in the sunshine. The beer spewed all over the patrolman and, needless to say, he didn't like that. If Grandma's nephew had not been the judge in that county, Grandma would have really been in trouble.

The patrolman wrote out a ticket for Grandma. It included such things as driving without a license, obstructing traffic, parking in a no-parking zone (the middle of a county highway), insulting an officer, and finally drunken driving. The drunken driving charge was added because Grandma drank two beers as she was arguing with the patrolman and two beers make Grandma drunk. Grandma, after that, was charged with public drunkenness and drinking in a public place (again the middle of a county highway).

The patrolman had to move the tractor from the middle of the highway and drive Grandma and her beer home. By now, Grandma was too drunk to climb onto the tractor. Anyway, the patrolman thought that Grandma would really be unsafe and having anyone else on the highway at the same time would be unsafe. Things got worse at the farm because the dog that doesn't like beer bit the patrolman. The other dog probably would have bit the patrolman too but he was too busy drinking the beer that Grandma had poured into his drinking bowl.

Grandma took the patrolman into the house to wash the dogbite. Once in the house, Grandma took out her teeth so that they wouldn't fall out and get stepped on. And Grandma doesn't speak well when her teeth are out. Grandma doesn't speak well when she is drunk either. At that time she was drunk and had her teeth out so the patrolman probably didn't understand anything that Grandma said after that. He probably wasn't impressed with her logic while she was sober either.

While Grandma was nursing the dogbite, she spilled a glass of beer onto the patrolman's pants. The patrolman probably would have left except that the dog which had bit had ran off with his shoe. The patrolman had taken off the shoe when Grandma was nursing his ankle. The patrolman was probably mad about the whole affair.

After giving the patrolman a sandwich, a piece of cake, and a beer, Grandma went to find the shoe which the dog had run off with. It must have taken a while to find the shoe, because the dog had hidden it behind the henhouse. The patrolman had another beer, and another sandwich while he waited for Grandma to find the shoe. He was also waiting for his pants to dry. It probably took a real long time for Grandma to find the shoe, because eighty year old women walk funny when they are drunk.

## Lessons in Drinking

After a while the patrolman was also drunk and Grandma had to call her son to come take the patrolman back home. Now, my uncle is a minister. So uncle Tommy must have felt sort of silly to see two members of his congregation in the condition that Grandma and the patrolman were in. Anyway uncle Tommy drove the patrolman home and had the patrolman's wife drive uncle Tommy back over to Grandma's tractor. Uncle Tommy drove Grandma's tractor back to Grandma's farm. Uncle Tommy was probably going to lecture Grandma but she had gone to bed when he got back.

Uncle Tommy preached on the evils of drinking one Sunday morning after that. The patrolman and Grandma became friends and he occasionally stops by the farm to have a few beers with Grandma. And every now and then he will bring Grandma a case of beer from town.

"I am not retreating one damned step." "It is good to be angry at untruth."

These words were written by a poet who speaks for the younger generation. He is not dead. It is unfashionable in these days to praise living poets, but I have fallen in love with the diverse verse of Yevgeny Yevtushenko and cannot wait to write about him. Spokesman of the neo-Marxist Russians, Yevushenko is a devout Communist who is disgusted with the dogmatic approach that is held by the old guard Stalinists. He believes that the cynics and dogmatists are traitors to Communism and the people, and the power-hungry Stalin is responsible for that element of blind obedience that can still be perceived in modern Russia. But the lean native of Siberia is not favored for his political rebellion alone; he writes poetry of the most sensitive and perceptive sort. He remembers the stern directives of the Stalin regime that were the institutionalized inhibition of free expression, and he rebels. He remembers the inhumane persecution of the Russian Jews, and he rebels. He remembers the lies and illusions that controlled doggerel and hackwork that wins the Stalin Award for literature every year, and he rebels.

Yevtushenko has opened the door to better relations and understanding between Russian and American artists that have been entered through a cultural exchange in the past few years. Yevtushenko visited Europe in 1963 and American in 1967.

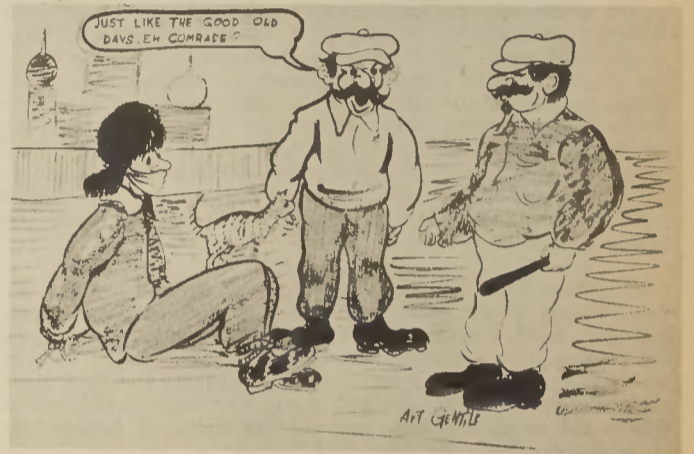


Yergemy in Alaska (A REAL LIFE PHOTO)

Voznesensky spent several months in the U. S. in '66, where he captured the imaginations of the American public with readings from his ANTIWORLDS. Yevtushenko was even more captivating as he read his poems thousands of times all over the States. Overcoming the barriers of language and ideology, Yevtushenko has proven that song and verse form a universal language of their own. Born in 1922 in the small town of the Trans-Siberian Railway, Yevtushenko (sometimes spelled without the 'y') grew up as the son of a peasant geologist but moved to Moscow at an early age. His long autobiographical poem "Zima Junction" conveys the

spirit of his childhood and youth more accurately than any commentary like this could possibly do. As a boy he was a prolific athlete, playing ping-pong, cycling, and goal-keeping in soccer; his first poems were published in a sports magazine.

Yevgeny's great-grandfather was sent to Siberia for burning the landlord's estate, and his grandfather was arrested for high treason in 1938. He died in a concentration camp. The family background of Yevtushenko is



The command that the living village gives to Yevgeny ends with a few lines that reflect his view of life and his home:

"Love people.  
Love entertains its own discrimination.  
Have me in mind, I shall be watching.  
You can return to me.  
Now go.  
I went, and I am still going."

"...She weeping and her friends weeping. I frightened

don't feel like dancing, but you can't not dance. The bridegroom will soon be the soldier. The poem hits close to home. It is now.

"In Georgia" paints the happy yet sad life of the Russian peasantry:

"I in the Russian way dancing and weeping to songs I am unable to translate"

"Party Card" tells the story of a Russian child who is blinded by the propaganda of the Stalinist ear:

"A shot-up forest full of black holes  
Mind-crushing explosions.  
He wants some berries, he wants some berries:  
the young lieutenant, lying in his blood.  
I was a smallish boy,  
Who crawled in the long grass til it was dark  
And brought him back a cap of strawberries,  
And when they came there was no use for them."

"Wheatfields blackened round their villages.  
In the woman's coat I wore at the time.  
I felt for the party card close to my heart."

Yevtushenko's attitude about truth has gotten him into a lot of trouble in Russia. The literary and political establishment tried outwardly for some time to crush Yevtushenko and his type. In '63 he published an article in a French Journal, L'Expression. This is a sin of the first order, and Krushchev began an all-out campaign to discredit Yevgeny. It did not work. This admirer of Pushkin has several poignant statements about truth in his poems. Two of them follow

"Telling lies to the young is wrong.

Proving to them that lies are true is wrong.

Telling them that God's in his heaven

and all's right with the world is wrong." from "Lies"

"How sharply our children will be ashamed

taking at last their vengeance for these horrors

remembering how in so strange a time

common integrity could look like courage." from "Talk"

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