

Lazar Sherishevskiy with His Friends



This is a meeting with Naum Korzhavin in the House of writers in Moscow in 1990 during his visit from USA. I the 1st on the left, Naum Korzhavin is the first on the right.

In 1953 in Gorkiy I entered the University. I finished the philological Faculty well. I started to have my works published. I became a free lance writer. I wrote for newspapers and TV and earned my living thus. Some time later my books were published and I joined the union of writers. I could earn my living without having to work in the office. I called myself 'a parasite with a certificate'. I didn't put down the poems I composed in the camp. I wrote them down after I was released and had them published in 1991. In 1971 I moved to Moscow. There was terrible censorship in Gorkiy and I could hardly earn my living. Moscow welcomed me. I found a job to be able to support the family. I translated poems and had 50 books of my translations published. I know Ukrainian and Belarussian. I also had my poems published, but it was hard. My books began to be published in 1980.

I was enthusiastic about perestroika in the 1980s at first like many others. Thanks to perestroika people of my fate, i.e., those who were arrested and suffered during the Stalin's period got some support. The 'Memorial' community of former political prisoners was established. I was one of the first members of the working group of this society. I am still involved in its activities. The Memorial society's goal was to restore the hidden events of the Soviet period and disclose the truth about persecution, terror and discrimination. It's a historical/literature society. The structure include few strands: uniting former prisoners and their successors having the status of those who suffered from political persecution. They have their own organization. There is also a historical unit in the Memorial, working with archives, documents, facts, memories. And there is also a legal center fighting for human rights.

Publishing became easier: previously there were only state publishing houses and the ideological censorship, but when it was canceled, it became possible to publish books, but on market terms,

though. I've published in 15 years, I did it on my expense. I had savings from my translation before 1992 and managed to publish my first book on this money. Later I had to look for sponsors. My daughter has supported me. I don't sell my books. I can afford small editions of 300 - 500 copies. I give these books to my acquaintances. Occasionally people buy few books at literary parties. I used to translate Caucasian authors, I know Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani a little, but I do my translations on the basis of word for word translation, and they still have state publishing houses. I've kept my old ties. They published my translations in Russian and paid me.

My school friend became a world-known poet: he was Emmanuel Mandel. Later he had a literature pseudonym of Naum Korzhavin [Naum Korzhavin, born in Kiev in 1925, a poet and playwright. In 1947 was arrested for poems against Stalin and his regime. 1947 - 1952 was in exile in Siberia. In 1973 was expelled from the Union of writers and emigrated from the USSR and now lives in the USA]. We were friends and attended a literature club at school. We are still friends. He visits here and then we meet. He is an old, severely ill man now.