

March 19, 1987
**Letter from Kim Philbey from Moscow to Gen. T.
Boydjiev**

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Postbox 509
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Our dear Radka and Todor,

How nice to hear from you again, but what a sad story you have to tell. We only met your father briefly -- two or perhaps three times -- but he was clearly a man of resolution and achievement. I am glad to hear that he was awarded the Order of Dimitrov, but am sorry that they did not have the forethought to present it in time for him to appreciate the honour a bit longer: say, on his seventieth or his seventy~~s~~th fifth jubilee birthday. But anyway he was the sort of man who would take more pleasure in the knowledge of work well done rather ^{THAN} in the decorations that went with it. Do please convey to your mother our deepest sympathy; at least she has you, Radka and her grandchildren to help fill the empty space in her heart. It was interesting to hear that your father received his Order in Gramatikovo. I hope that, in due course, yours will be presented to you in Karnobat -- so much more romantic than in cosmopolitan Sofia!

You did not need to apologise for your English. It may not have the elegance of Evelyn Waugh or the subtlety of Graham Greene, but it is vigorous and intelligible (with very, very few spelling mistakes); what more can you want?

I still doubt whether I shall ever make Bulgaria again. Even that short trip to Latvia proved to be a mistake. It was the usual business of trying to cram a month's sightseeing into a week, not to mention a little work and trying to make conversation with local celebrities. On the third day, my lovely redhead put her foot down, sent me to bed and called the doctor. It proved to be not serious and we got back to Moscow under ^{OUR} own steam. I then became involved in another fairly ambitious operation which you may hear about before this letter reaches you. Then heavy pressure from the comrades and a few gentle words from the lovely redhead put me back in hospital for a general check-up and a booster course to see me through till next year. Now I am home again, savouring the delights

of being looked after like a child and, as I write, the sounds of kitchen activity as the lovely redhead prepares beefstroganov for lunch. Not that the food in hospital was bad, but it was remarkably unexciting! It occurs to me that, judging by the number of pills I am coaxed into eating before and after meals, I could become a good customer for Ilina. I would suggest that she might arrange me a discount on the price. But it is hardly worth it since I get them bezplatno anyway. Maybe perestroika will change all that.

I am shocked to hear that your son looks down on diplomats. Please tell him that his honorable man has been a phoney diplomat, a phoney journalist and a phoney bureaucrat as well. I will only say to him: Salud y pesetas, y mucho tiempo para gastarlos.

I am intrigued by your finding a dacha at Borovetz (or near it). Wasn't that the place where we had a rather heavy lunch at a rest house, after which Comrade Stankov had rather a noisy sleep? The odd thing was that, some years later, we ran into our host -- the manager of the rest house -- ~~and~~ at another rest house on the banks of the Vltava above Prague: he was studying Czech methods of running rest houses!

Anyway, after all this talk of our visiting Bulgaria, what about your coming to Moscow. Your room is waiting for you, and we can probably promise you bean soup for every meal -- but you must bring your own chubritza. We may have some in our spice cupboard, but it must be too old to have retained any flavour.

Well, as you see, my typewriter is beginning to play tricks, and I must stop now or the lovely redhead will burn the stroganov. All our love and sympathy -- and please pass on our regards to all our old friends. All good wishes from us both.

Kim