

JOKING ASIDE!



Time to Laugh Seriously

JOKING ASIDE!

Time to Laugh Seriously



Progress Publishers Moscow

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Шутки в сторону! или
Время улыбнуться всерьез

На английском языке

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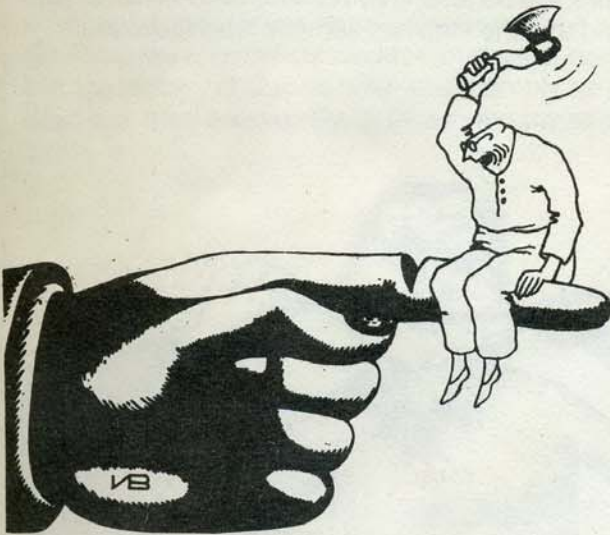
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Foreword



In recent times our society has begun to somewhat resemble a magician who retrieves from the pockets of his quite ordinary looking suit a seemingly endless number of attention-getters: bouquets of paper flowers, ribbons that have no end, or even rabbits or pigeons. The only difference is that it is not just the public that is watching with awe this endless stream of wonders--but the magician also.

Just a few years ago the situation was totally different. Over the decades of what is now called the "period of stagnation", many works of profound prose and brilliant poetry, unique sculptures and avant-garde art remained largely unknown to the public.

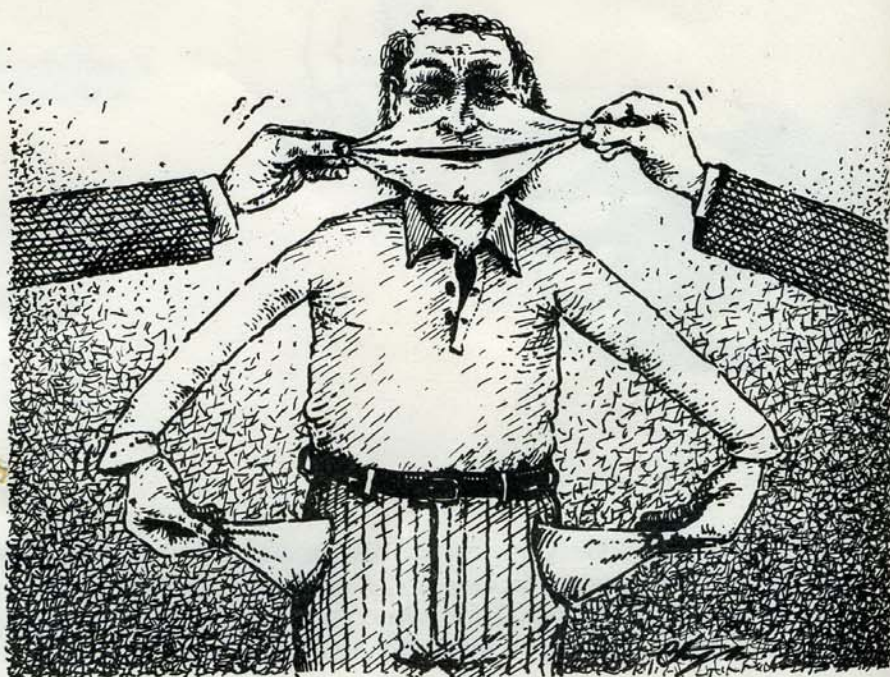
We have always had a fair number of cartoonists, perhaps even more than were needed. They were convinced that it was their civic duty to disclose and hold up to public shame various social evils, but in such a way that these afflictions seemed insignificant and virtually harmless on a larger scale--and so that people laughed at them.

But then the officials charged with deciding what constitutes real culture and what does not, began to disappear before our very eyes. And it was discovered that among the cartoonists there were people who knew how to draw not only funnily but in a way that made you think, demonstrating a profound understanding of the object of ridicule. People who were keenly aware of the most dangerous and irksome problems of society. Waiting in the shadows was an entire generation of politically mature and civic-minded graphic artists capable of making people laugh at the morbid and be terrified by the funny.

It is to this generation of cartoonists that this edition is devoted. Without complimenting ourselves, we would like to warn the reader that many of the cartoons presented herein will require extra moral and mental effort to comprehend and appreciate. For instance, without being told so, hardly anyone would be able to figure out that the drawing on page ... is supposed to represent Leda and the Swan from Greek mythology.

Therefore, following the practice of thick illustrated magazines, which interlace stories on politics with advertisements and sexual exposes, out of consideration for the reader we have alternated serious cartoons with inoffensive but not always innocent drawings. In this way, the reader will be able to laugh without concealing the page from his overly curious neighbor perched beside him on the park bench. What's more, being true democrats deep down inside, we have included several drawings that demand nothing from the reader except perhaps the ability to laugh one's head off for no reason at all.

It is the purpose of this edition to show that humor is no joke; that we have no intention to joke about serious matters likely to decide our fate; and that the time has come to laugh seriously.



S. AINUTDINOV

But before we begin, several words are in order about the peculiarities of Soviet thinking, without which the processes taking place in our society and thus the cartoons may be incomprehensible to the foreign reader.

First, we have been taught to think dialectically.

It is easy enough to employ the dialectical method in everyday speech. Every once in a while one merely has to say: "And vice versa!" If something is true, then the opposite is true also, and since it is true, it is also at the same time false, the opposite of which, by the way, is also false.

Thinking in this way allows us to be exactly two times smarter than those who don't know how to think in this way, who are two times more stupid than we are, and vice versa.

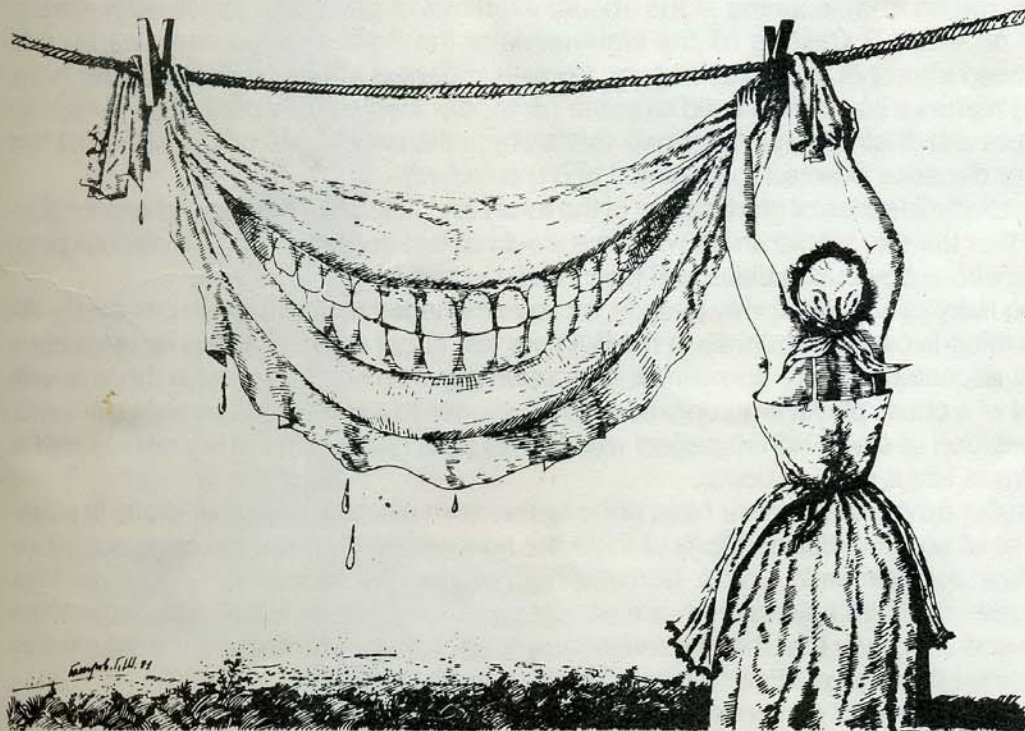
Making someone who is gravely ill laugh is a difficult and thankless task, but to make fun of someone's illness is simply unethical. Yet a person who keeps his sense of humor even under the most extreme circumstances is never without hope. And if he allows himself to laugh at his own illness, chances are he will be on the road to recovery.

And vice versa. A healthy person who has everything going for him usually smiles. But if he smiles all the time, one has to assume that not everything is going well.

This bit of wisdom can be applied on a larger scale to society, which, similar to a human being, can become ill and recover, take humor at its expense normally or be paranoid about it.

For a long time our society was an example of focussed seriousness. Everywhere you turned you came up against subjects about which even the slightest hint of a joke or unintended irony was regarded as blasphemy if not a political crime. In fact, our attitude was not simply serious, it was almost solemn. Just about everything was considered sacred with the exception of "isolated shortcomings" left over from the "accursed past" or snuck through censors or customs control.

And vice versa. We were perhaps one of the most smiling societies in the world. Broad smiling faces of model Soviet workers peered out at us from posters, newspapers, magazines and television screens. A special effort was made to project just such an image. "Too gloomy!"—the critics would say, and the faces on countless art works would have to be altered to make their smiles bigger. Upon the cheerful culmination of stories, novels or plays performers, spectators and officials from the Ministry of Culture alike would simply be obliged to smile radiantly—at themselves, at each other and, most importantly, at those who made possible all that happiness and joy.



G. BASYROV

But amid all this somber brow arching and forehead wrinkling, amid the fake smiles could be heard the uproarious laughter of nearly the entire population, who were driven into a state of near frenzy by the way we depicted our political enemies abroad: physically ugly, totally empty upstairs and marked by a pathological hatred for Russians. No efforts were spared in holding ourselves up to ridicule too. Constant targets of attack were people overconcerned about their personal appearances, users of imported cosmetics, red-nosed alcoholics, ink-stained denunciators, and last but not least, bureaucrats with heads shaped like paragraph marks.

That's the way people wanted to see things, and that's the way things were depicted. But according to the strict rules of the not-so-strict dialectics, everything in real life was exactly the opposite. There was nothing funny in what we indulgently laughed at, thinking we were fully in control of the situation. Almost cute-looking drunks singing rollicking tunes being hauled away by dashing, clean-cut law enforcement officers in spotless uniforms were a constant object of our collective humor. But nothing was said about the fact that these very drunks contributed to broken families and caused their friends and family members to undergo living hell. That they beat their wives, inflicted irreparable mental wounds on their children, begot whole generations of mentally and physically impaired children, and died as old men in the prime of their lives.

And nothing was said about the fact that bureaucracy, which was so often portrayed in naively primitive ways, almost as a character trait rather than a widespread social phenomenon, was in fact a powerful, ramified, shrewd organism that had infected with its cancerous cells almost every social institution, was able to drive the country into a period of stagnation lasting for decades, and ground up in an enormous paper shredder brilliant ideas and individual human fates alike.

As for the "denunciators", who were persecuted by friends and foes alike, they suddenly became heroes for having fought almost single-handedly against bureaucratic absurdities, injustice and officially sanctioned crimes. The price paid for their unbending dedication was more than just blocked career advancement or loss of social status. Sometimes they paid with their health, freedom and even lives.

There were some other things that we were never supposed to take lightly. But we did. What normal person could refrain from laughing at the absurd exertions of our for-life-appointed leaders to leave their mark on history? Casting off the nightmares of the Stalinist repressions, we laughed openly at the brazen attempts to rewrite history. Endless moaning about the horrors of life in the West did more to make us laugh than it did to sober us, for our ideologically predictable foreign affairs commentators with their highly sharpened sensitivity to the sweet smell of capitalism that had been decaying for decades seemed too well-fed and too well-off.

But in this muddled dialectics of glorification of the funny and ridicule of chronic nightmares glimmered the hope that the day would arrive when we would at last do away with the nefarious practice of bifurcating about obvious realities and their official portrayal.

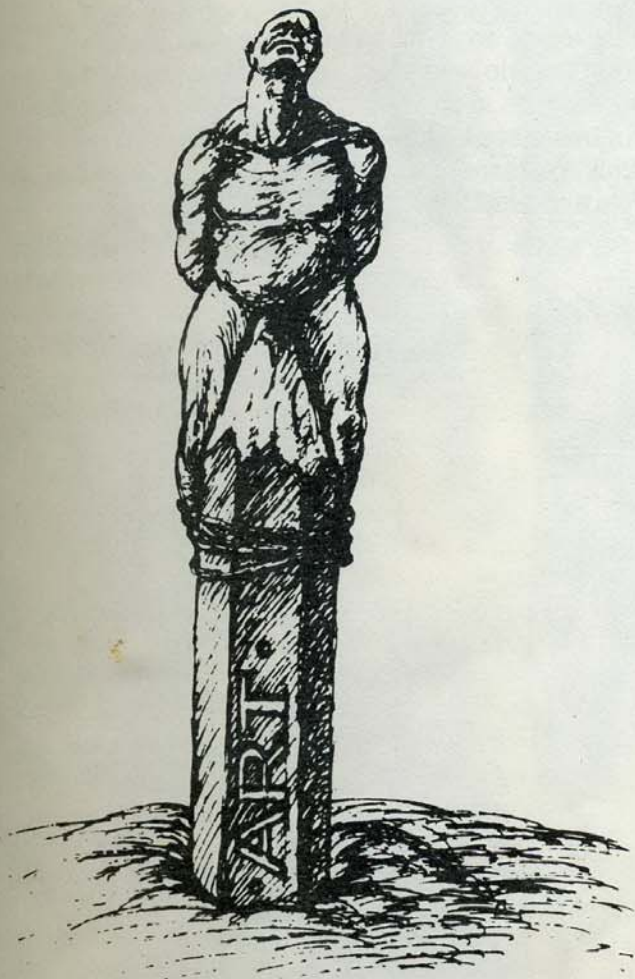
It would be too risky to say that today already we have managed to do things fundamentally differently. But one thing is certain: changes in the WAY we talk about our reality have far outstripped even our boldest expectations. We sometimes look upon our own achievements in this area with the bewilderment of a chess player who unexpectedly manages to capture two pieces in one move. Or with the superstition of a bed-ridden patient who knows he is recovering but is afraid to laugh at his regressing illness lest a relapse occur.

Under perestroika Soviet cartoonists have gone farther than perhaps any other group in pressing the outer limits of social criticism. Many of them are now conveying through cartoons what we have been too timid to express in words. Some of our monuments, titles, awards—all those false symbols of our past which we held sacred—are now being subjected to public ridicule, sometimes with such frenzy and accuracy that they no longer seem funny. But more important is the salutary effect of devastating irony and political "assassination" through laughter.

Karl Marx said that mankind can break with its past lightheartedly, for all historical events occur twice: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. Our society has reaffirmed this canon many

times over. The tragic mistakes of history gave way to the comic and patently absurd theorizing of erstwhile prophets of a bright future; the morose grandeur of the Stalin epoch was supplanted by the absurd cult of the immortal party leader; and the appallingly blind belief in ridiculous propaganda phantoms was replaced by an ironic, cheerful mistrust by the educated masses of the idle chatter of political demagoguery.

We must not reject these so transparent hints by History itself. We must continue to poke fun—mercilessly and publicly—at all that we wish to part with forever.



M. ZLATKOVSKY

Chapter

1

HOW NEW THINKING IS AFFECTING GRAPHIC ART

In this chapter the reader will be able to see for himself that POLITICAL cartoons are becoming more HUMANE. Apparently this is because POLITICS ITSELF IS BECOMING MORE HUMANE.

The old "enemy image" is gradually disappearing from the political cartoons carried by our newspapers and magazines. Seen less and less are foreign presidents crazed by their hatred for the Soviet Union; fanatical war campaigners dressed in Pentagon garb whose sole desire in life is to blow up the planet; and Western radio station announcers, depicted as rabid dogs foaming from the mouth, barking at our amazingly reproachless reality. Depictions of life abroad are beginning to become brighter and more sympathetic.

But old clichés never die, they merely take on new form. Thus, the "enemy image" remains, but now as an embodiment of countless arsenals of weapons, the specter of a nuclear crucifixion, and new means for taking human life so effective that their use even in limited quantities would be enough to guarantee the total self-destruction of mankind.

It seems that even the creators of political cartoons, who not so long ago were so attentive to the transgressions of other countries, have begun to seriously reflect upon the fact that these shortcomings pale before the prospect of having no enemies at all, no friends, no shortcomings, no advantages, of being neither good nor bad, of not being at all. Thus the heroes of these cartoons are no longer "us" or "them", but a small, round ball, the planet Earth--and those who for the sake of their own selfish interests are wont to treat it like a football.

M. ZLATKOVSKY



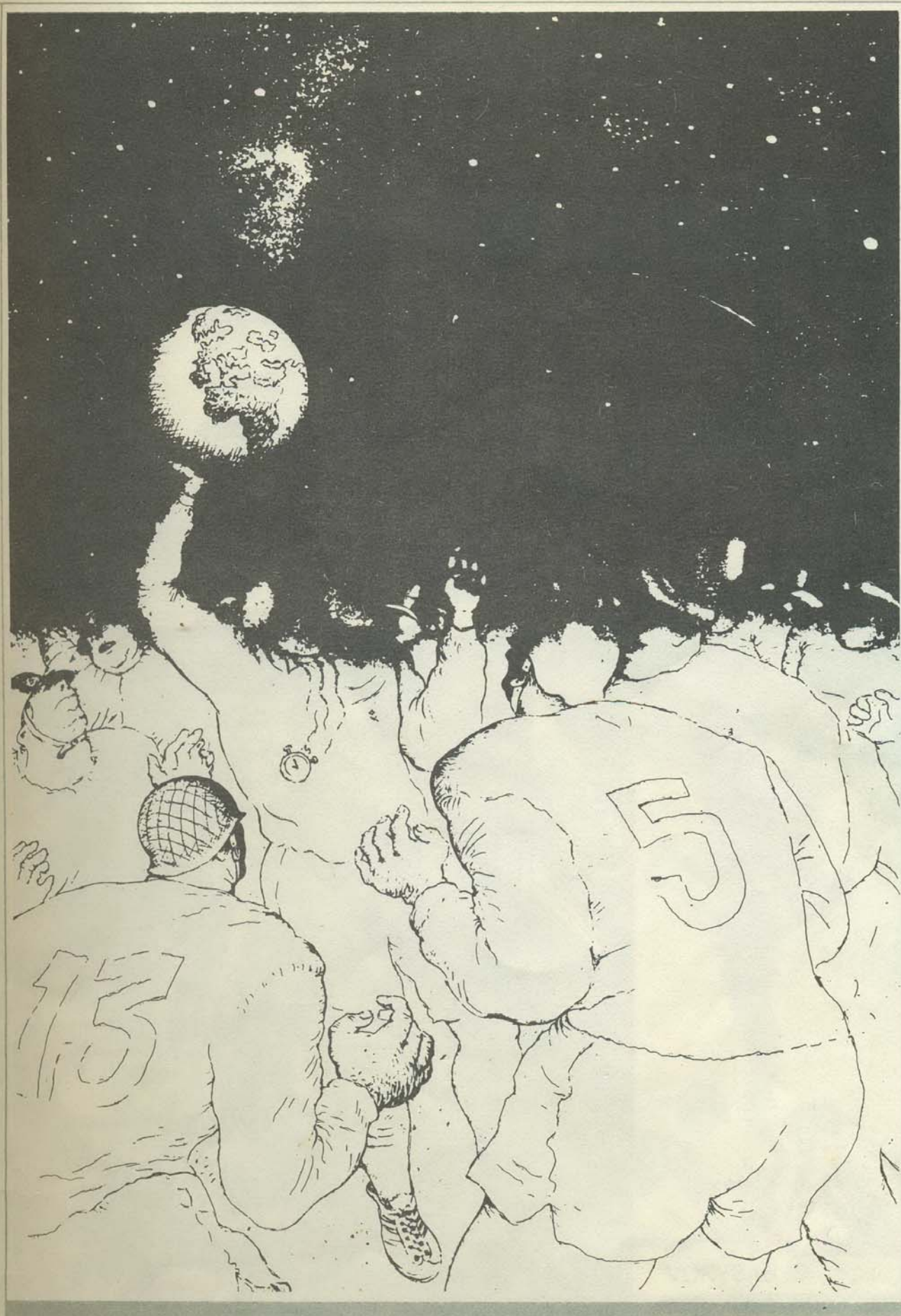


I. SMIRNOV

Chapter
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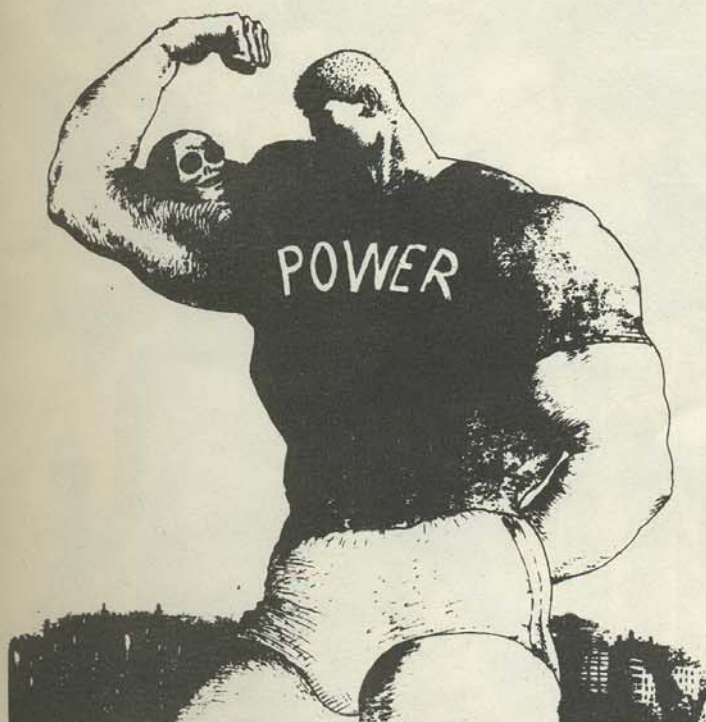


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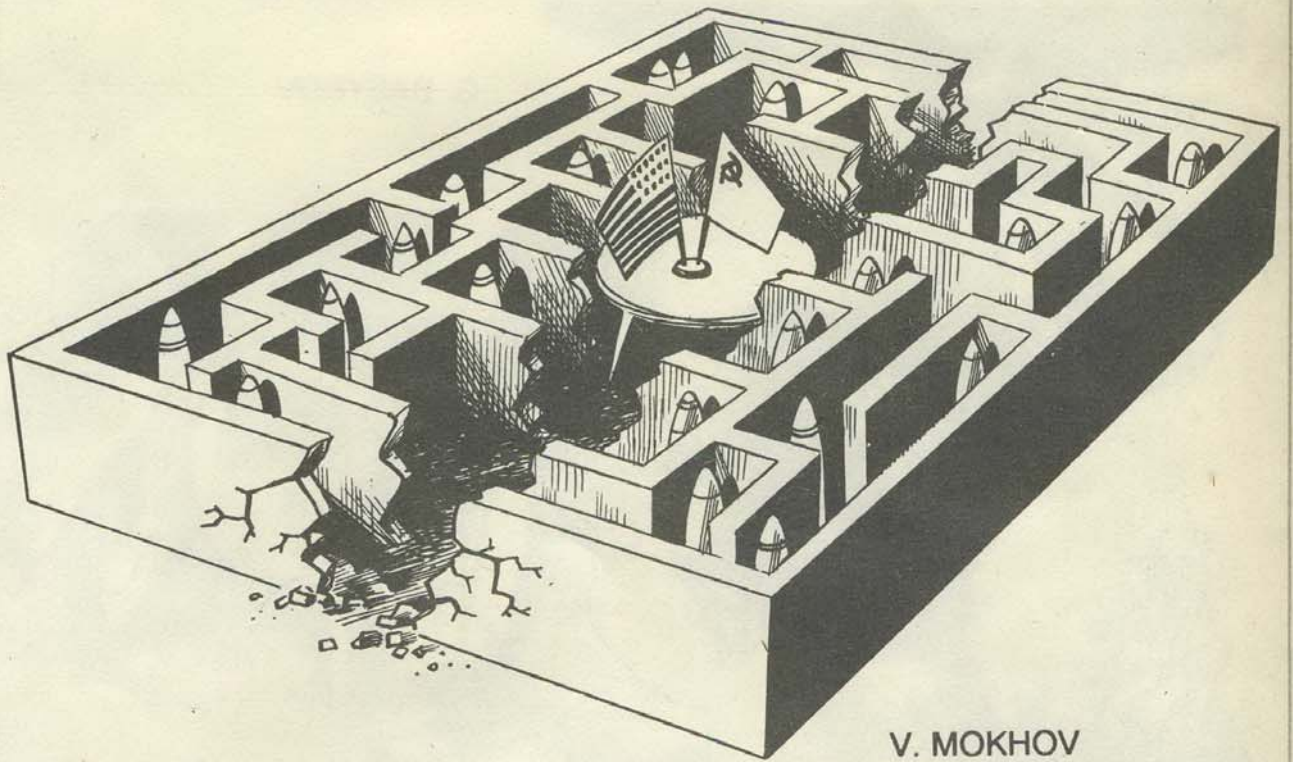
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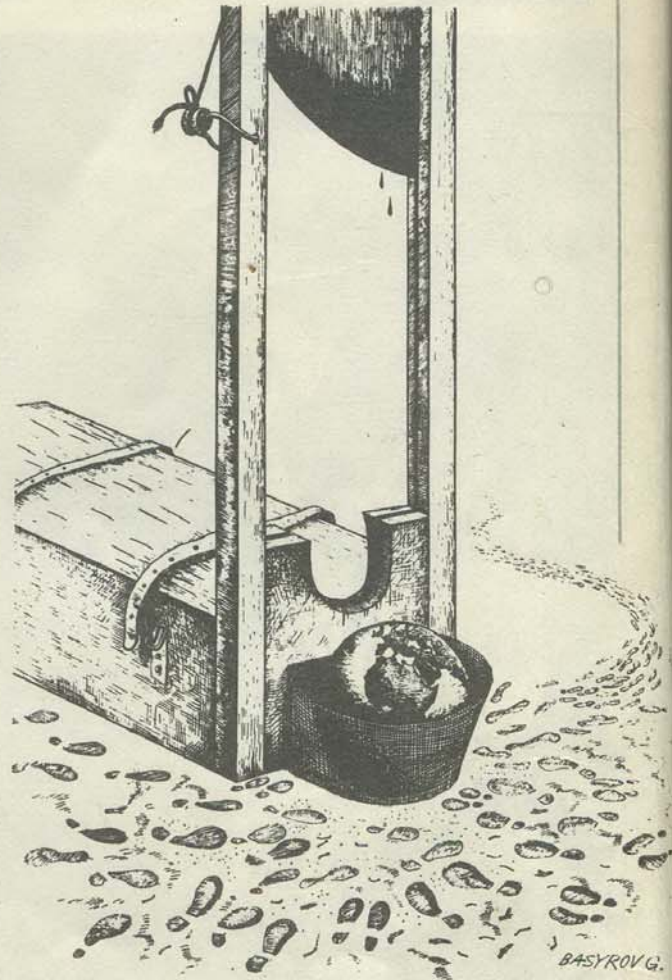


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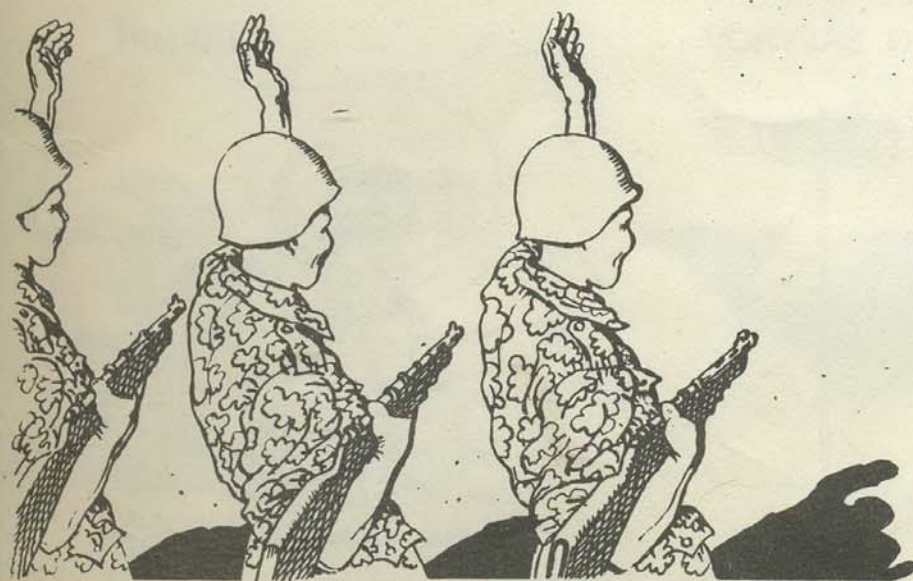
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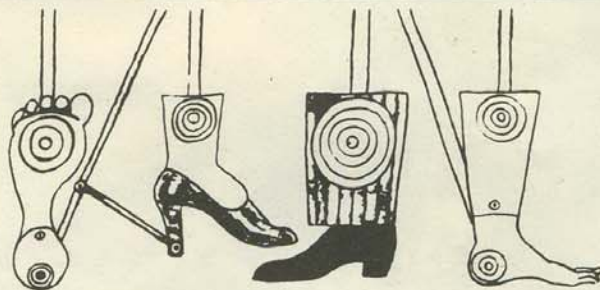


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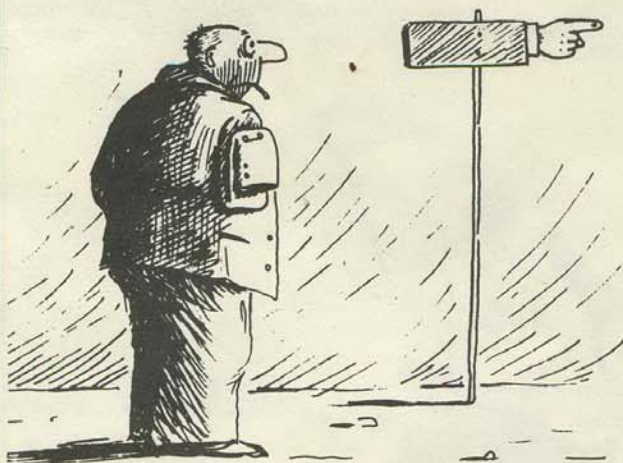
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G. BASYROV



V. BURKIN



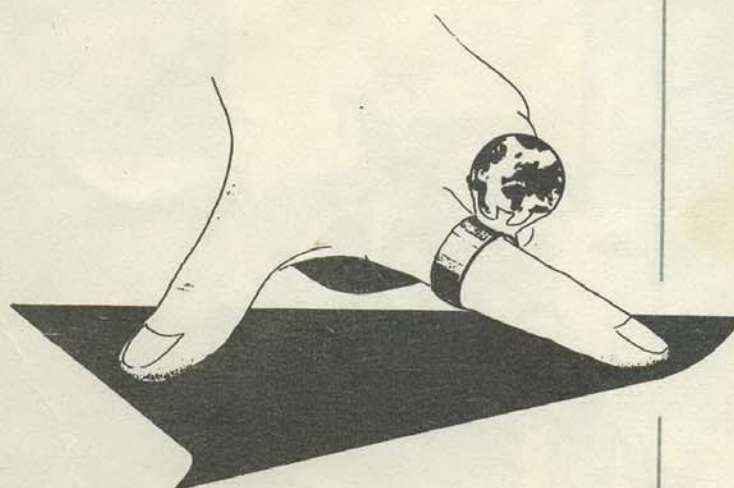
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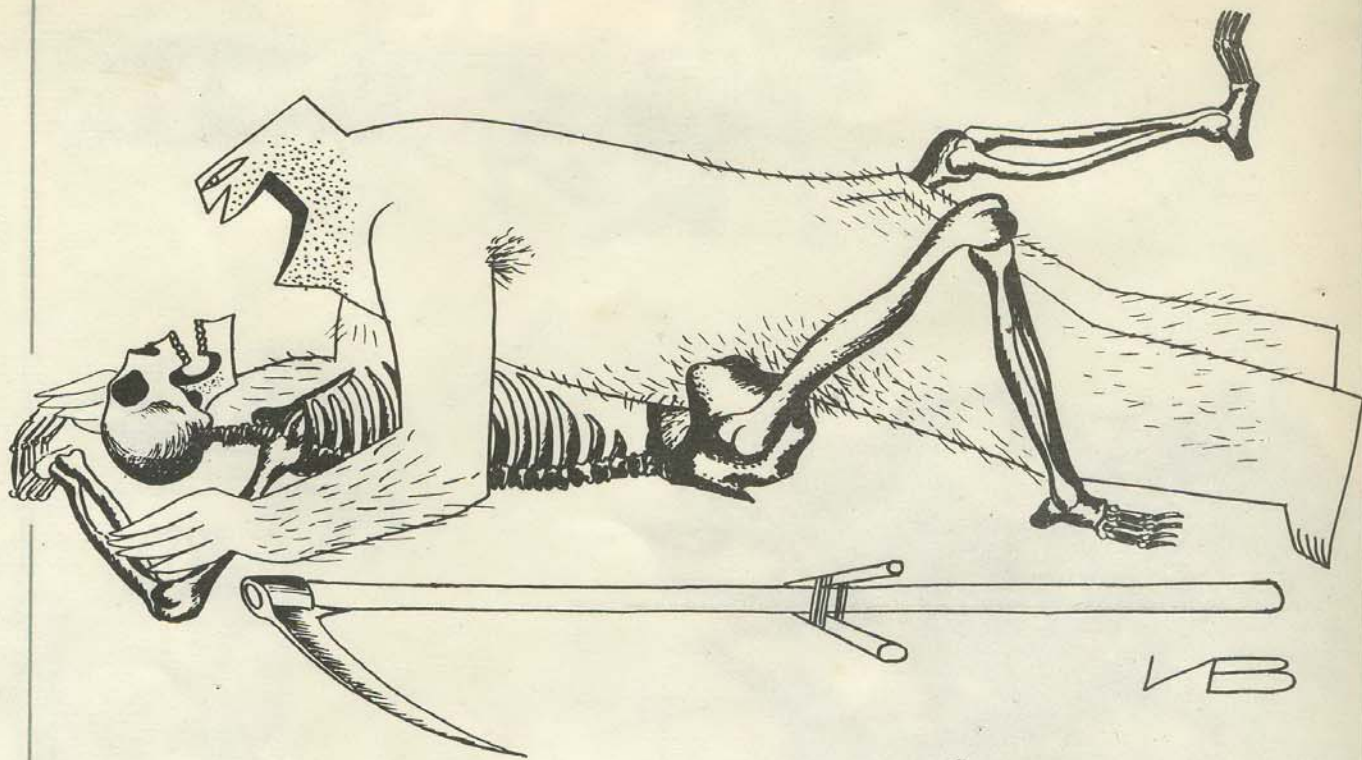
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E. NEIMANTIS



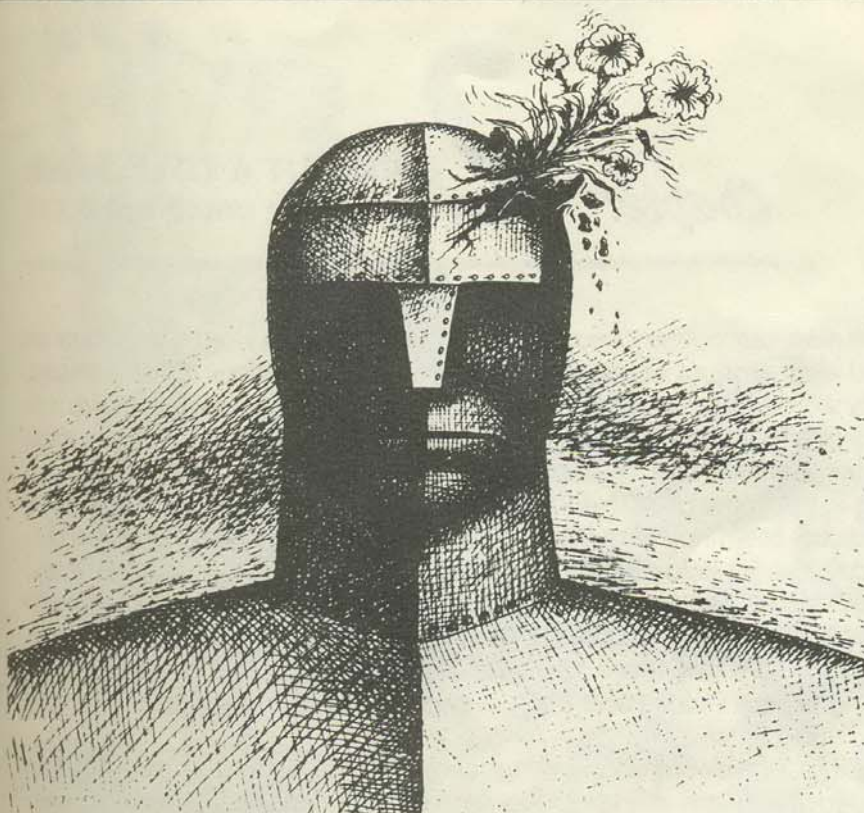
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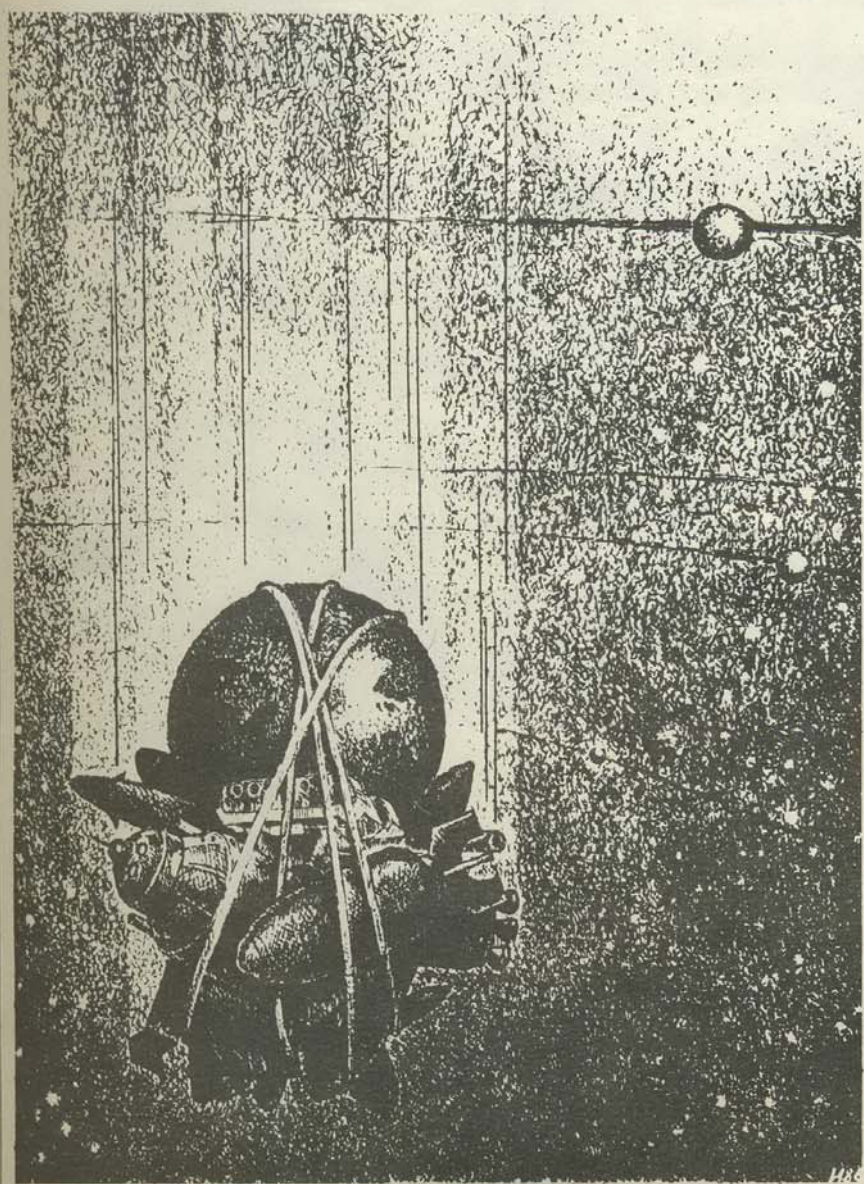
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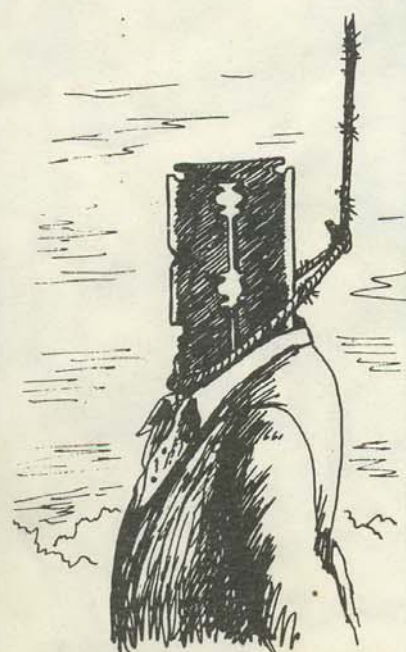
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G. BASYROV



I. SMIRNÓV



V. BOGORAD

Chapter 2 WITHOUT A TITLE, which yesterday could not exist

Perhaps better than anyone else, our country knows what it means when a word is inscribed on a banner and declared sacred. Any amount of joking about it could have serious consequences. Instantly scores of people rally around this banner, and for want of greater security transform this banner into a sack to be pulled over people's heads, a gag to be stuffed into their mouths, or a rope which, as we all know, has more than one use.

In the name of socialism—as in the name of God—too many guiltless victims have fallen; too many avoidable tragedies have occurred; too many sanctified crimes have been committed. But we continued with an unshaking hand to paint a halo directly above the horns on our principal altarpieces.

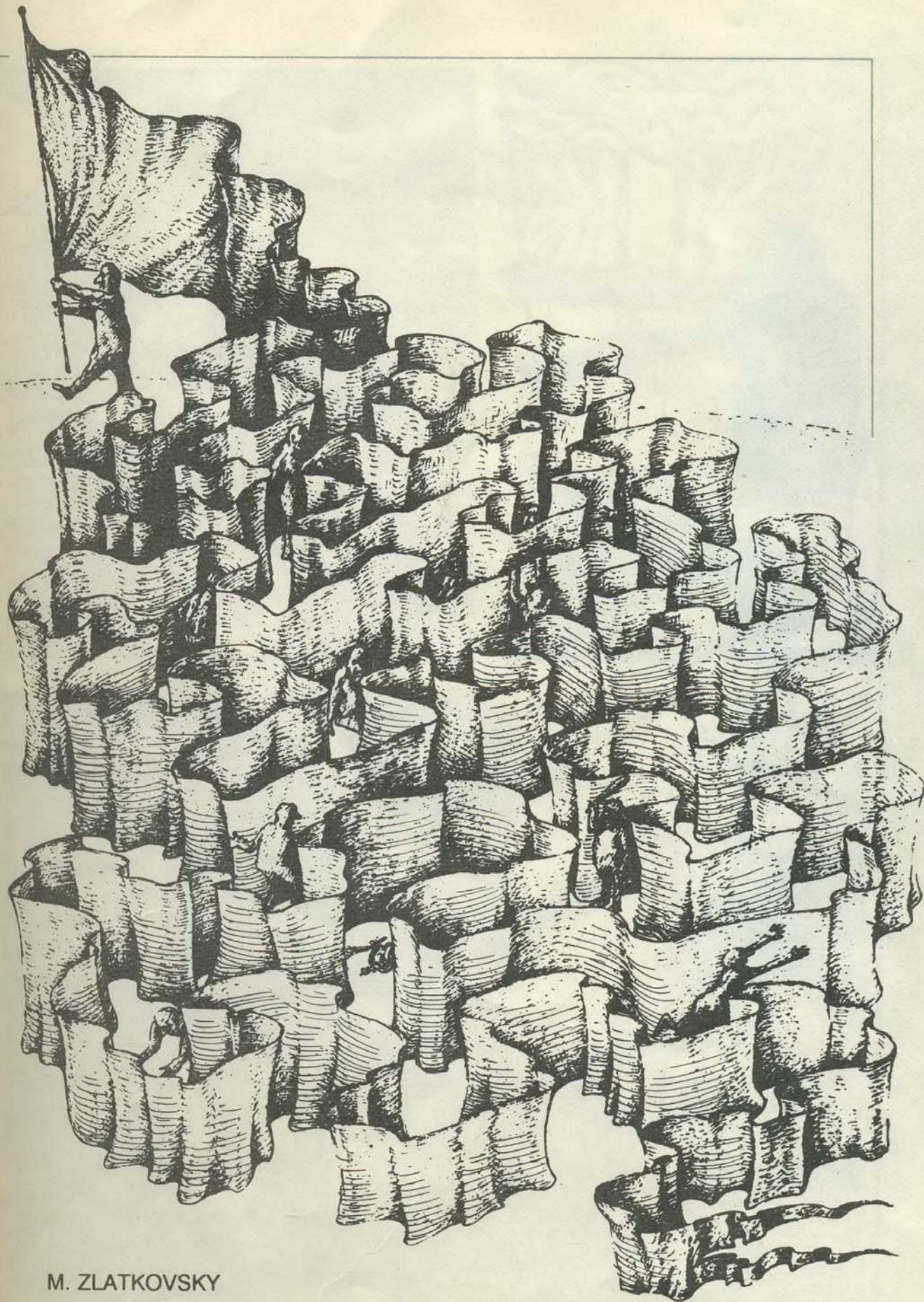
No word, no matter how sacred, should be loud enough to drown out the colloquial, unamplified voice of the common people. No banner should be large enough to block from sight the rest of the world. Only then can we be sure that these newly devised slogans do not become a shrill song drowning out the moaning of new victims and that the banner does not become a collective burial shroud.

We are still at the outset of this formidable undertaking; we are still swaddled by our erstwhile banners, and boulders of leaden words are still knocking against our heads. But before our very eyes have begun to crumble the monuments to our principal standard-bearers, burying their lessers in the debris.

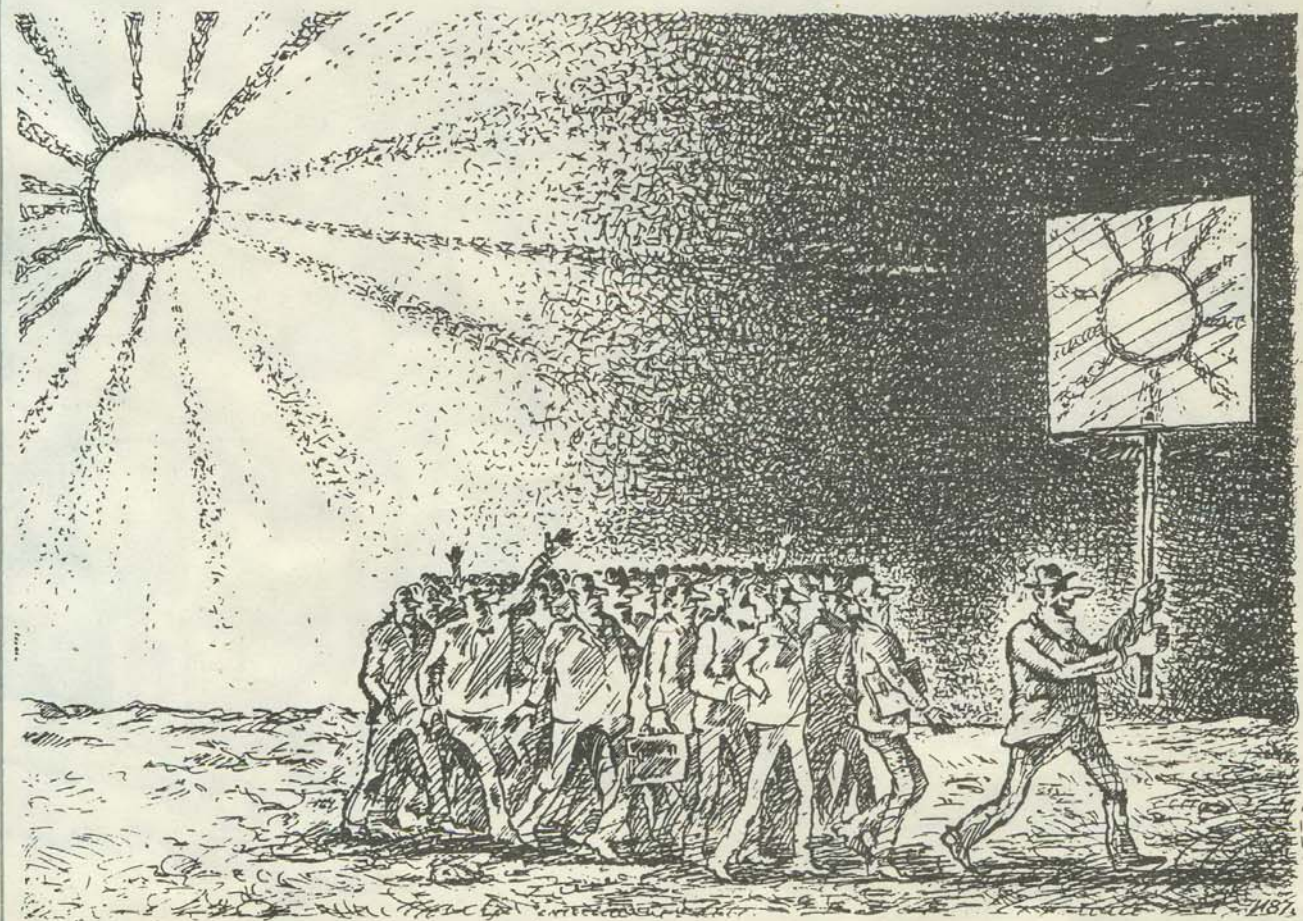
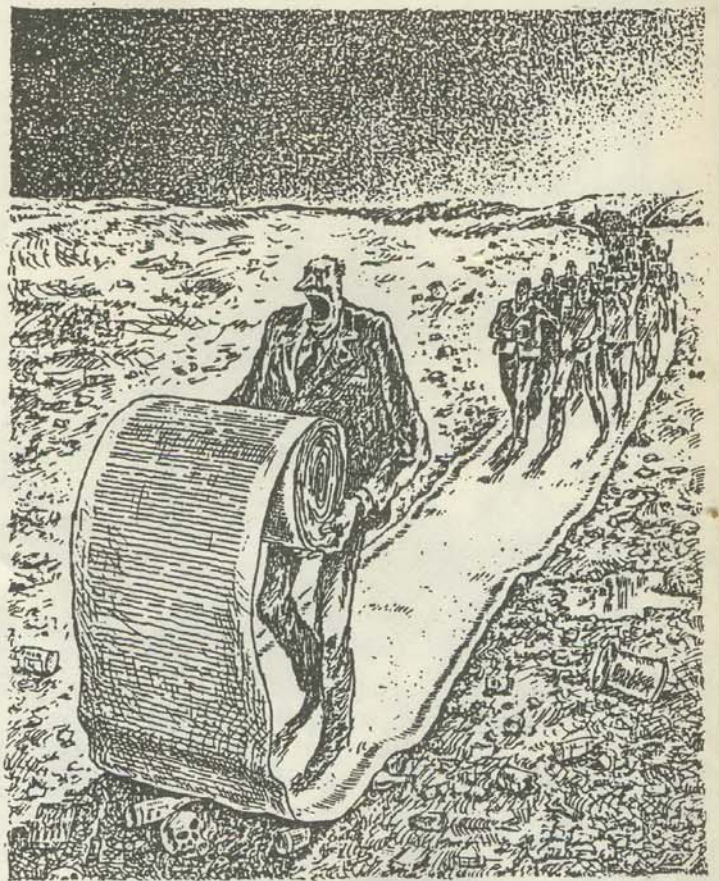
It is a gladdening sight to watch as the impure forces fall from their pedestals. Rarely does history provide an opportunity for painting such subjects from life.



V. BOGORAD



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M. ZLATKOVSKY
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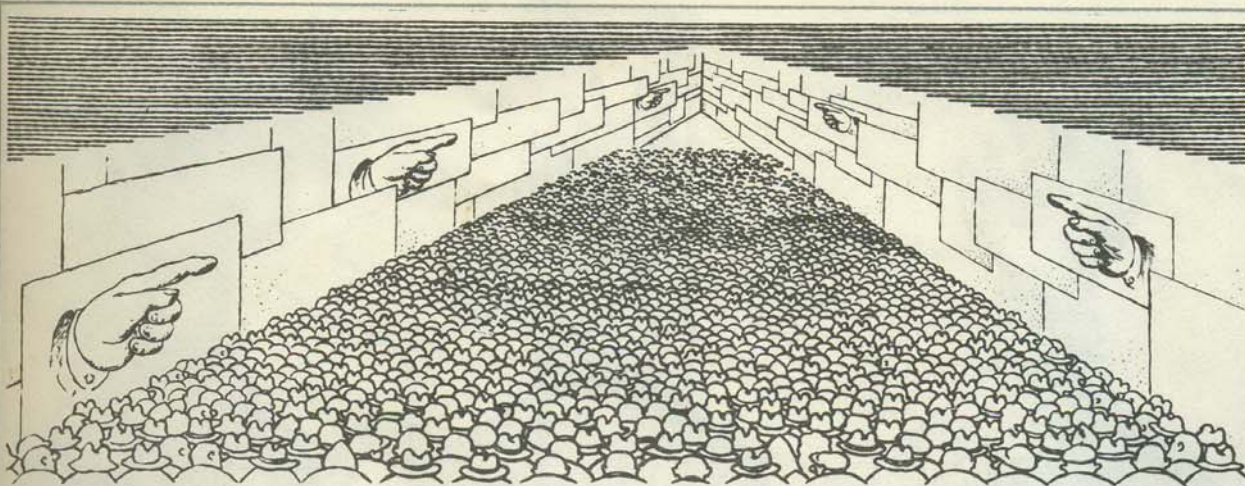
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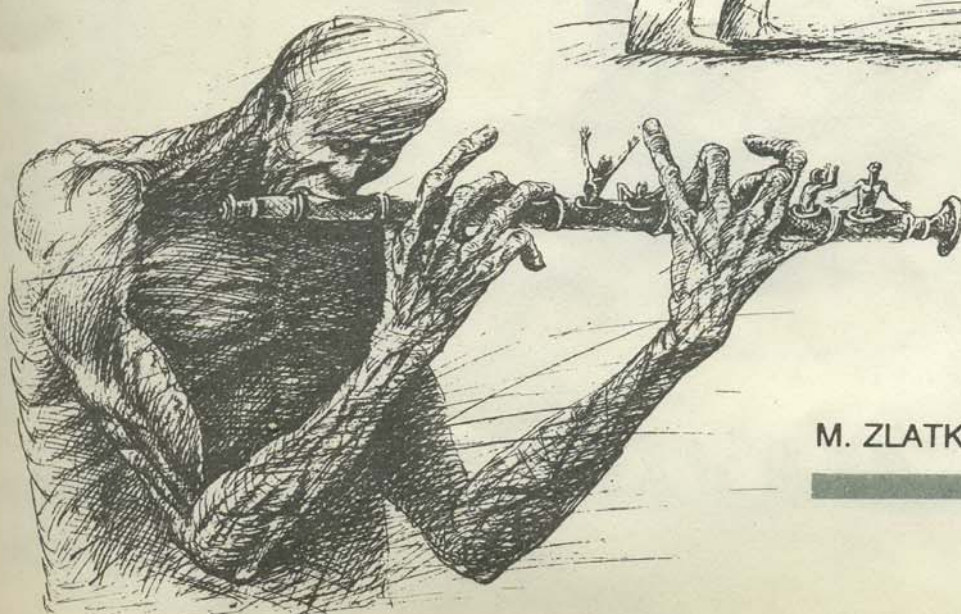
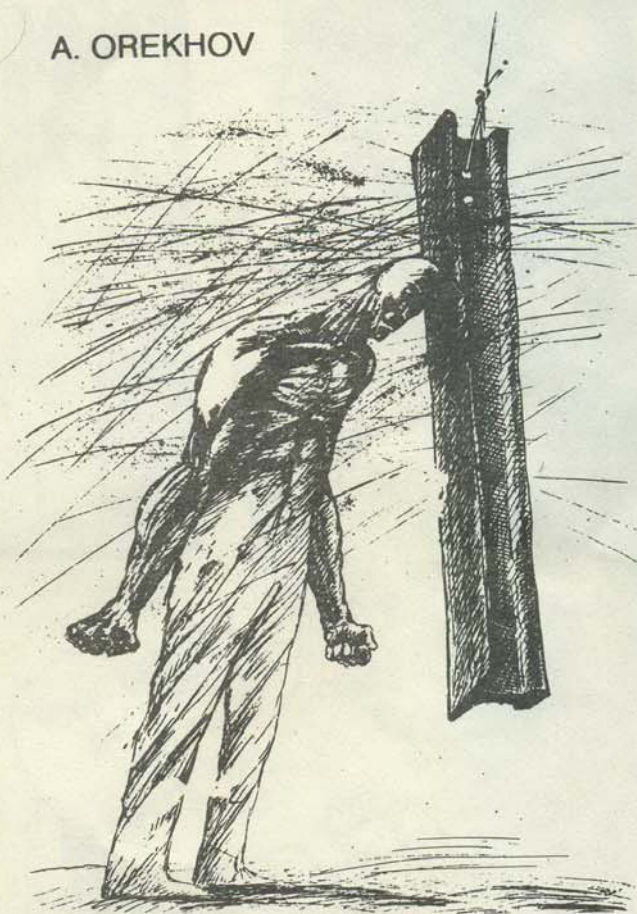
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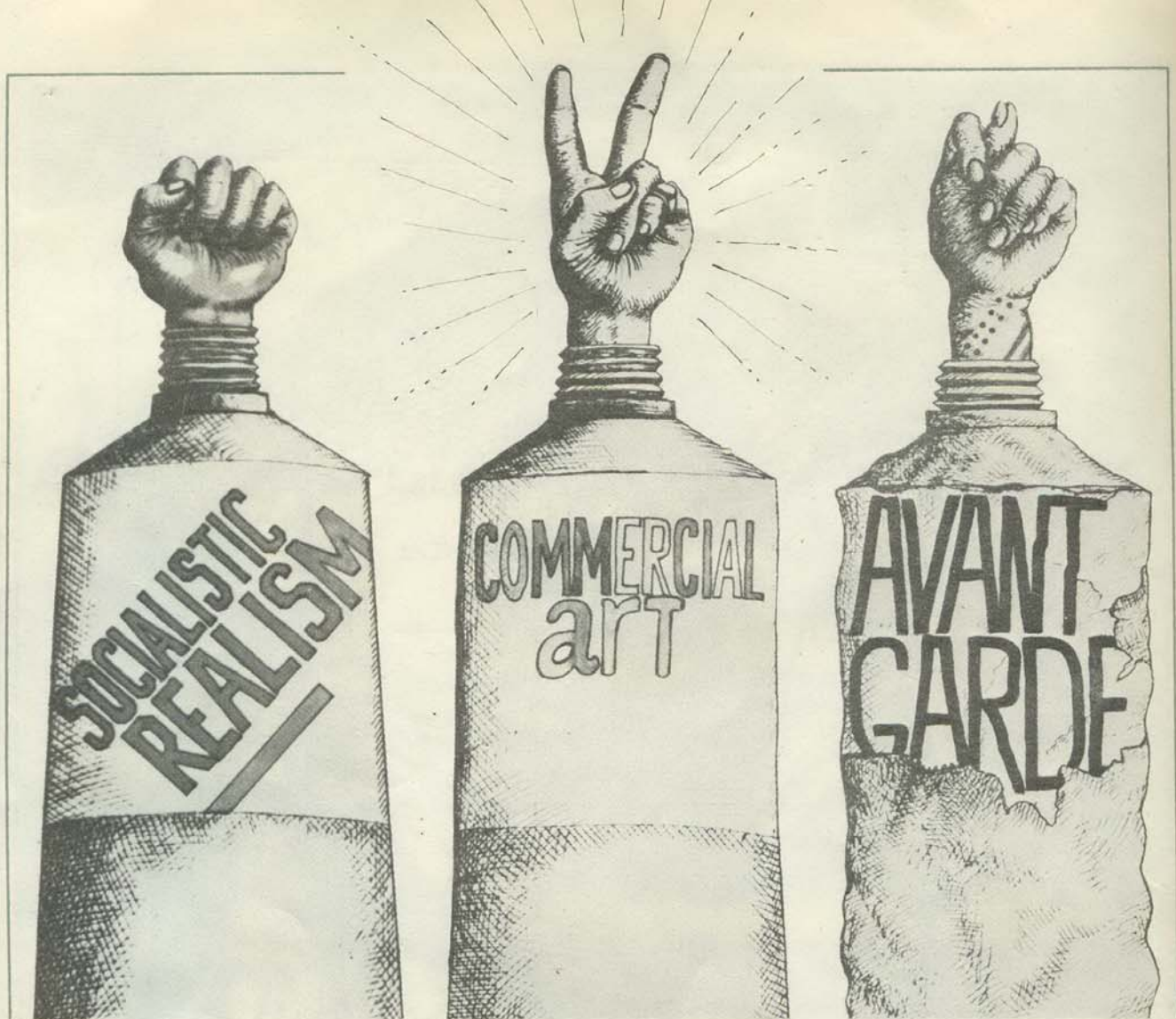


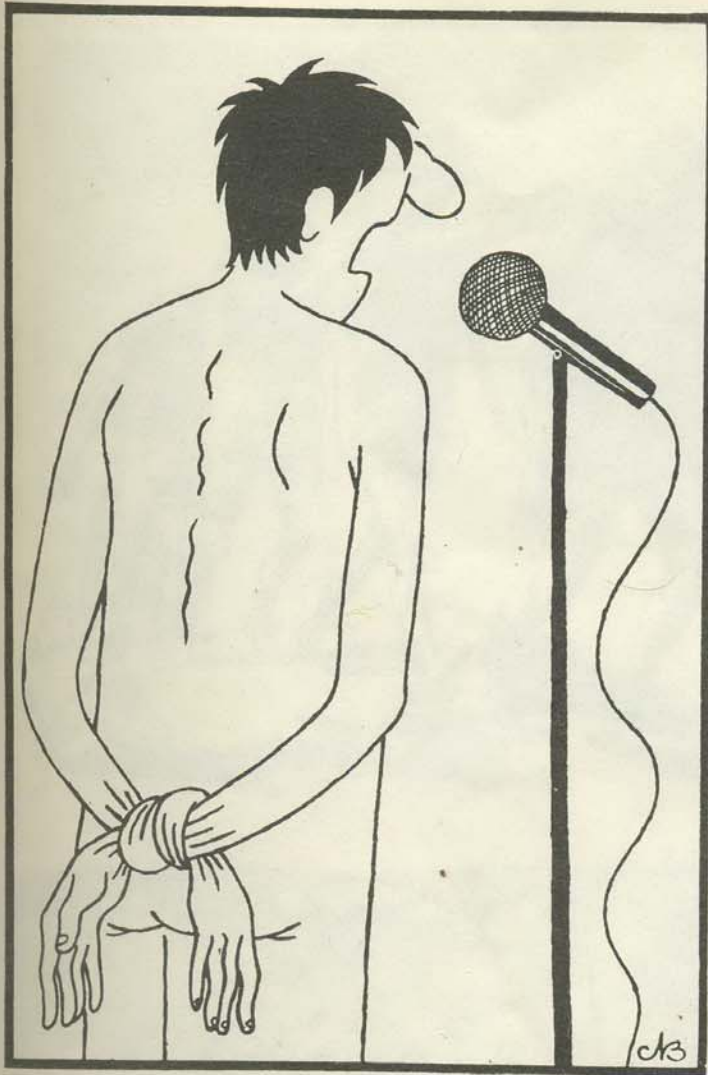


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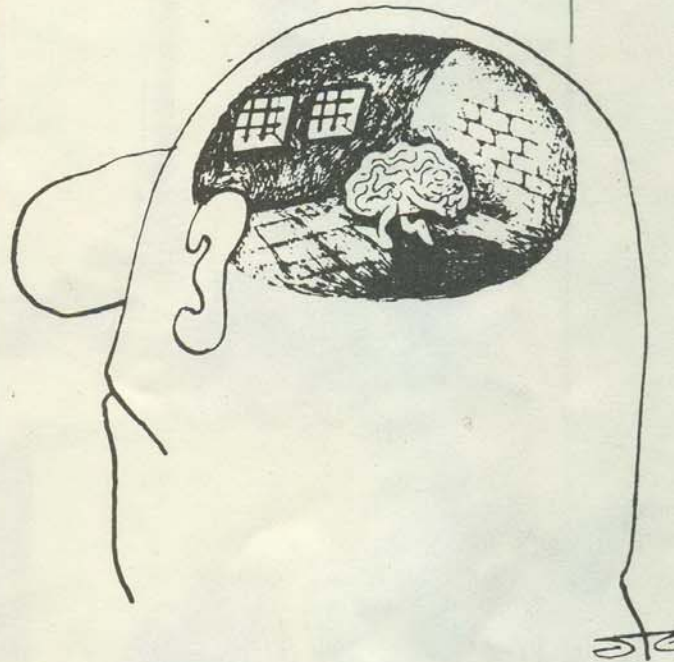


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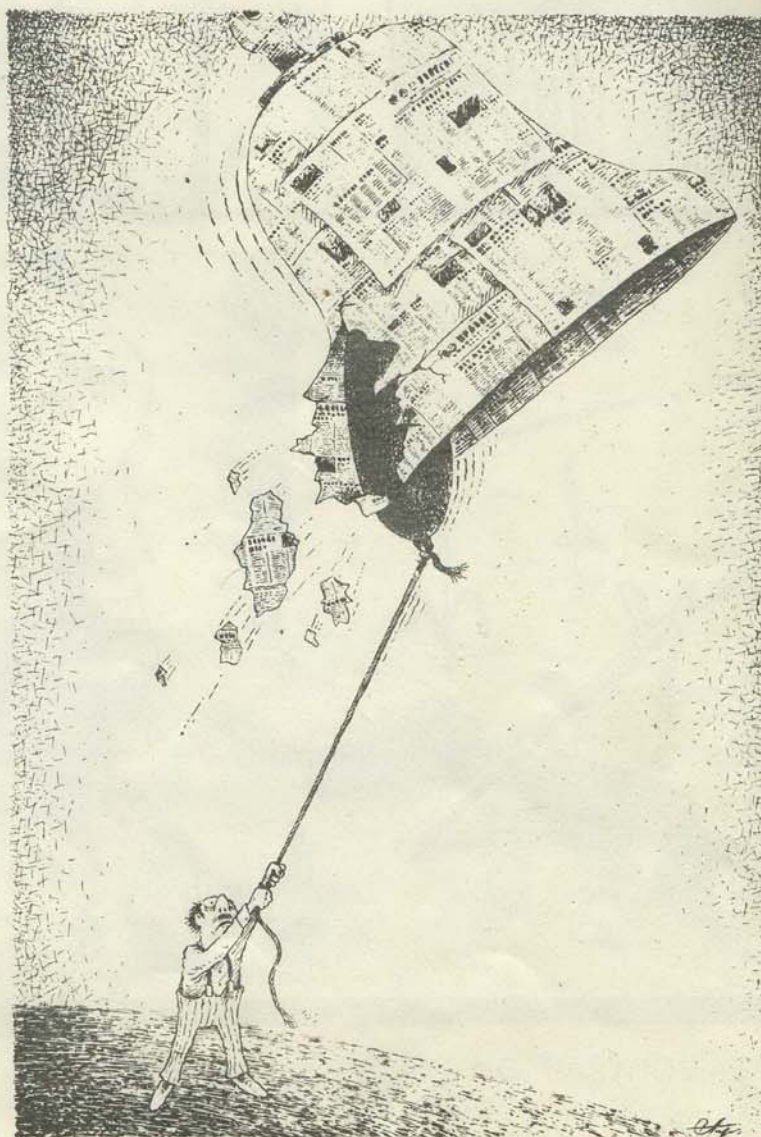
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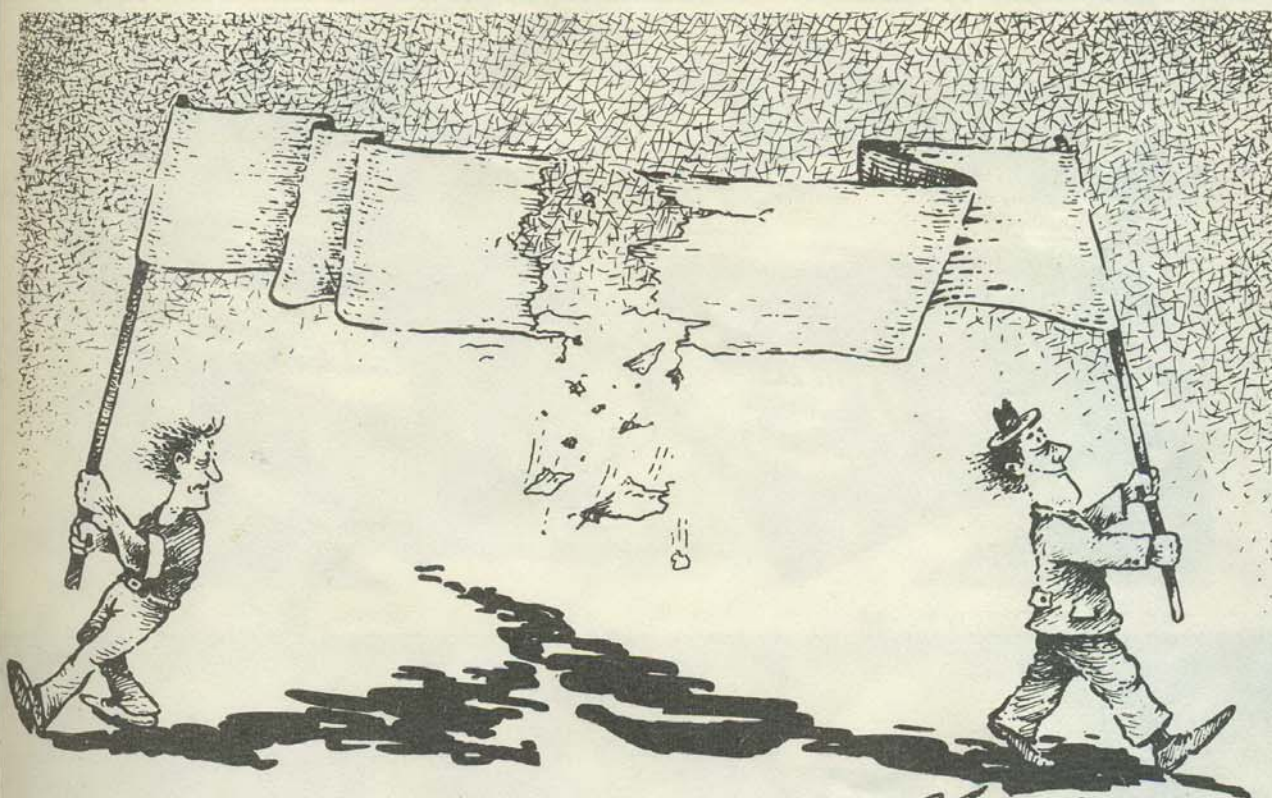


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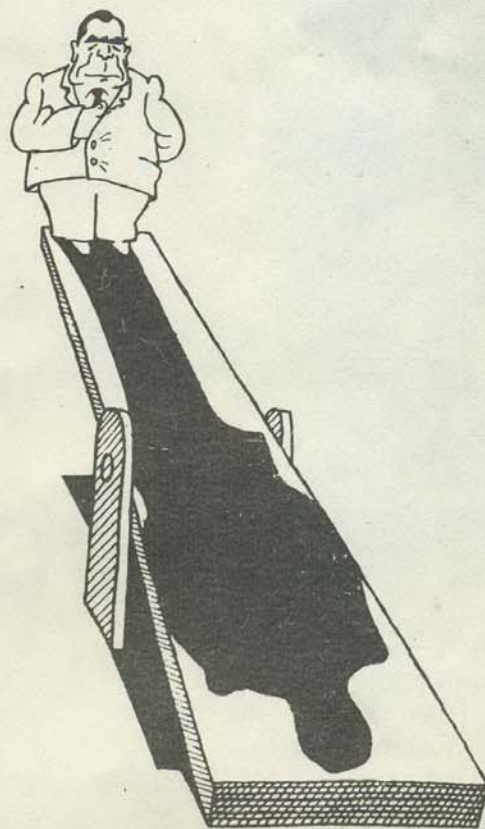


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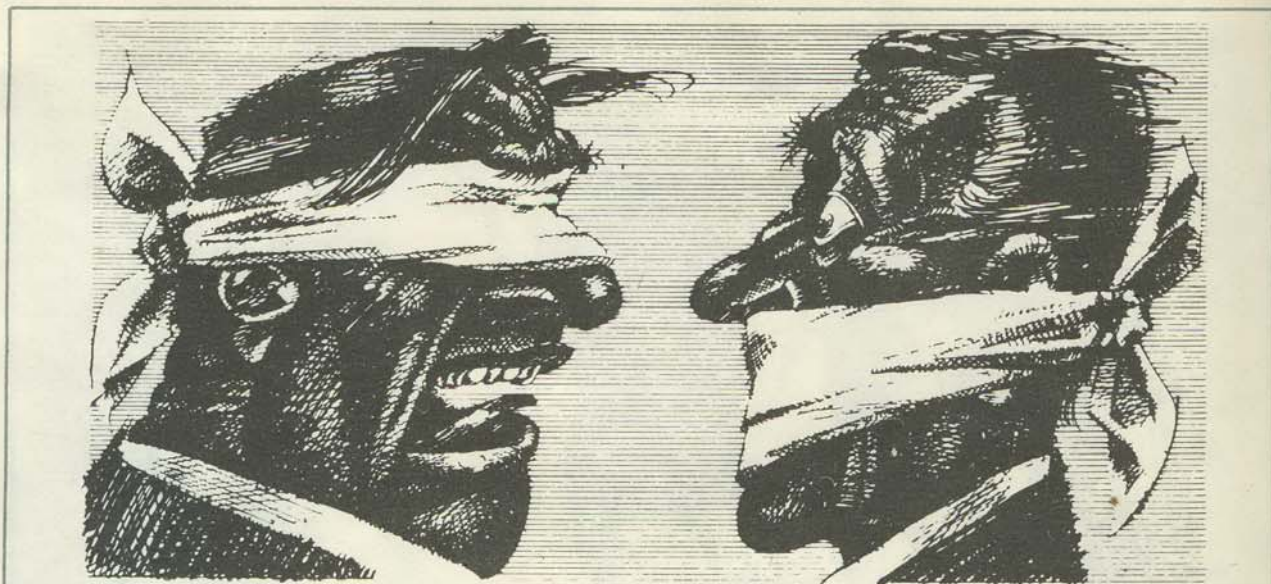




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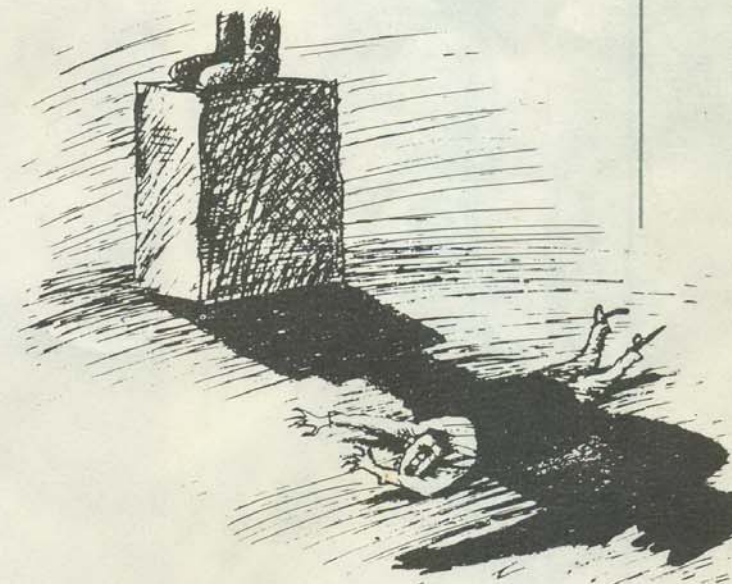
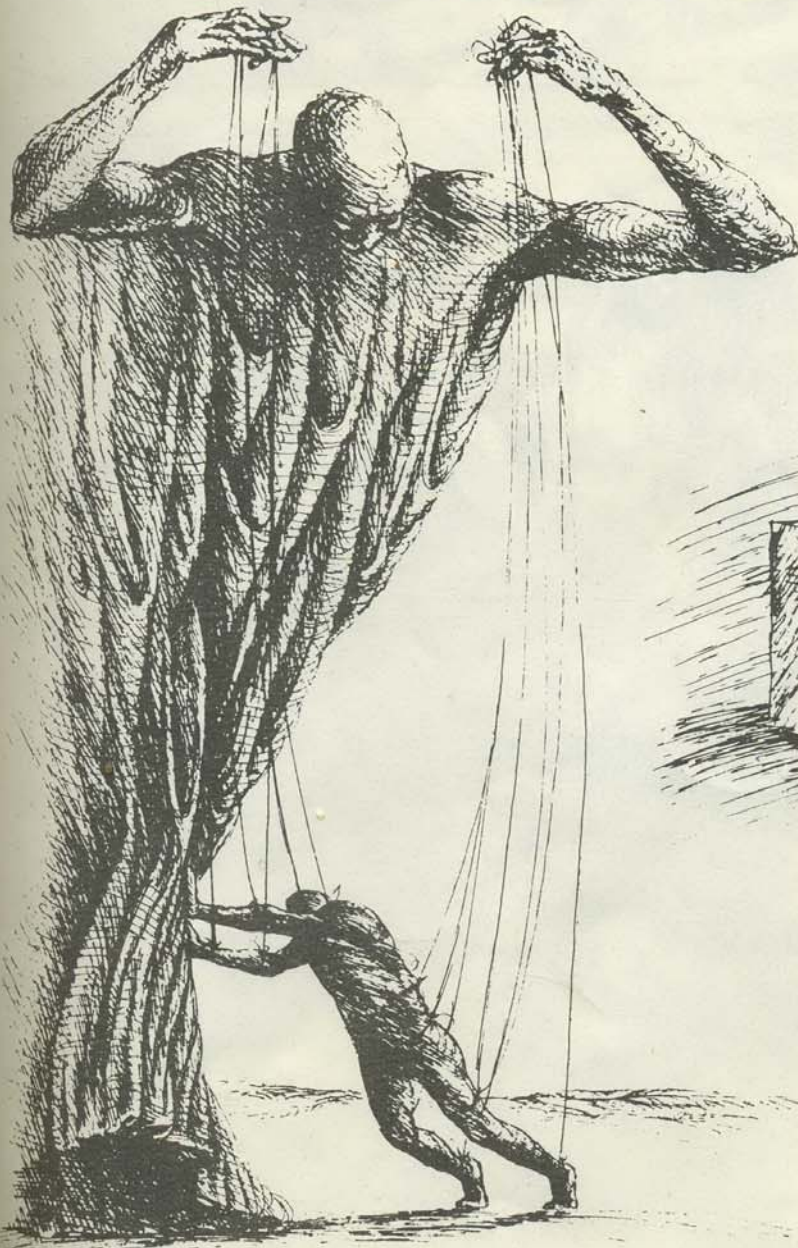


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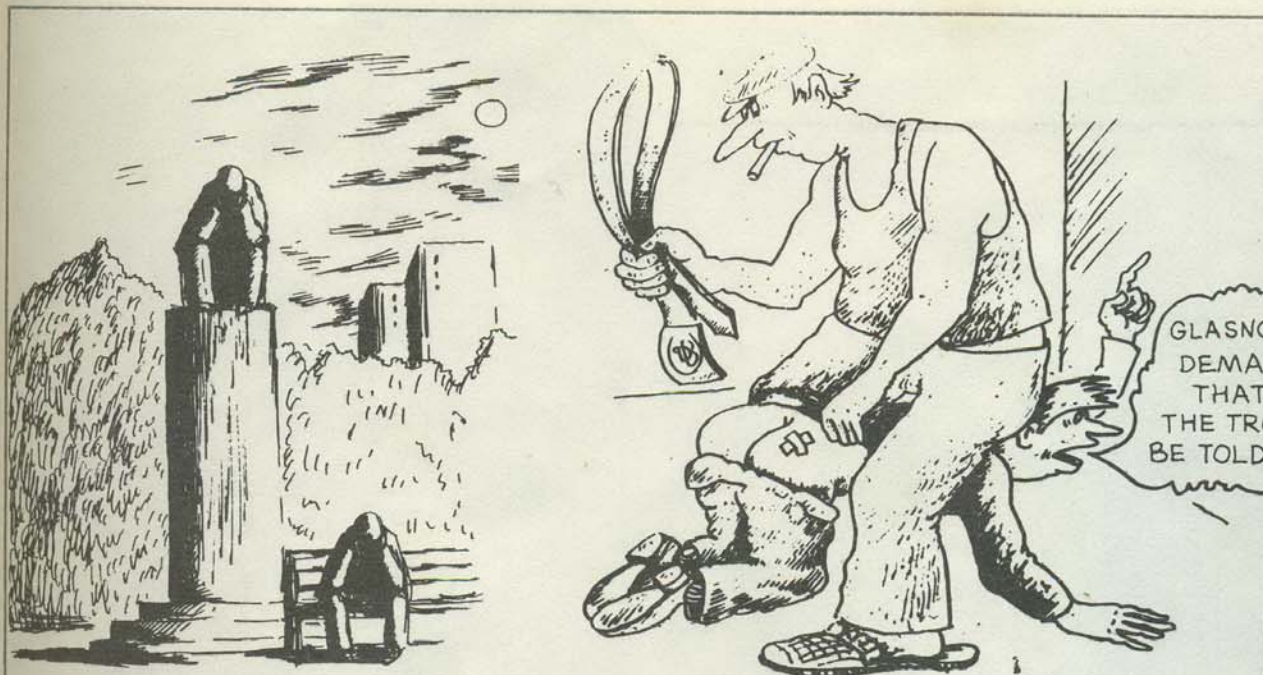
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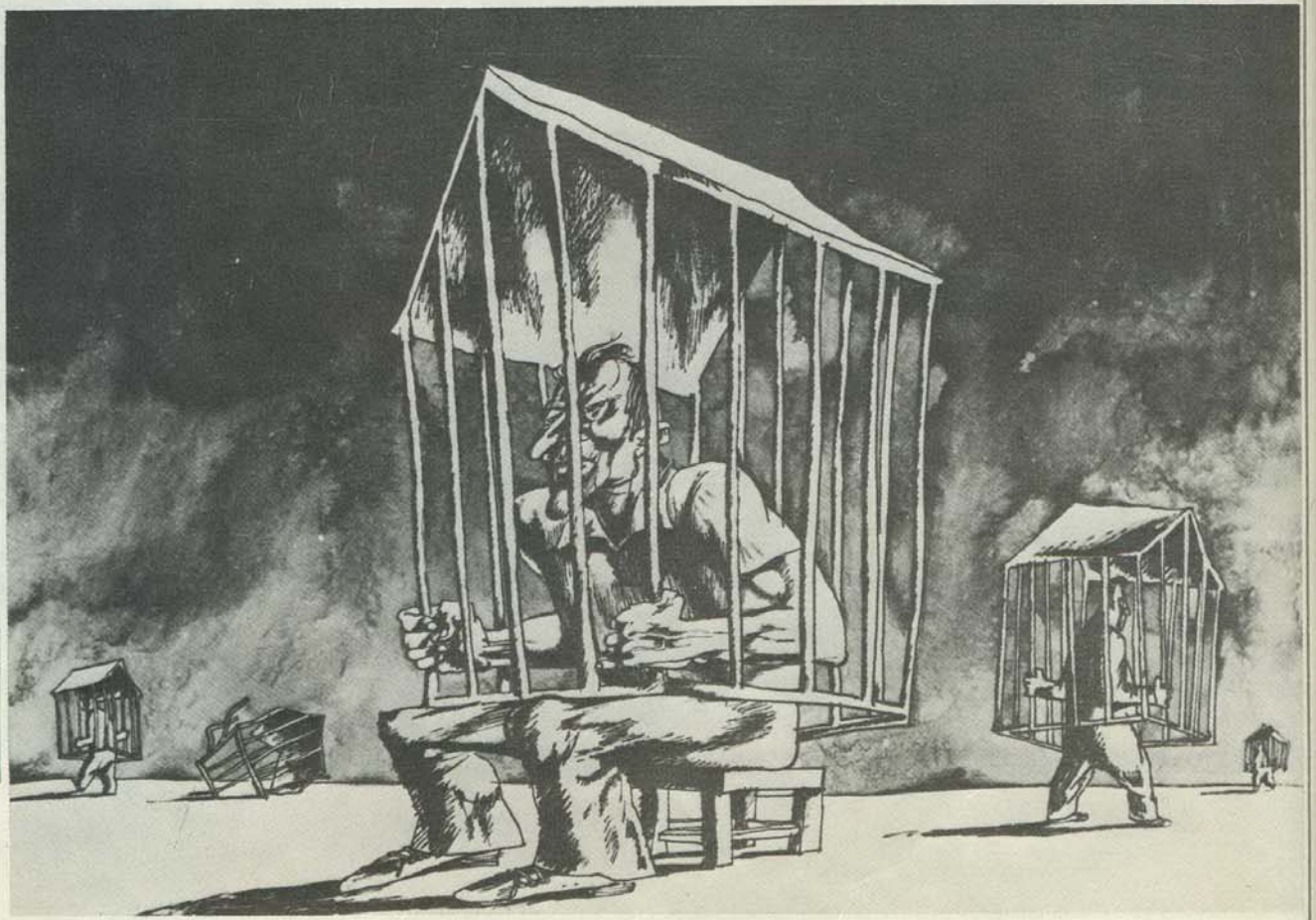
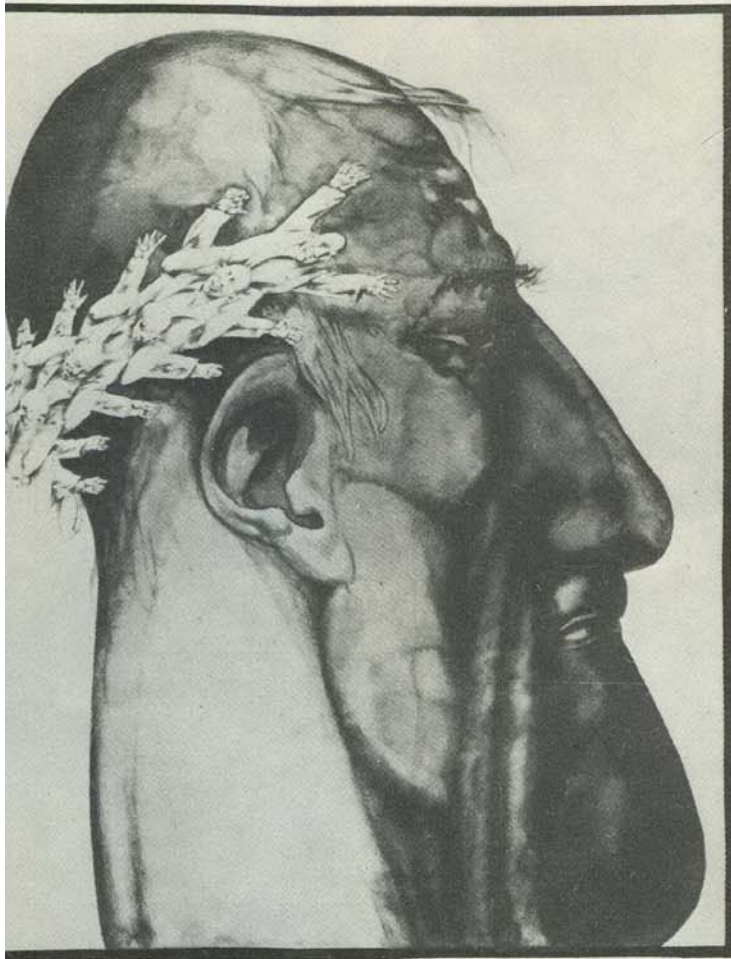


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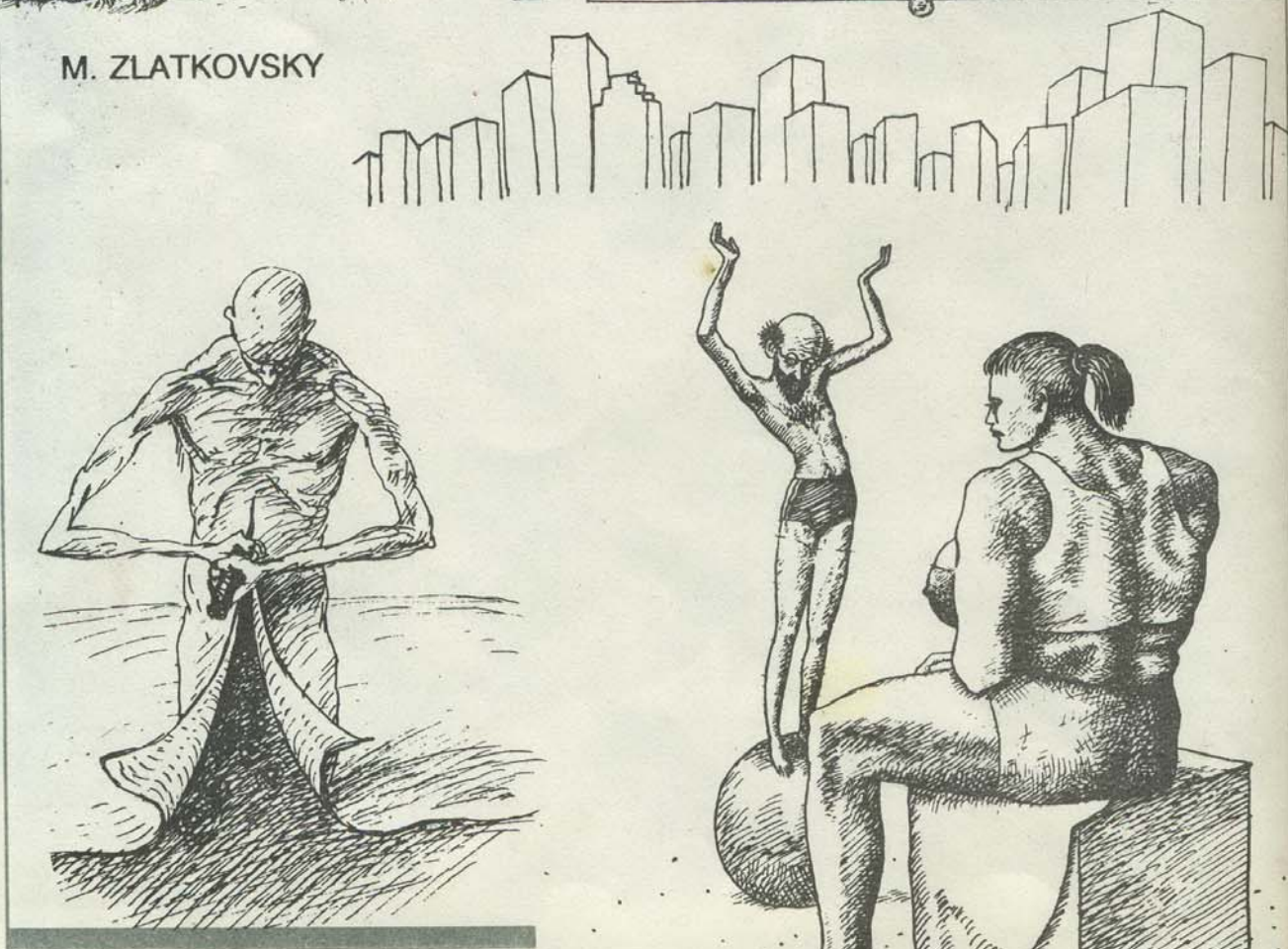


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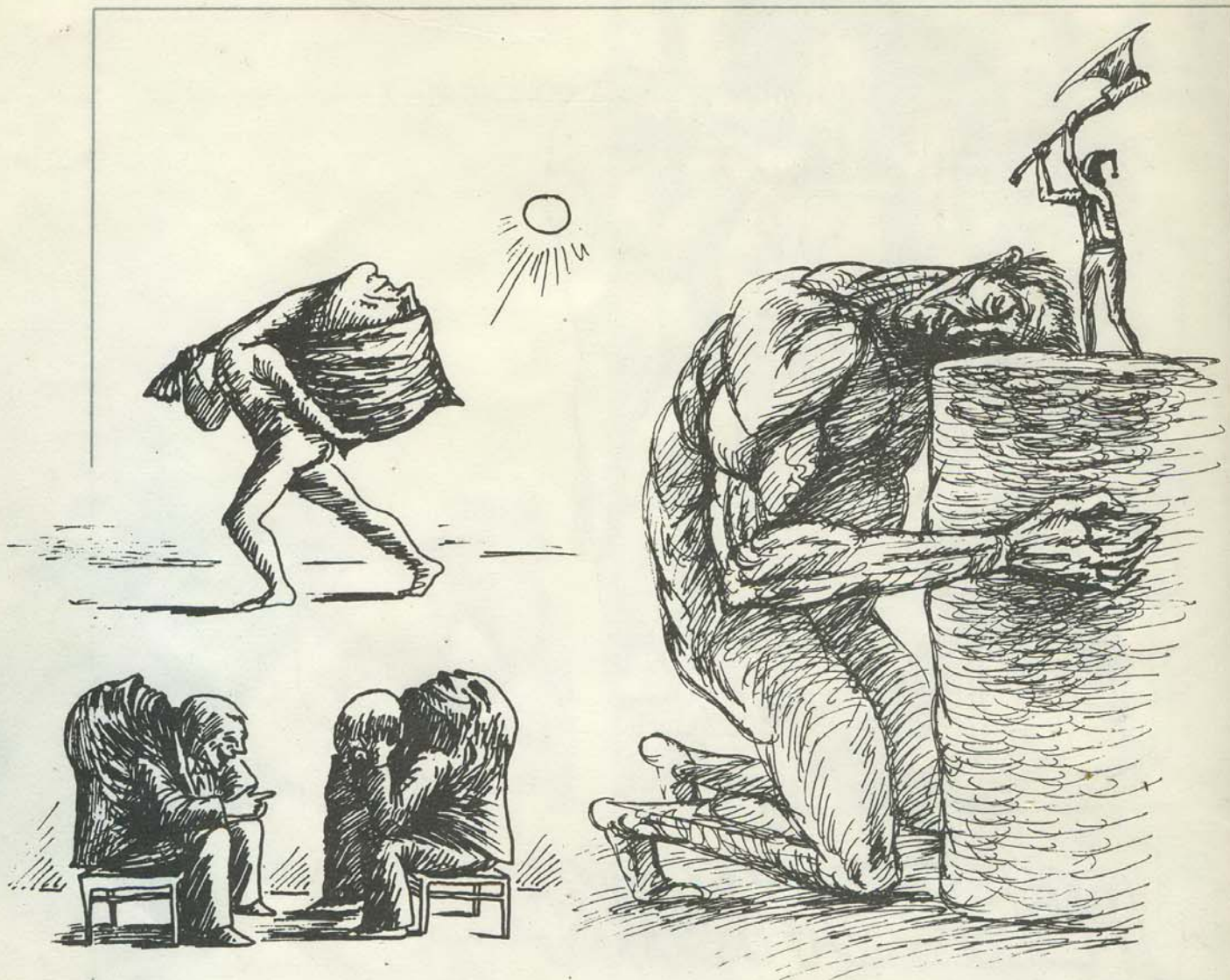


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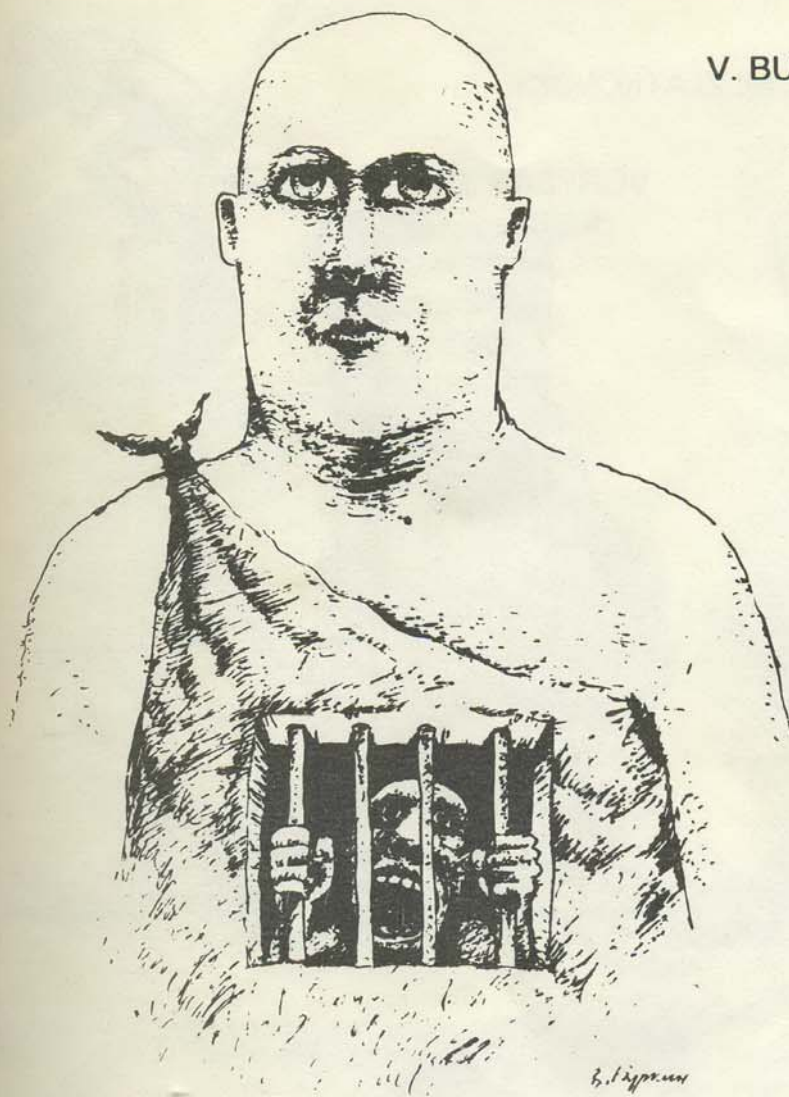
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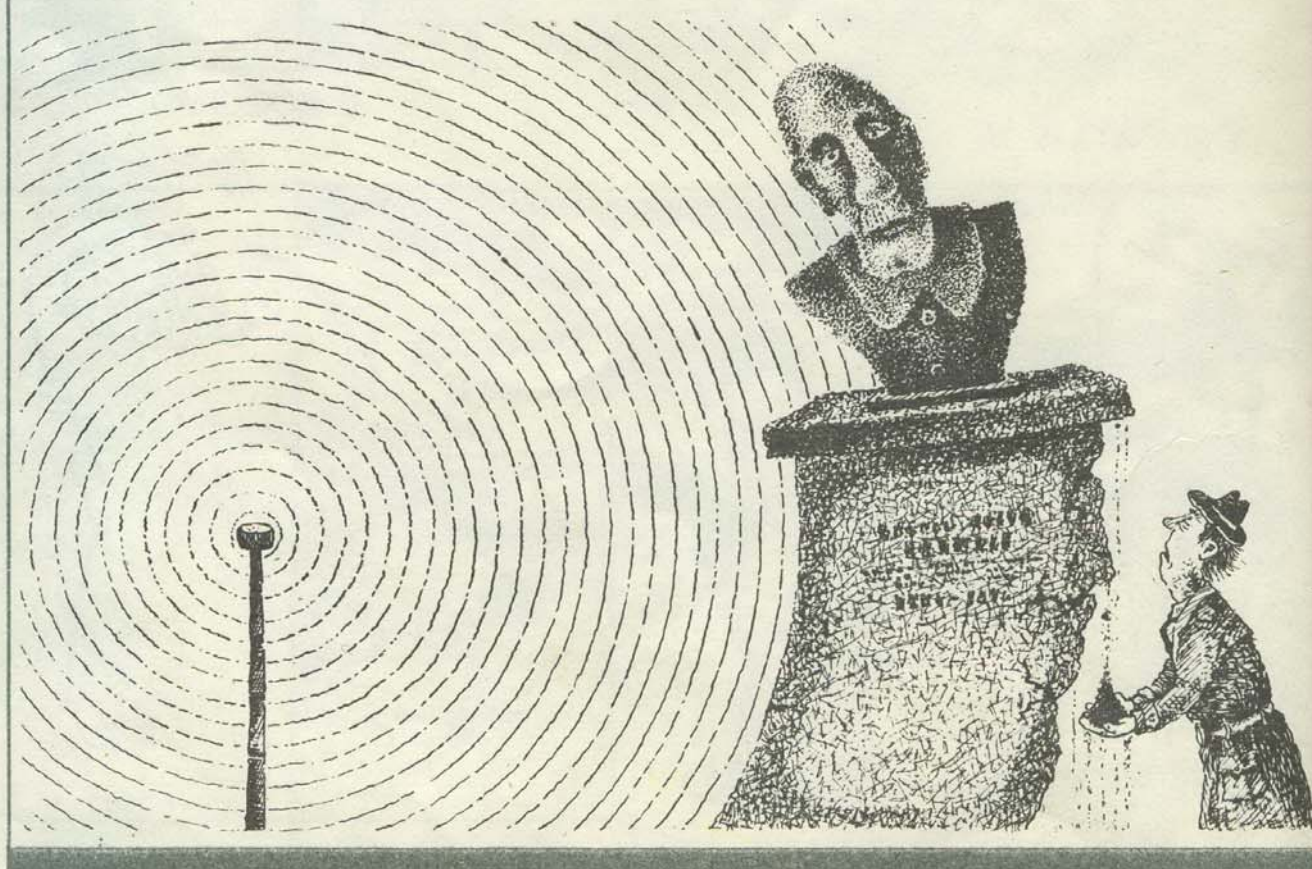
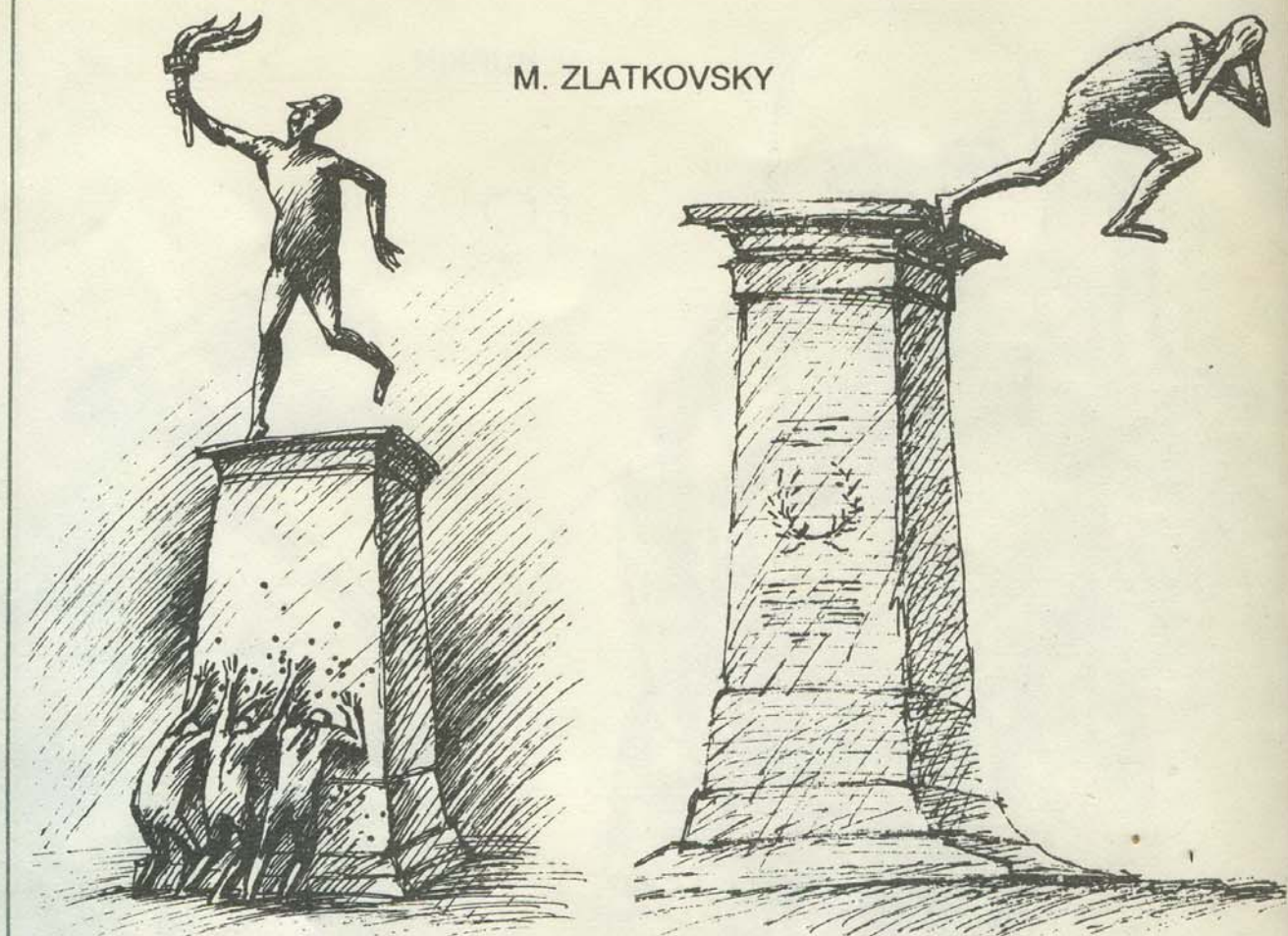


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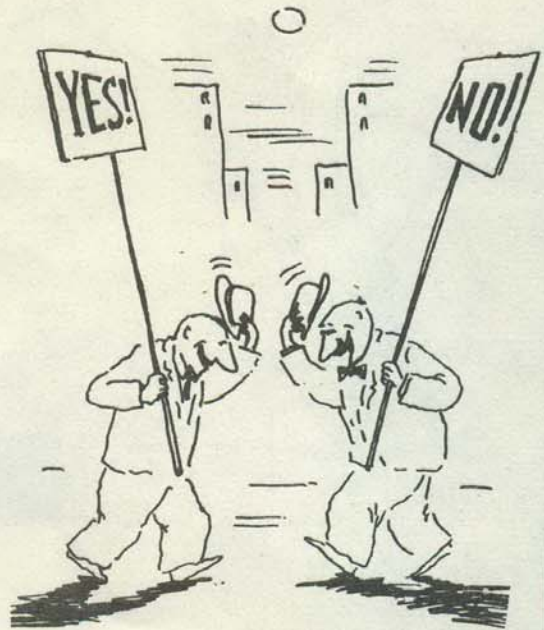
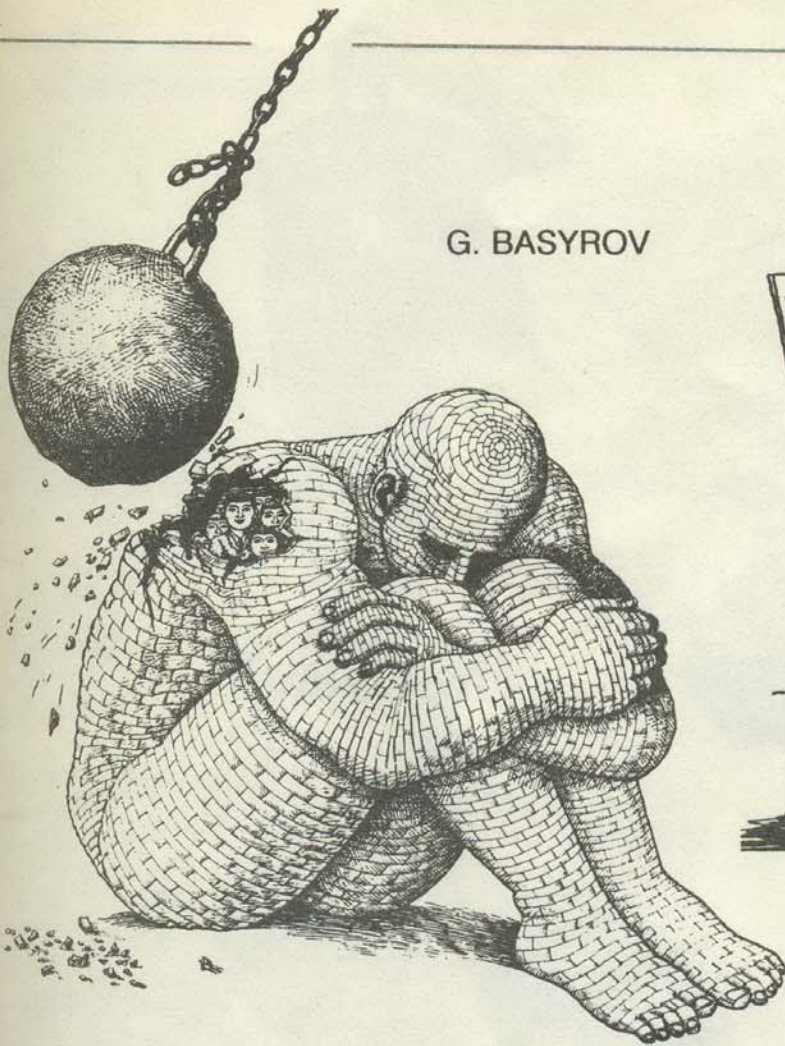
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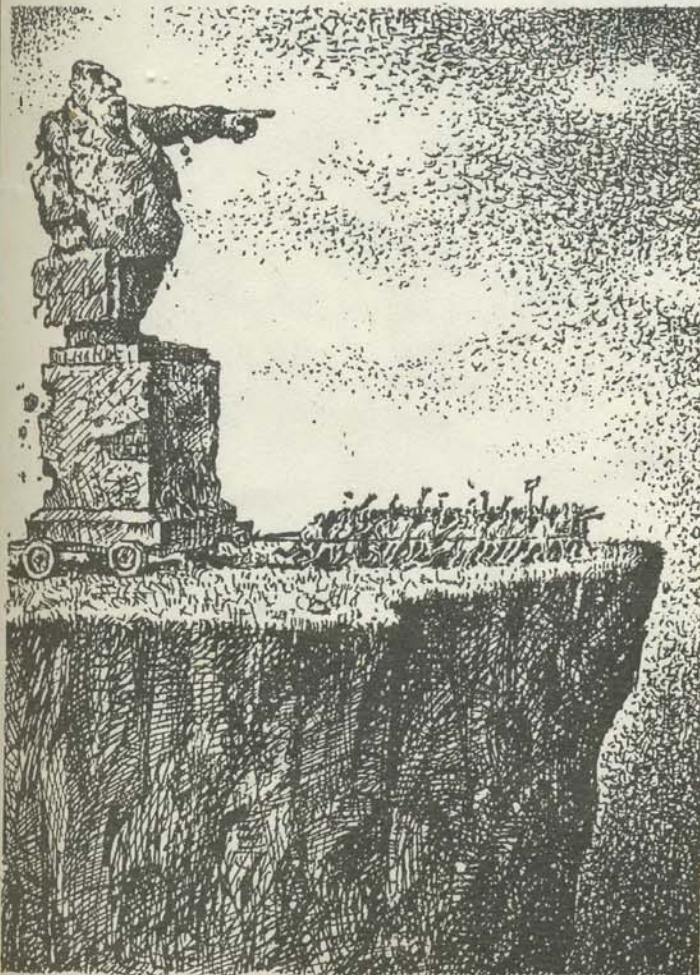


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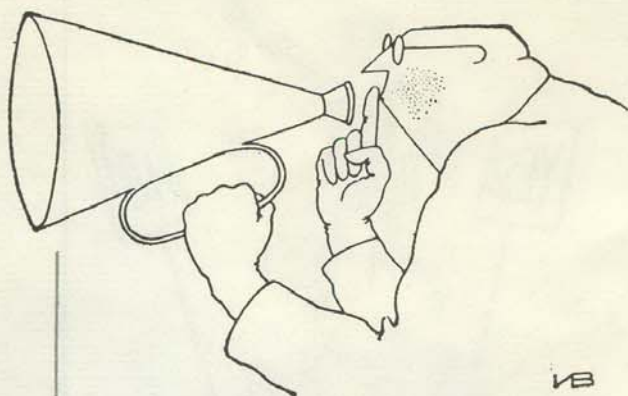
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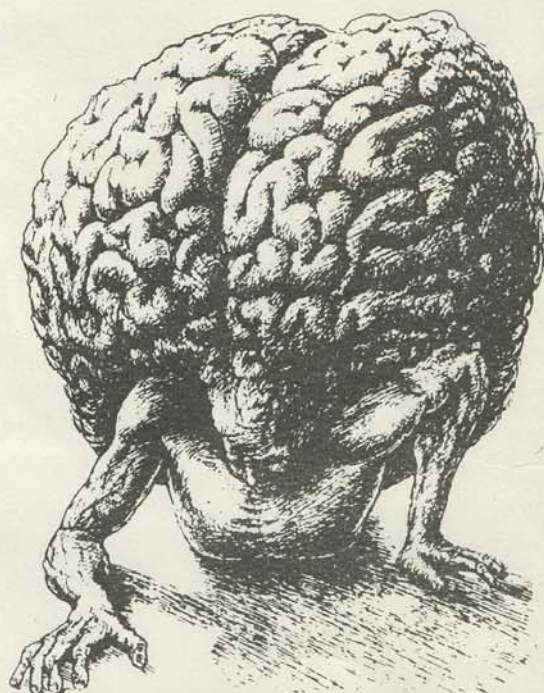


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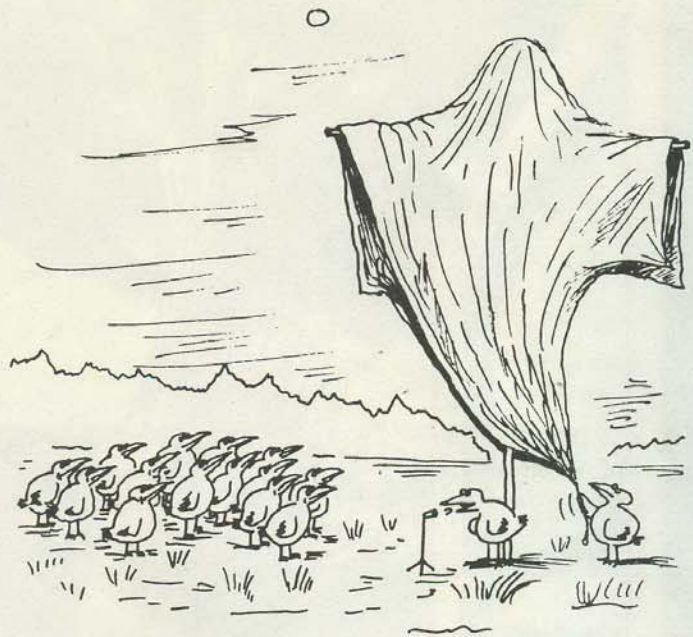
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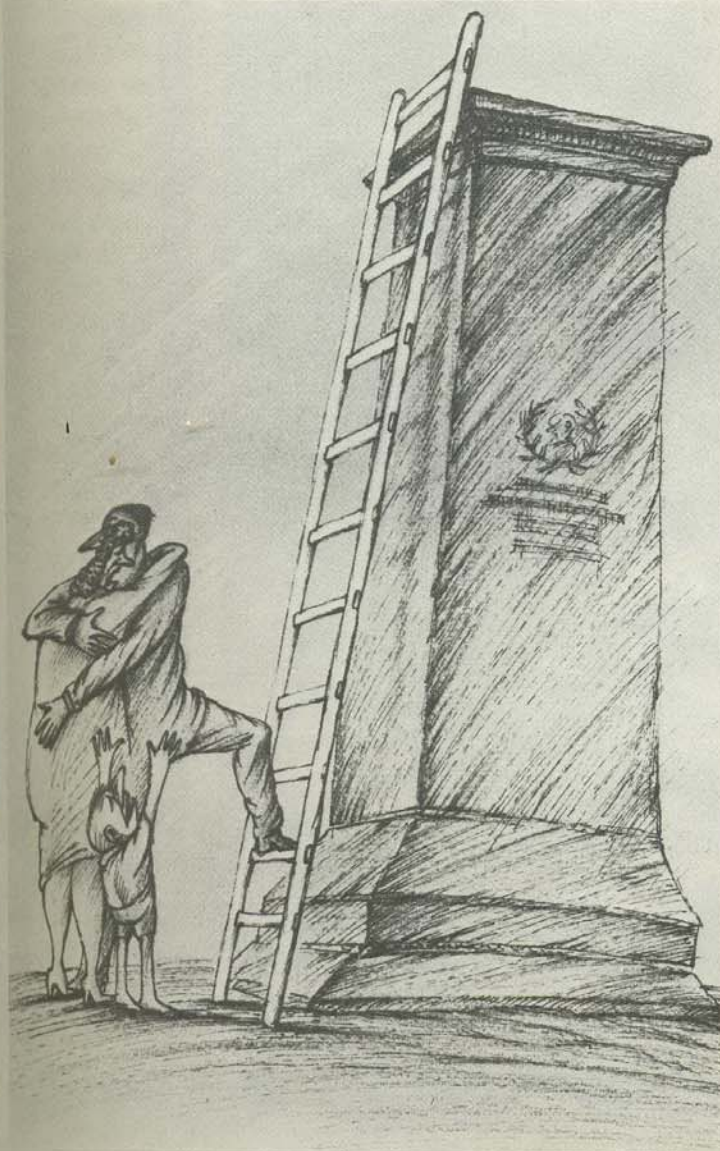
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V. BURKIN



Chapter 3

"BOTH PAINFUL AND FUNNY" problems that must be resolved

*The naughty little boy froze his finger
And found it both painful and funny...*

Alexander Pushkin

In having played the brutal, heart-chilling games of recent decades, haven't we also placed in a deep freeze certain essential human qualities? For instance, such qualities as ordinary human compassion, the ability to really like people and be friends or to communicate? The answer to this question is yes—if we judge by WHAT our cartoonists have drawn on this topic. But if we use as our criterion the very fact that they HAVE TACKLED this theme and the WAY in which they have done it, then our answer would have to be a definite 'maybe'.

On the other hand, we are well acquainted with our timeworn and newly inherited afflictions.

Take, for example, the widespread curse of alcohol abuse. We had to scratch scores of superiorly drawn cartoons depicting our anti-alcohol campaign for the simple reason that not a single foreigner would be able to make out what was drawn in them—so technologically advanced is the equipment used by our boot-leggers to make illicit alcohol. Domestically no such problem exists, for every schoolchild is well versed in such "extracurricular activities".

But then not every Soviet child knows from trustworthy sources what he is supposed to know about sex. And adults sometimes learn more than they ought to about the sexual liaisons of their neighbors or co-workers.

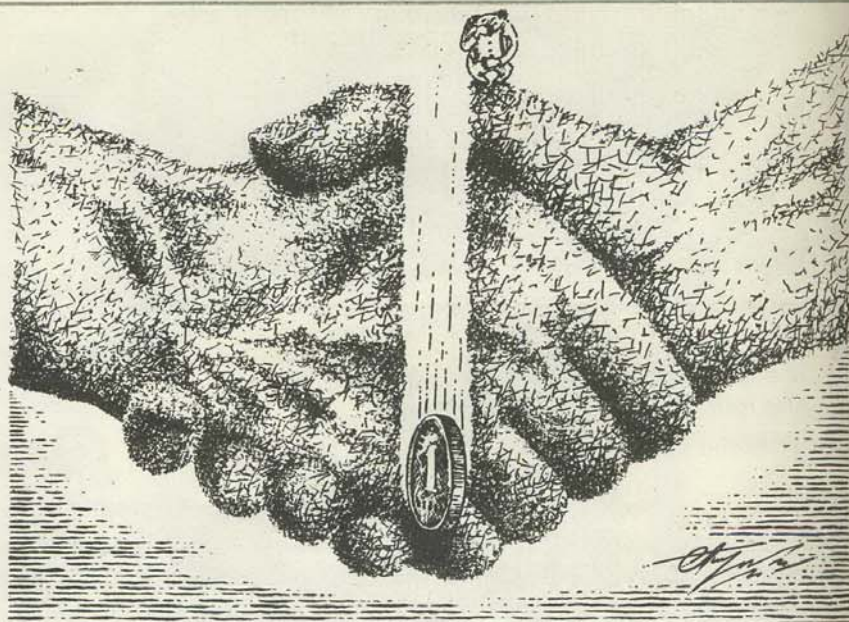
For a time we were unaware of the existence of prostitutes in our country. Now that we know that they exist, we don't know where to find them.

We were also ignorant to drug addicts, and to underground millionaires. But as for legal millionaires, once again just ask any child. According to the official version, these are people whose songs we sing, whose books we read, whose paintings the entire nation likes. But not everyone believes this version. Which goes to show that there is still hope.

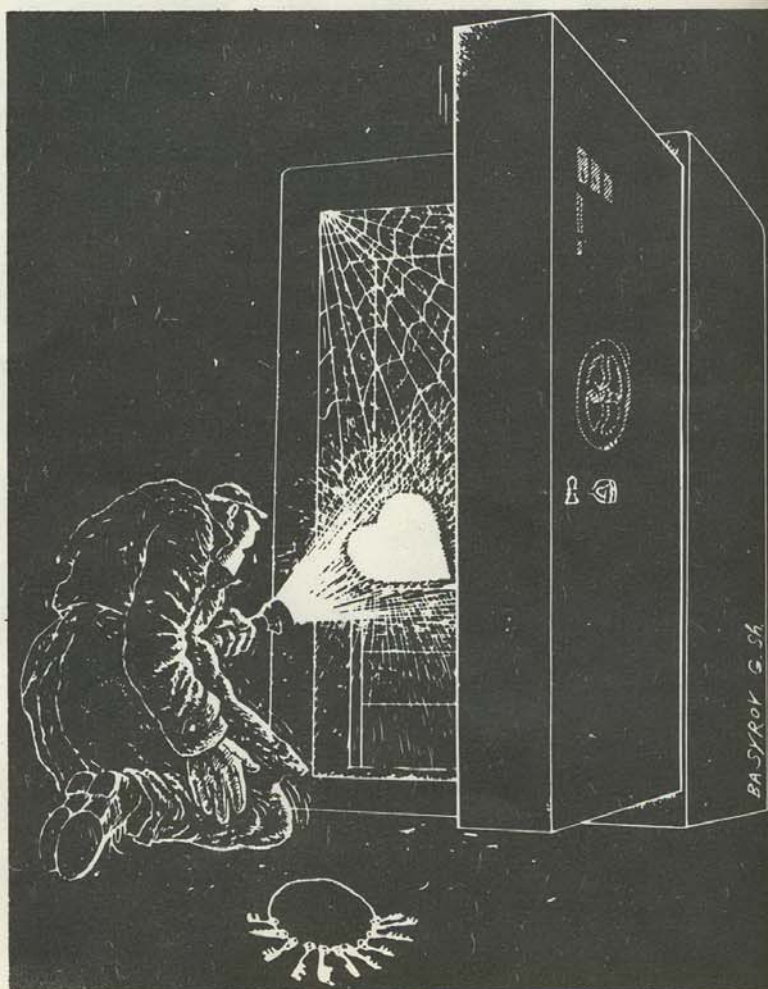
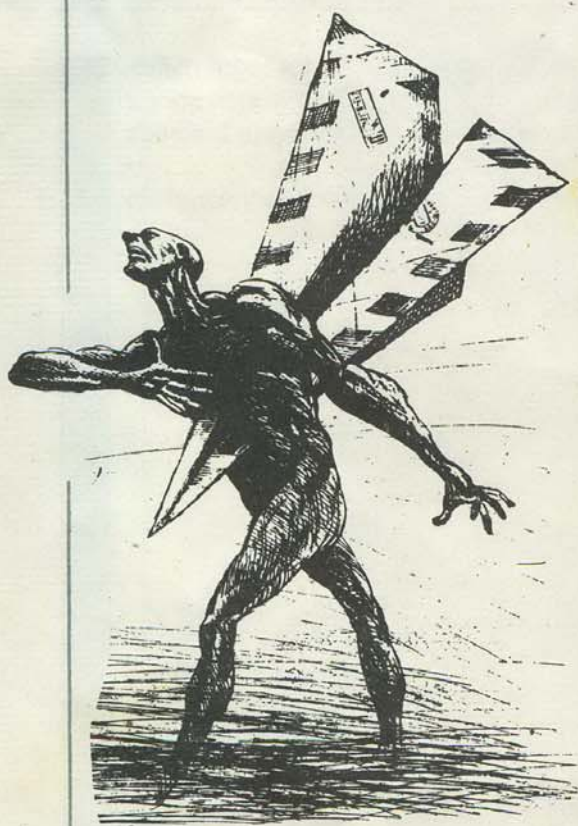
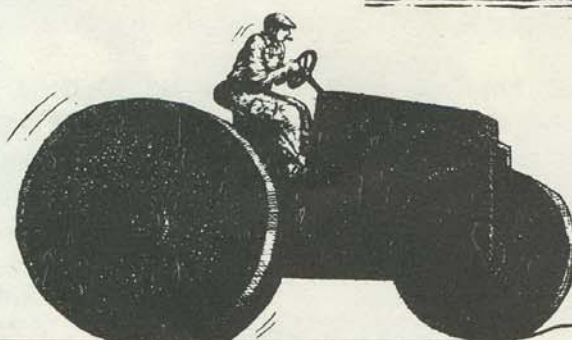
Nothing is hopeless if we only don't confuse guilt and misfortune, cause and effect, individual sin and public bane.



S. AINUTDINOV



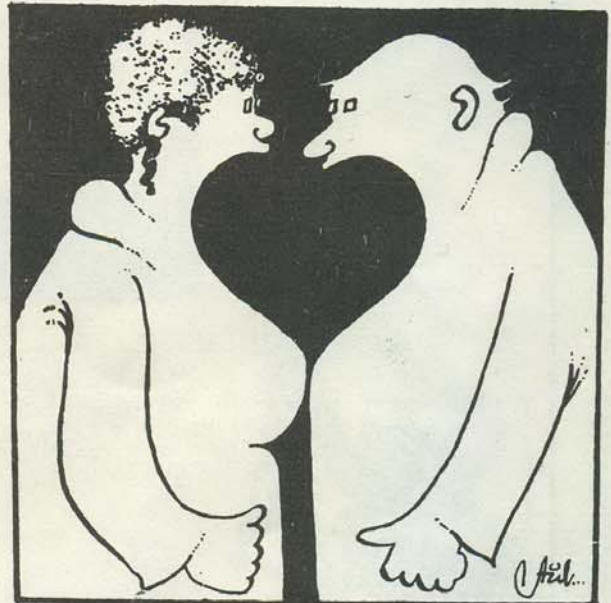
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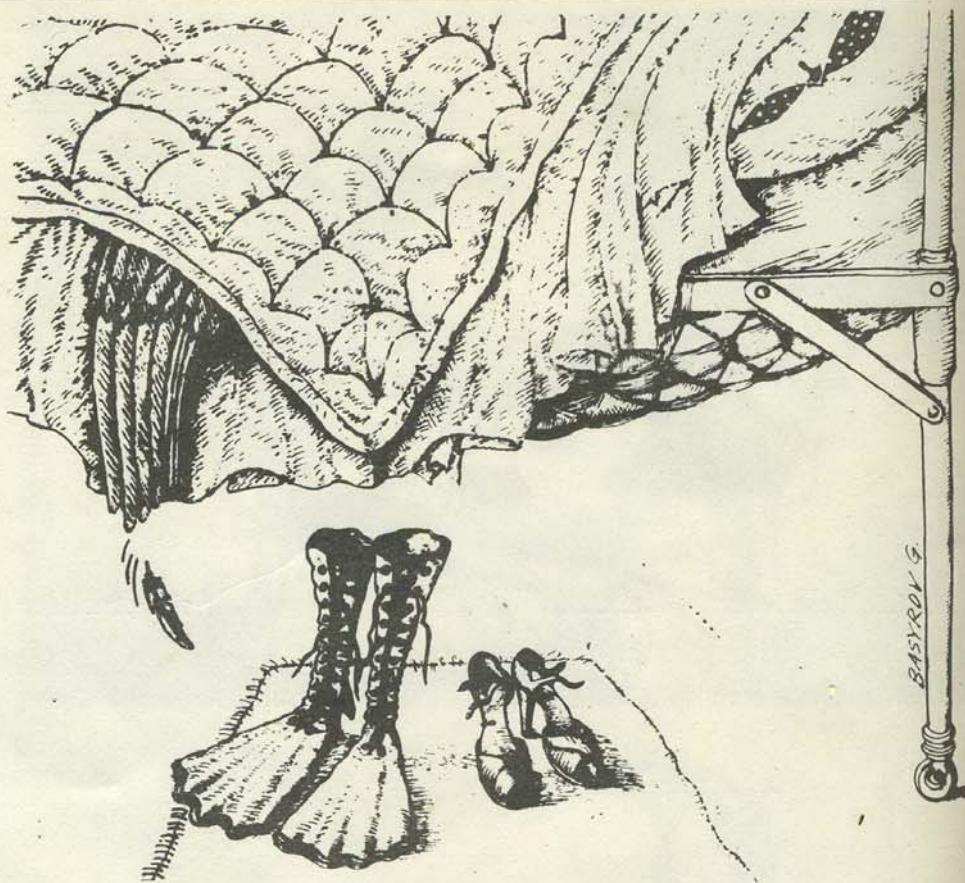


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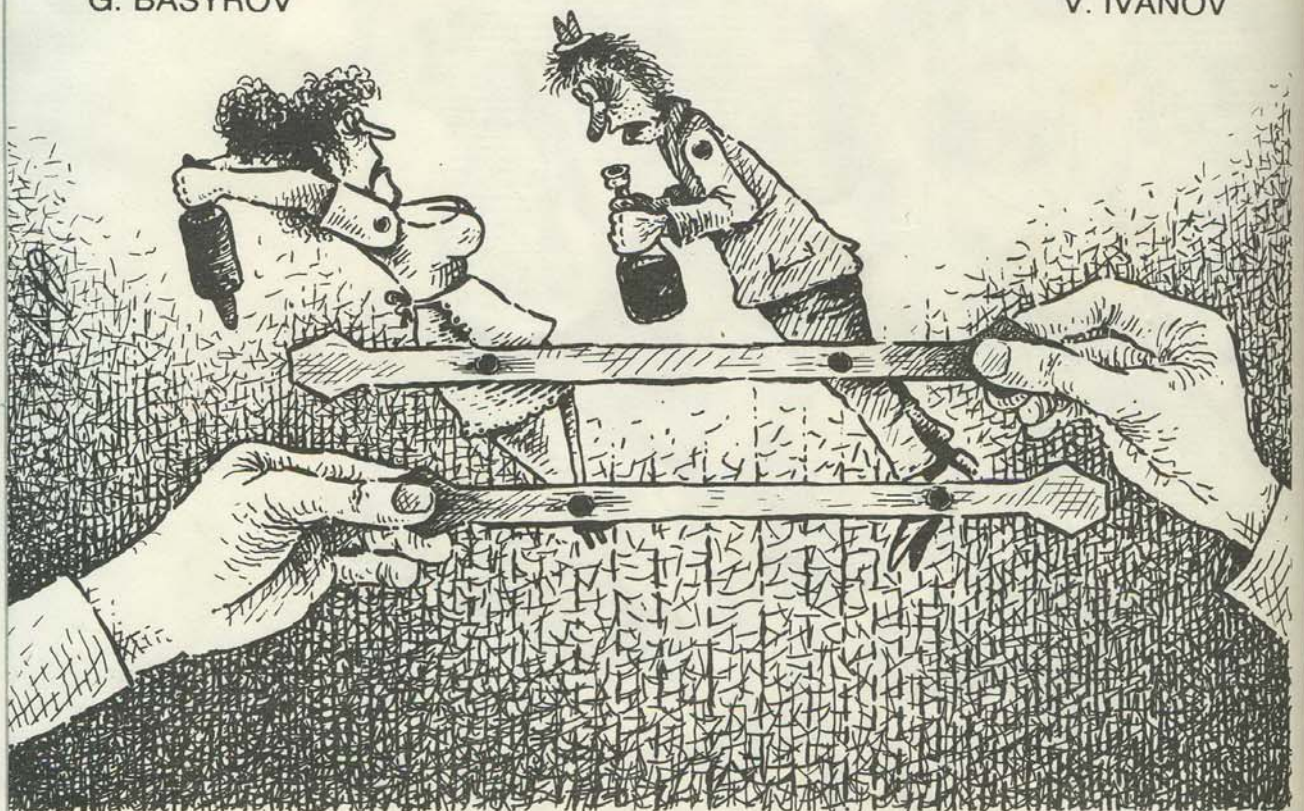
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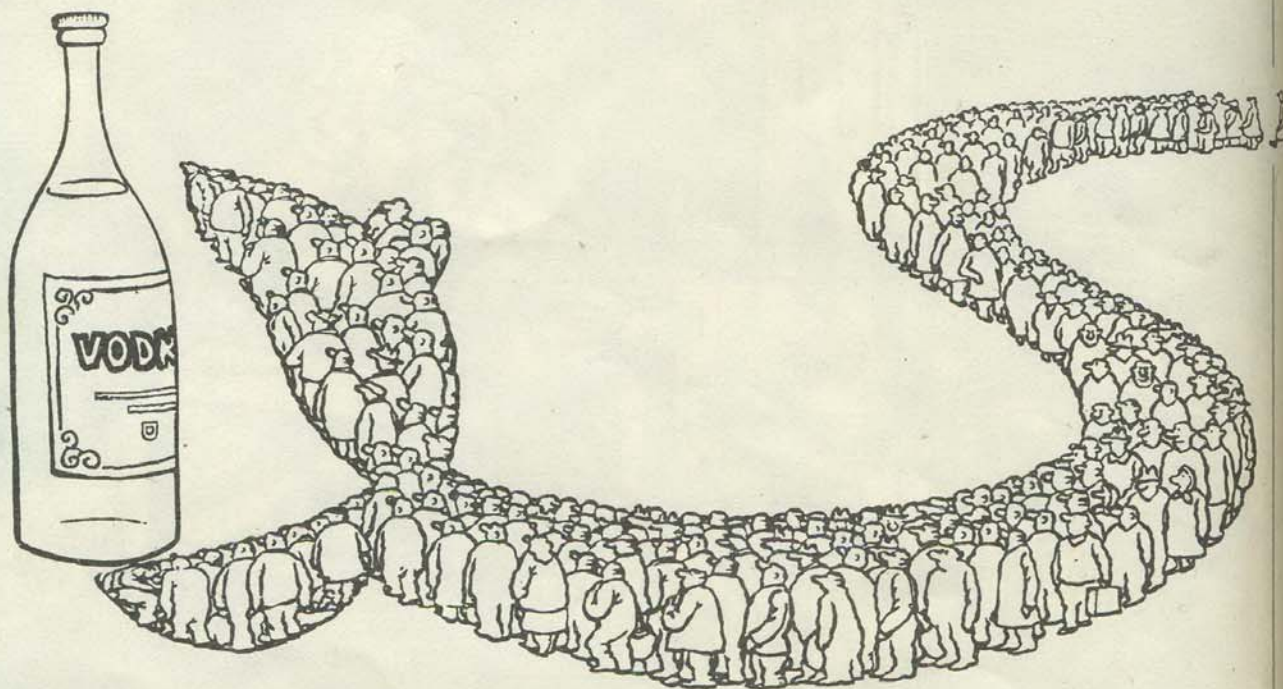


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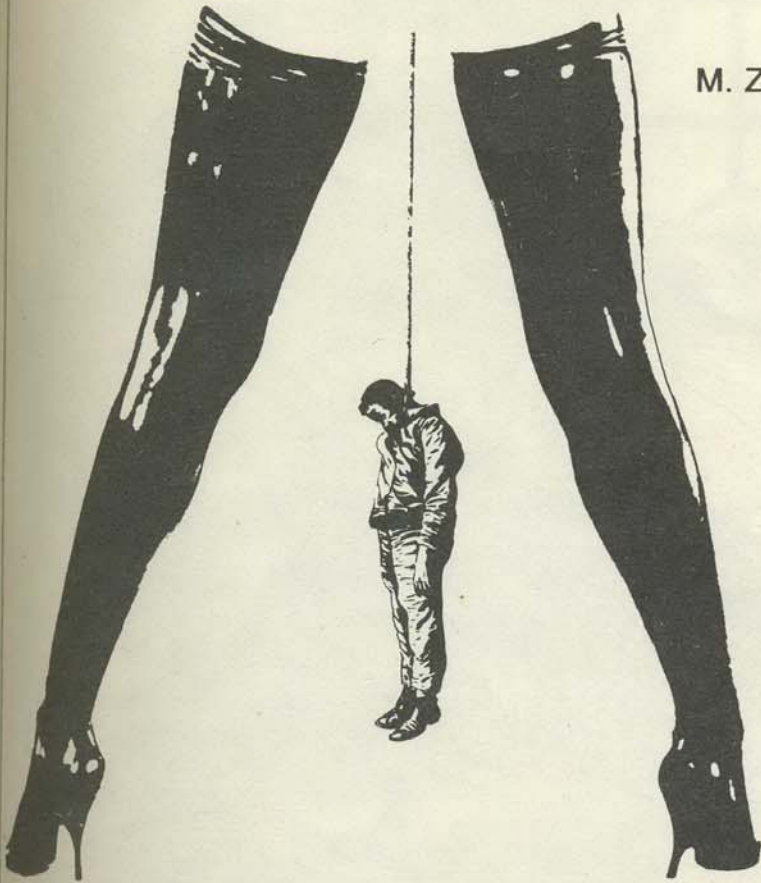


V. BOGORAD



M. ZLATKOVSKY
L. NASYROV

M. ZLATKOVSKY



M. ZLATKOVSKY
V. SKRYLEV

Chapter
Three **59**





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V. BOGORAD



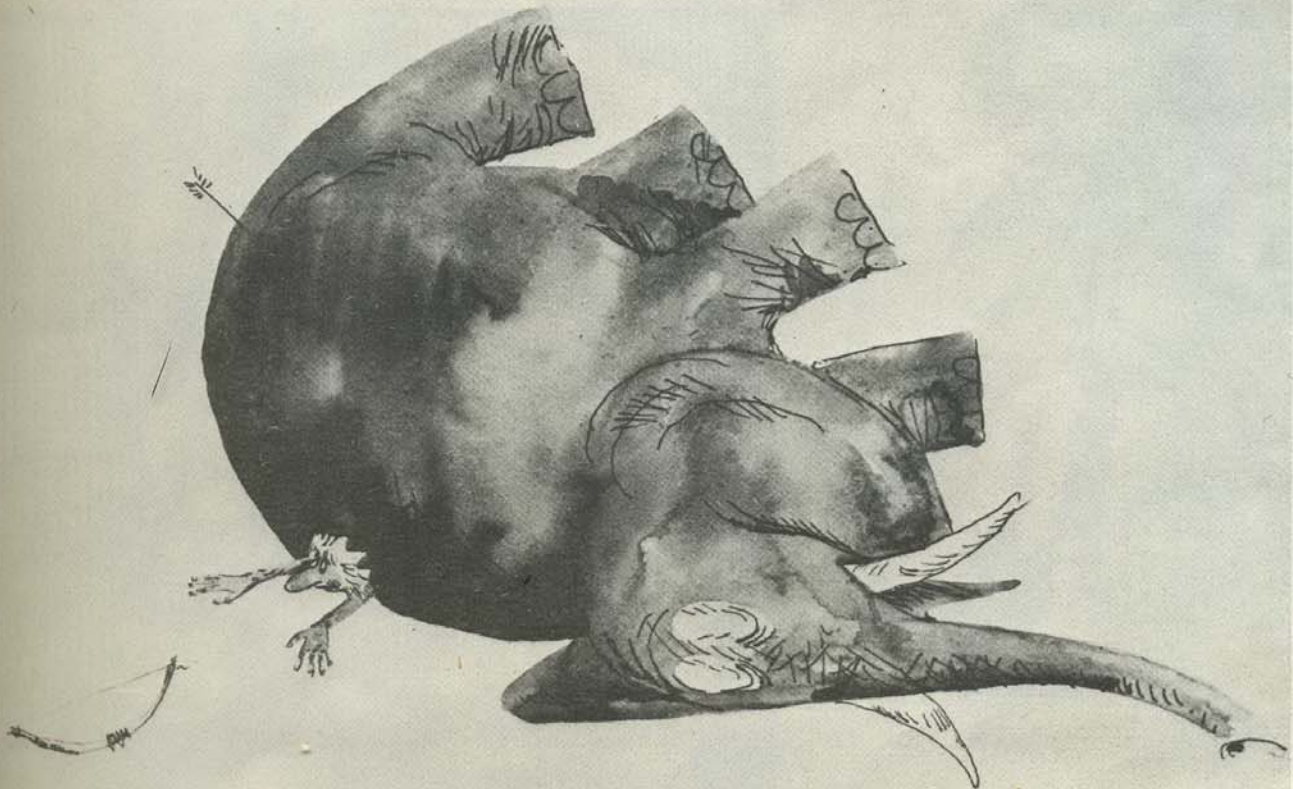
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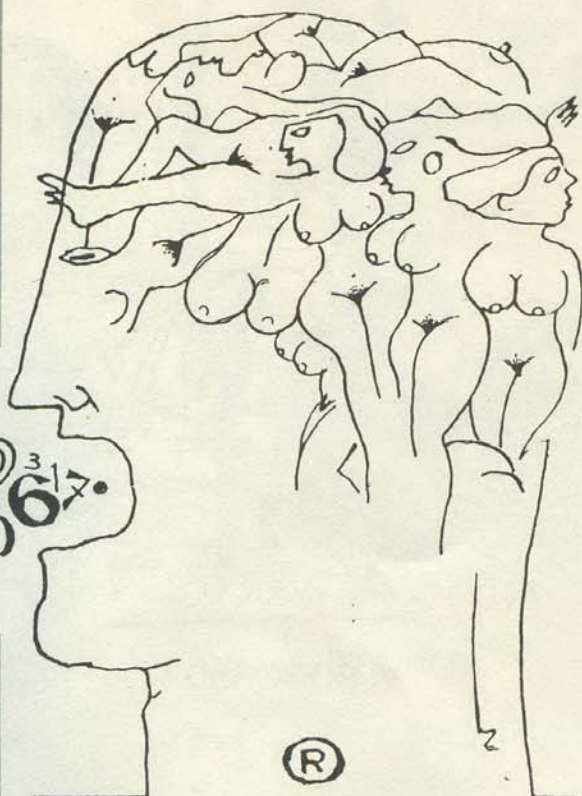
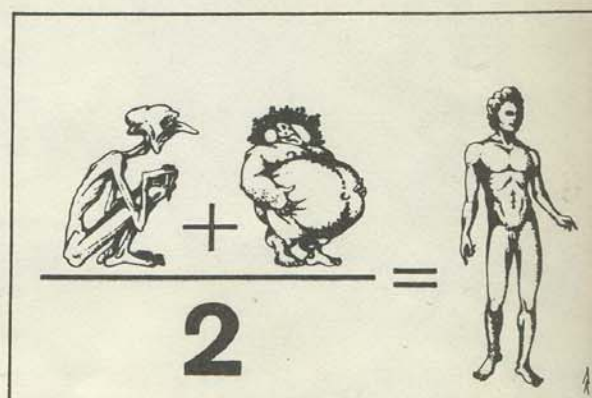
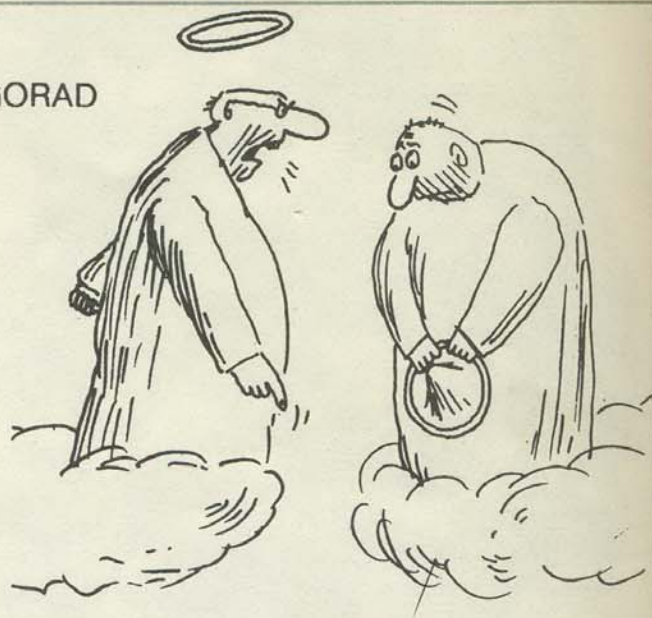


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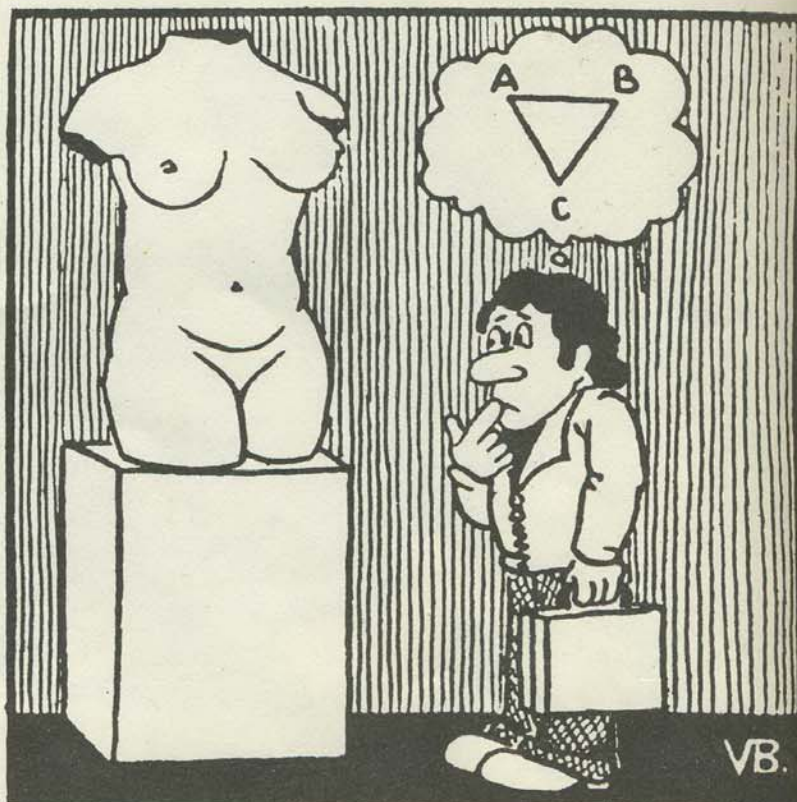


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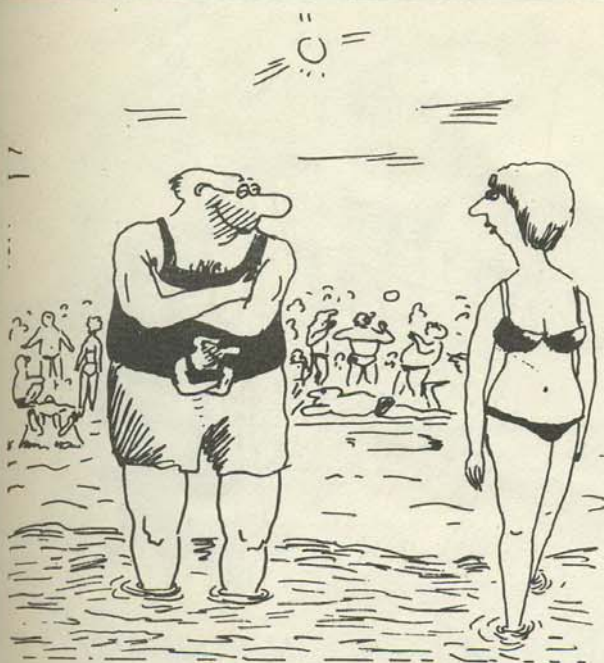


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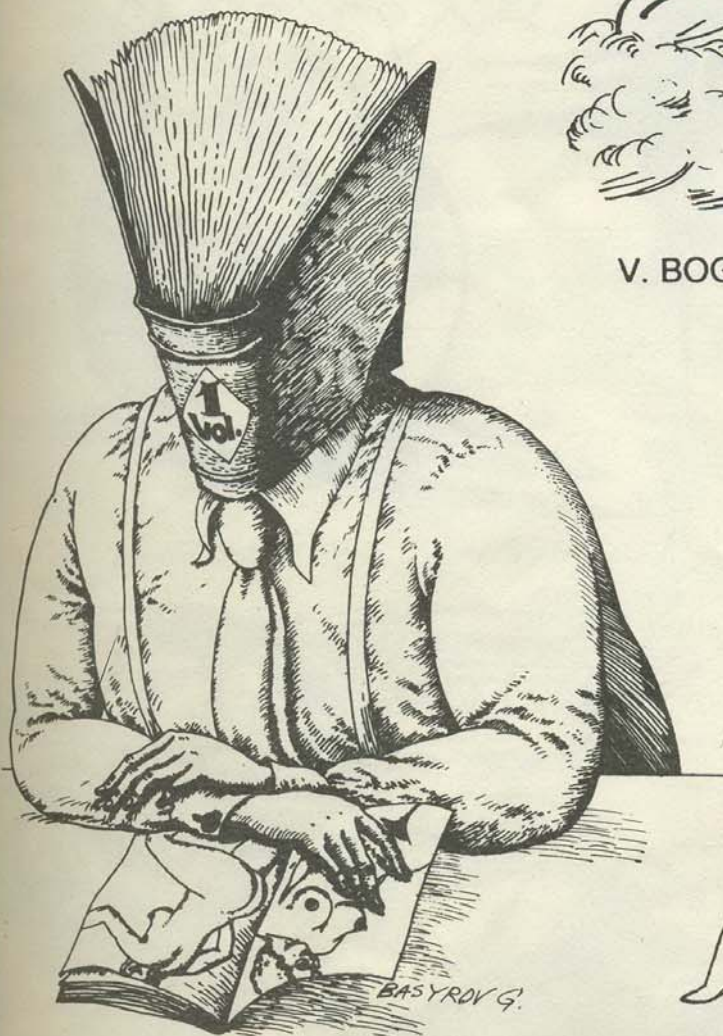
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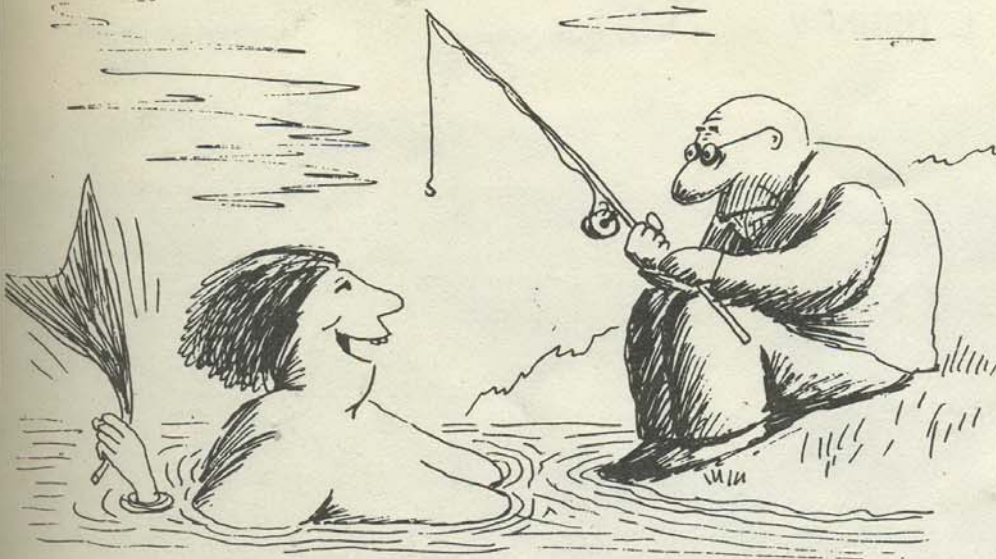
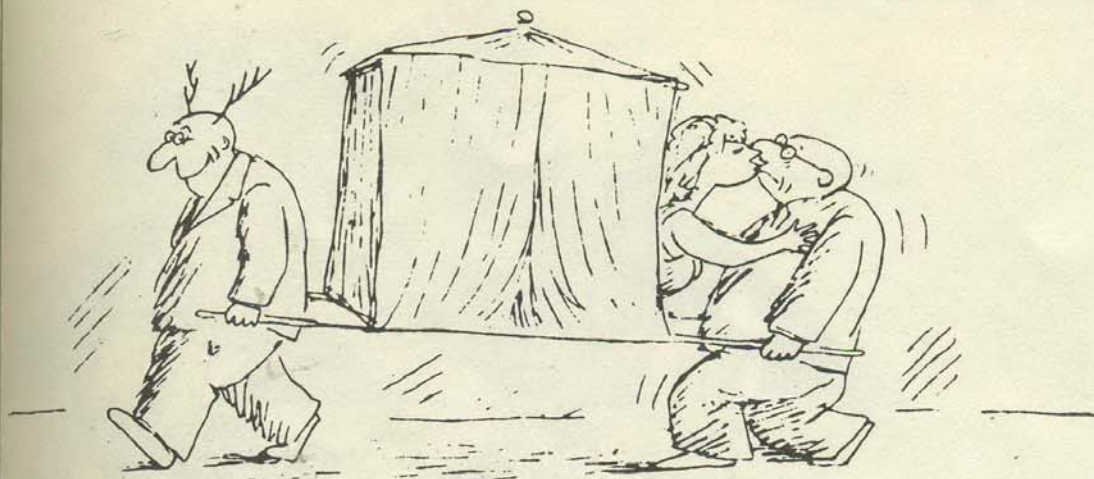
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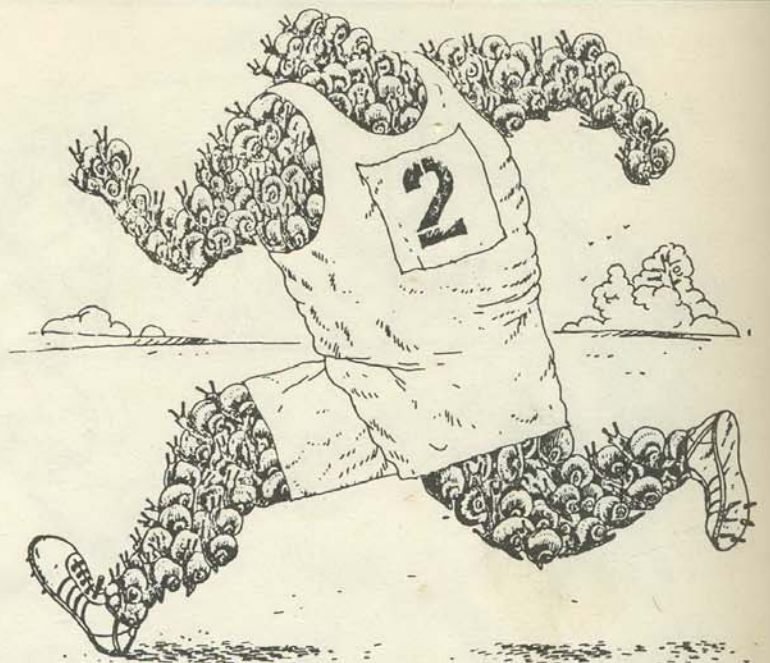


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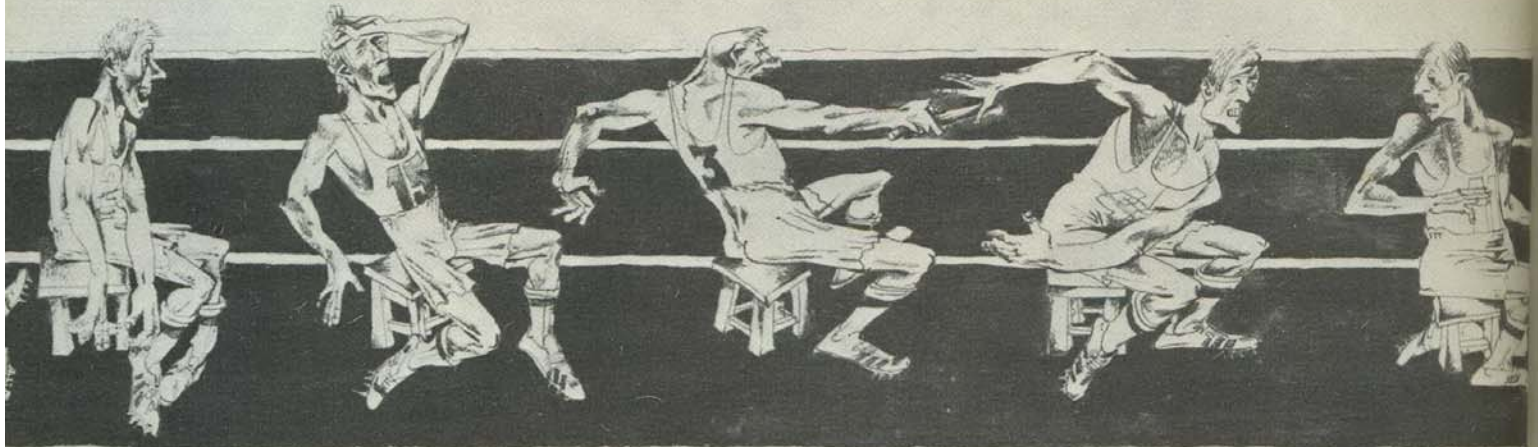
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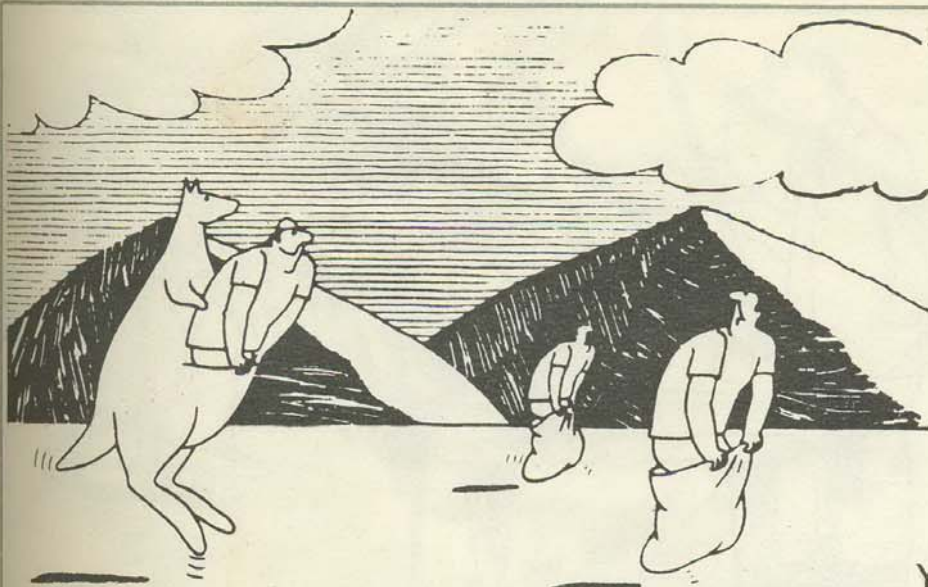


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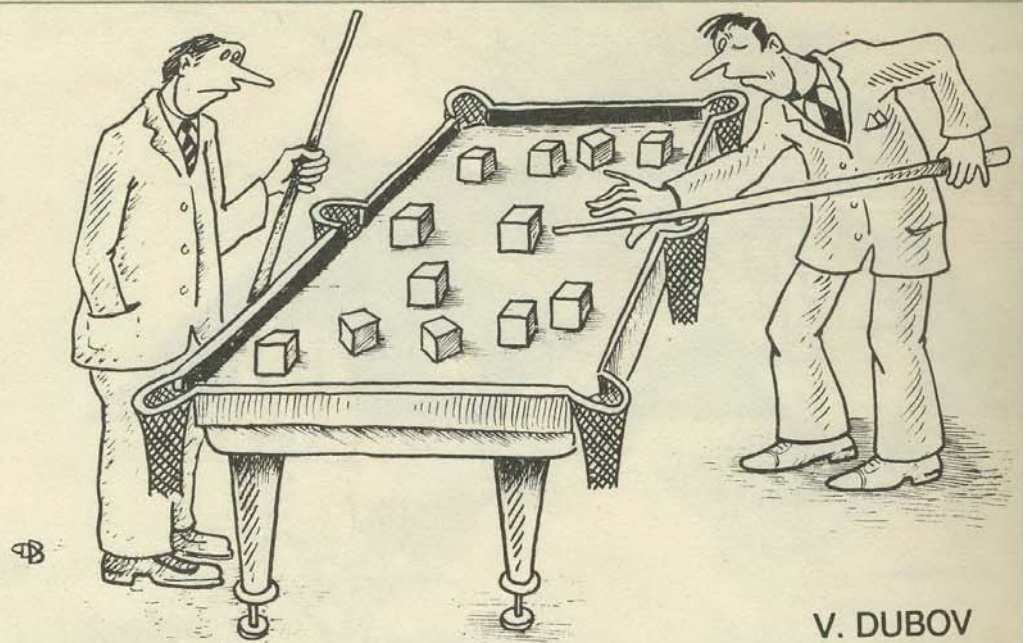
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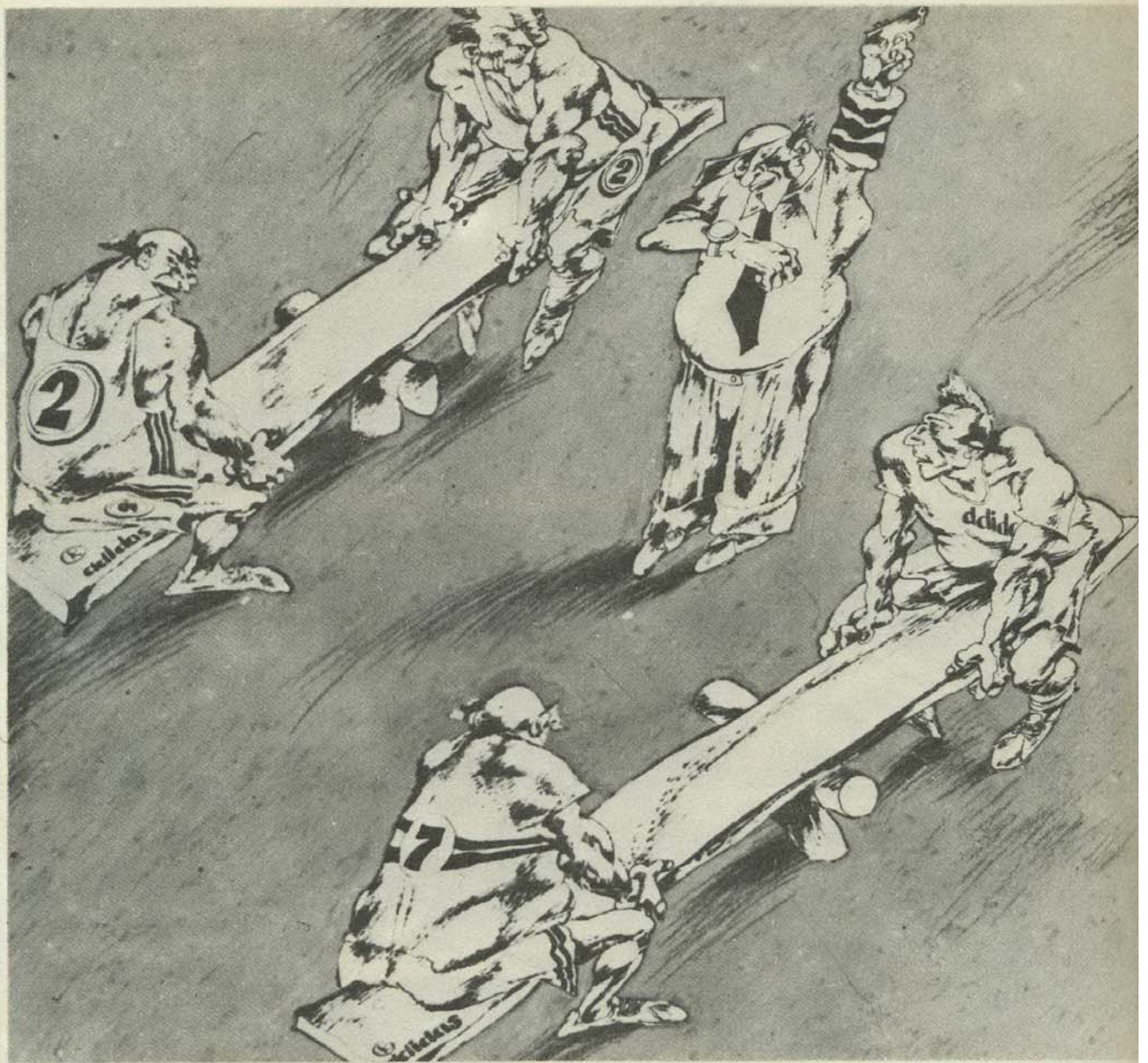
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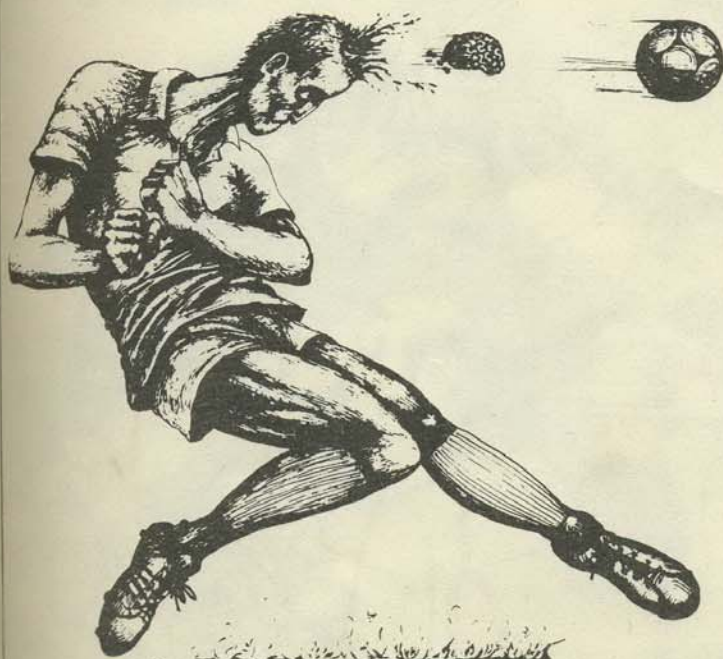
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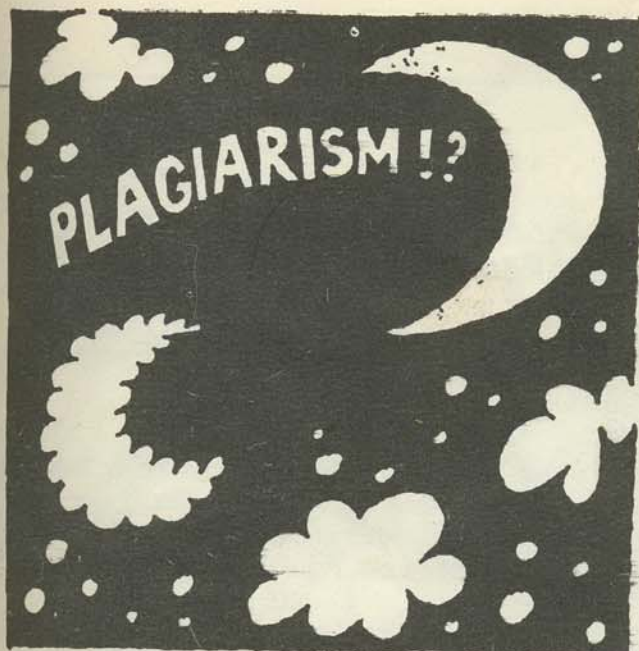
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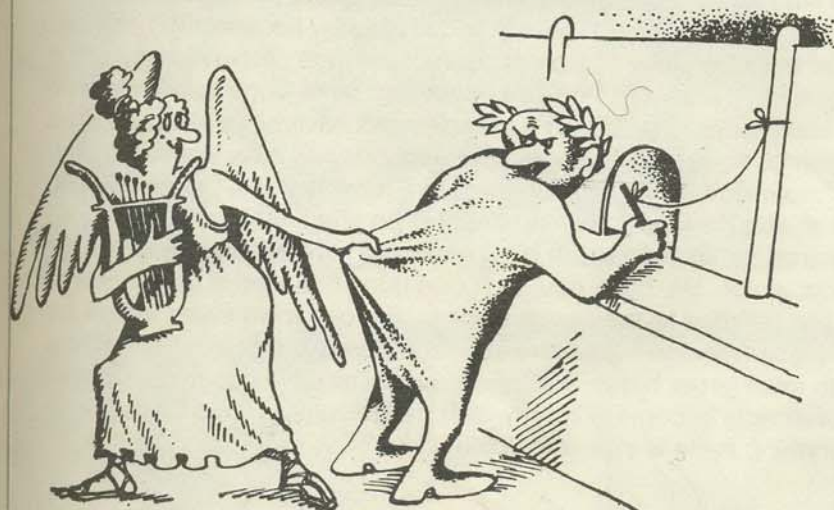
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S. BOGACHEV



A. PAKALNIS



S. TYUNIN



S. TYUNIN



S. AINUTDINOV



S. TYUNIN

Chapter 4, in which it just so happens that in some inexplicable manner **MACHINES, HOUSES, TREES, ANIMALS** and **HUMANS** continue to exist side by side on earth

They exist together in a symbiotic relationship within a socio-technological ecosystem. The machines begin to encroach upon houses for lack of adequate space; the trees start attacking animals because they don't want to grow and feed them; and all of them together start attacking us humans, who have no place to live, nowhere to walk and rest, nothing to eat. Poor us, what do we have to do with all this?

But at least it can be said that in our country these problems are less acute than they are in the capitalist world. Our technology isn't too aggressive because we don't have enough of it, and because those machines that we do have are of inferior quality. In this country houses don't encroach upon nature as often as we could want because of a catastrophic shortage of them. And destruction of plant life is not as detrimental to the animal world as one would think since many species of wild animals have been methodically exterminated and livestock herds have been overdeveloped. But all this has had little effect upon us since we were born unpretentious and have learned to adapt to any unfavorable change in circumstances. As for ourselves, we have had little effect upon our surroundings since we're not at all accustomed to having much of an effect upon anything.

It is also true that we have spared no effort to upset this somewhat lethargic harmony. We buy machines that we don't know how to use. We build houses (good thing that land is free of charge) so far apart that shouting from one building to the next is useless. We cut down entire forests and leave half of the lumber lying in place. We don't get more lumber this way but at least, lying there, it takes up more space. We try to raise larger herds, but this demands more grain which is in short supply. As a result, both we and the cattle become skinny—which, incidentally, is good for our health. Here we can see again that everything in life is interconnected.





S. TYUNIN

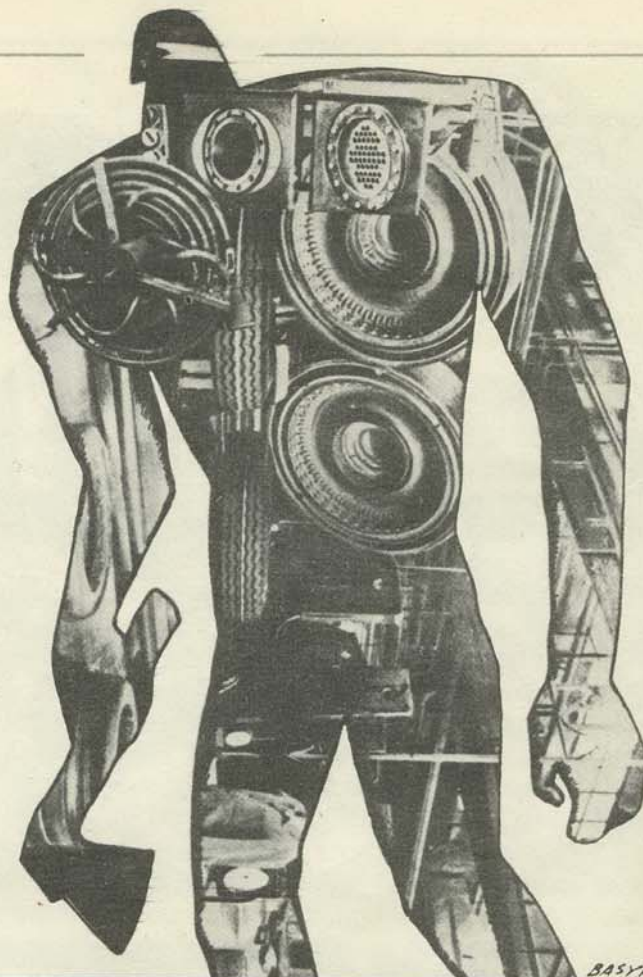


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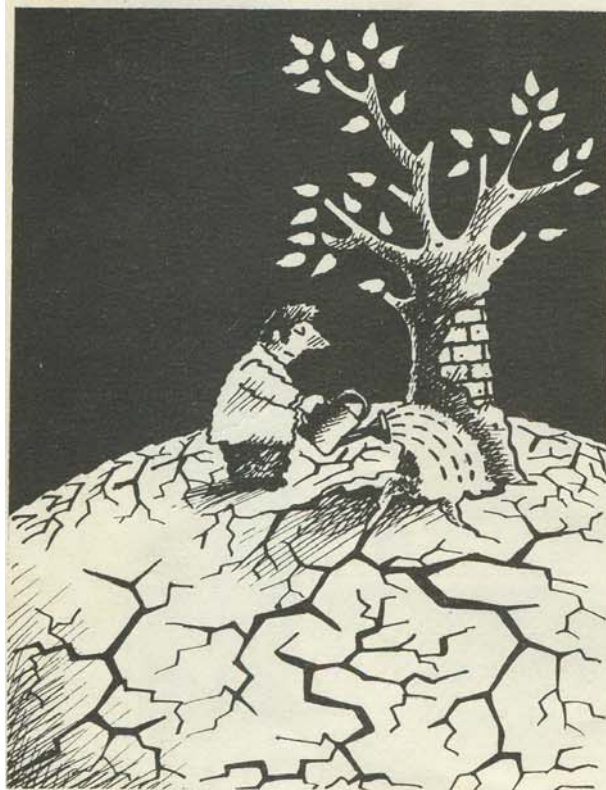


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G. BASYROV



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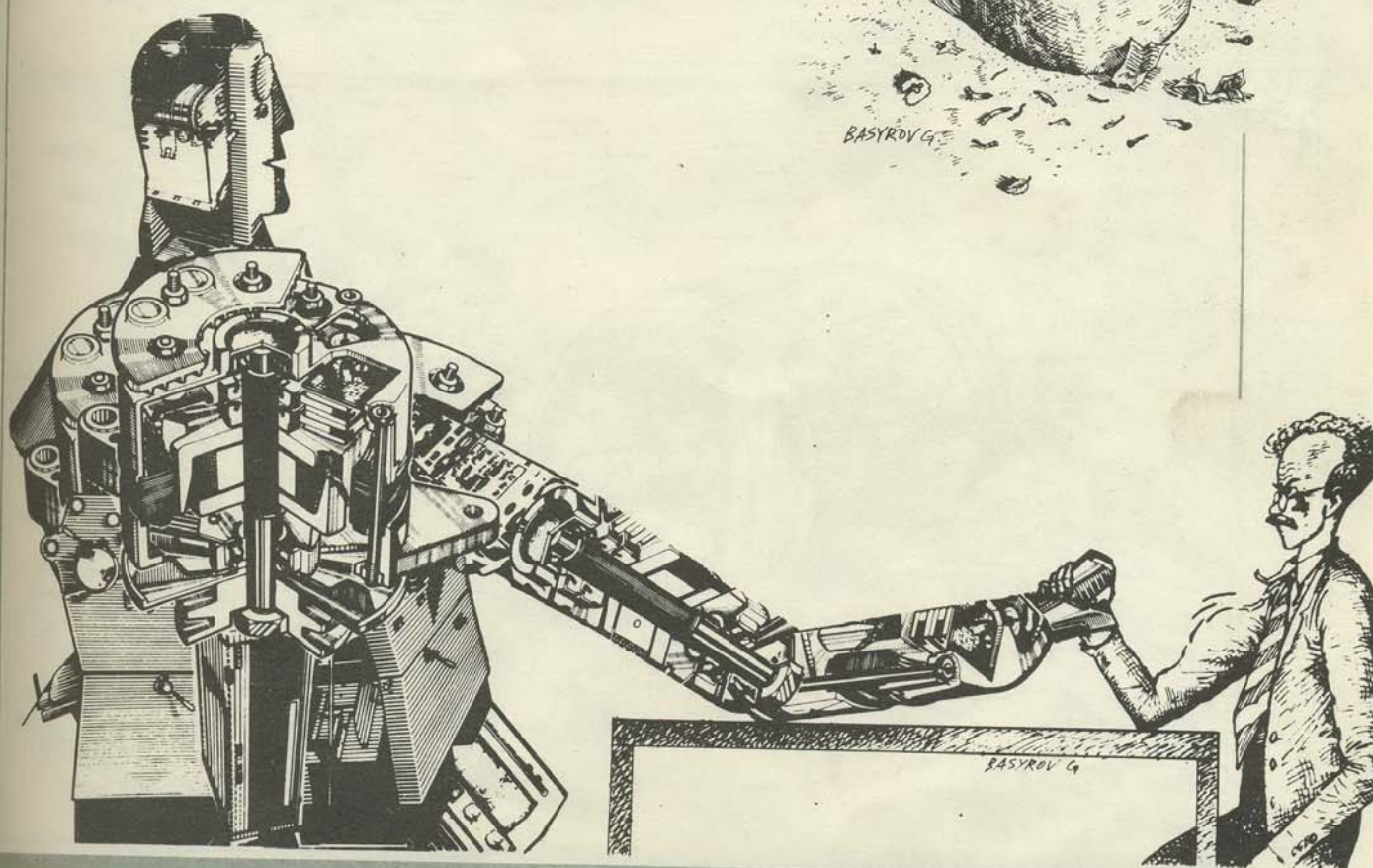
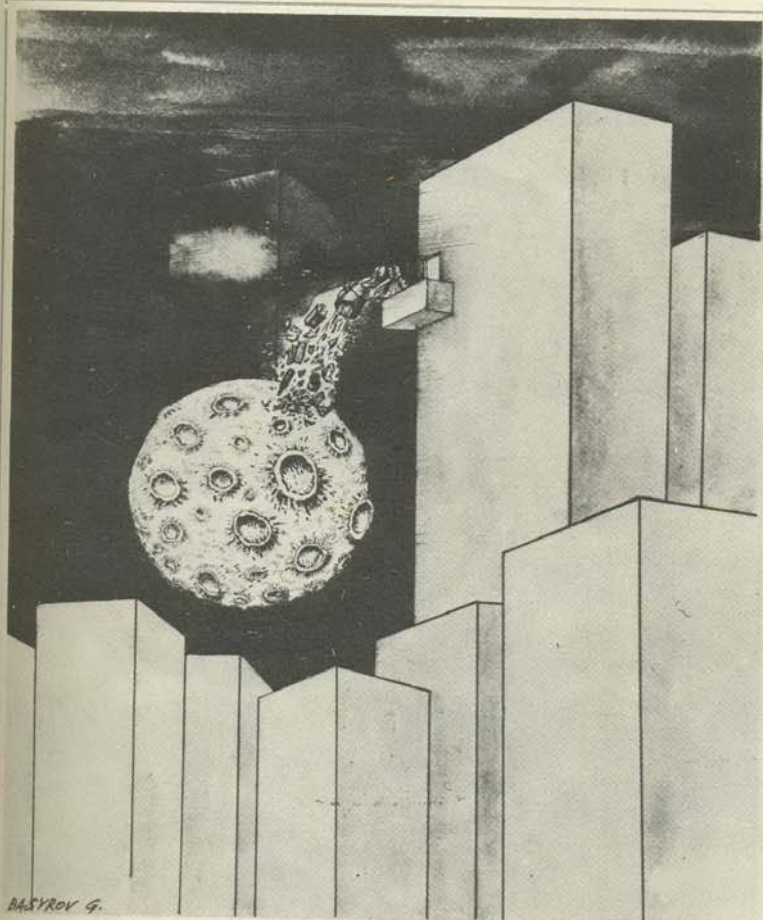
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Four

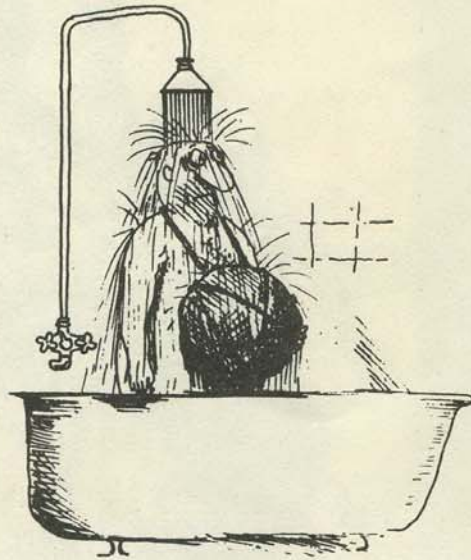


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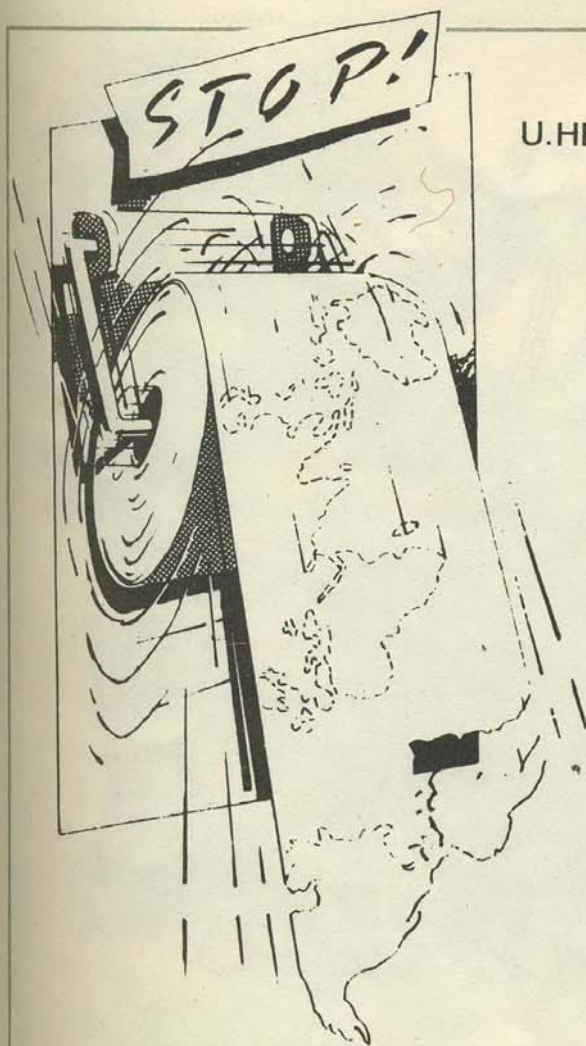
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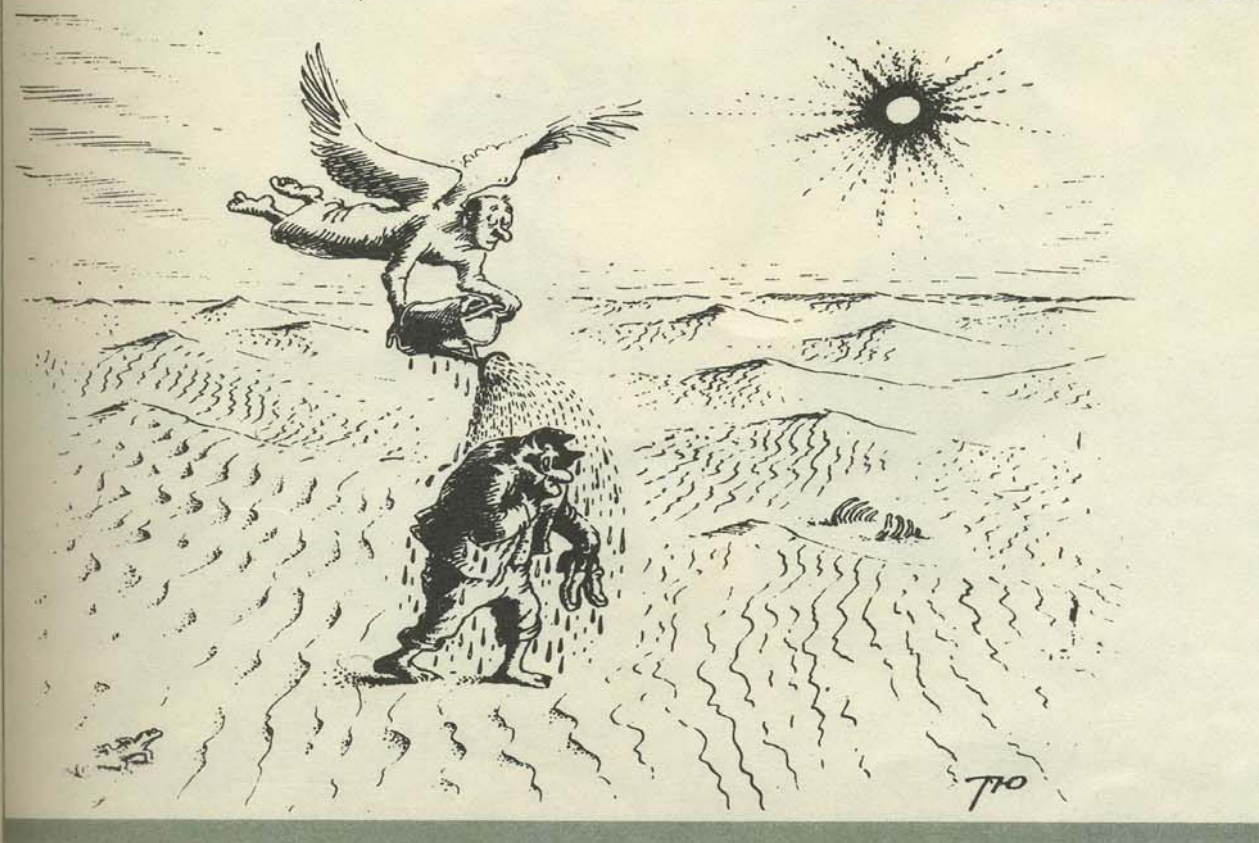
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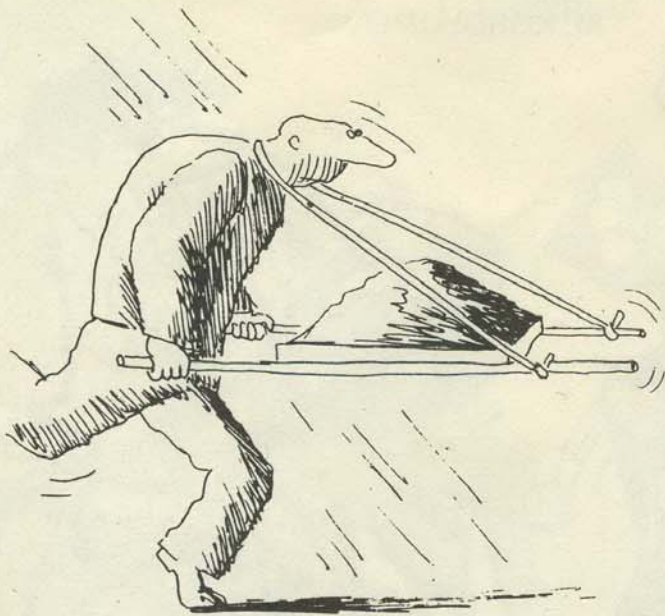
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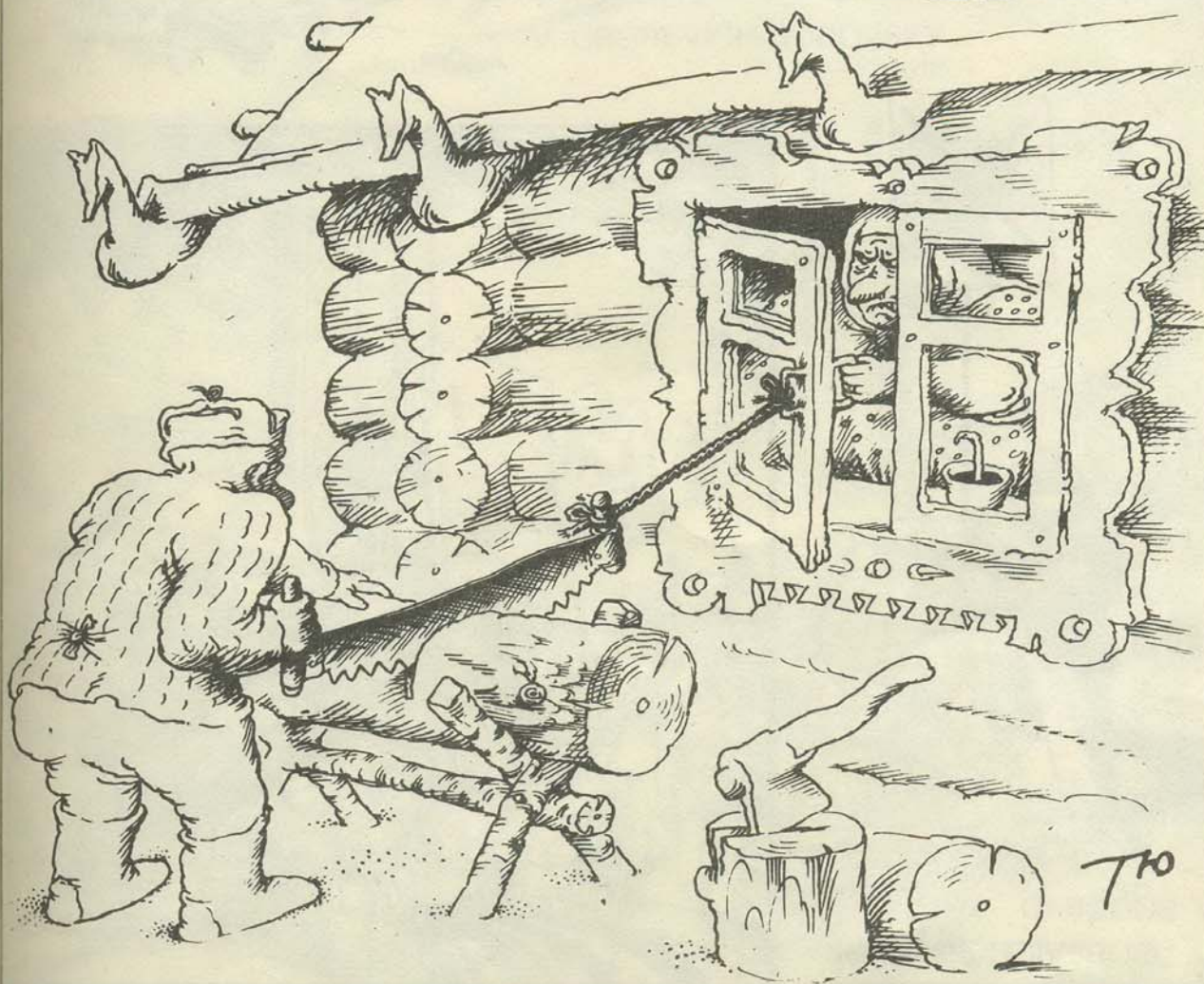
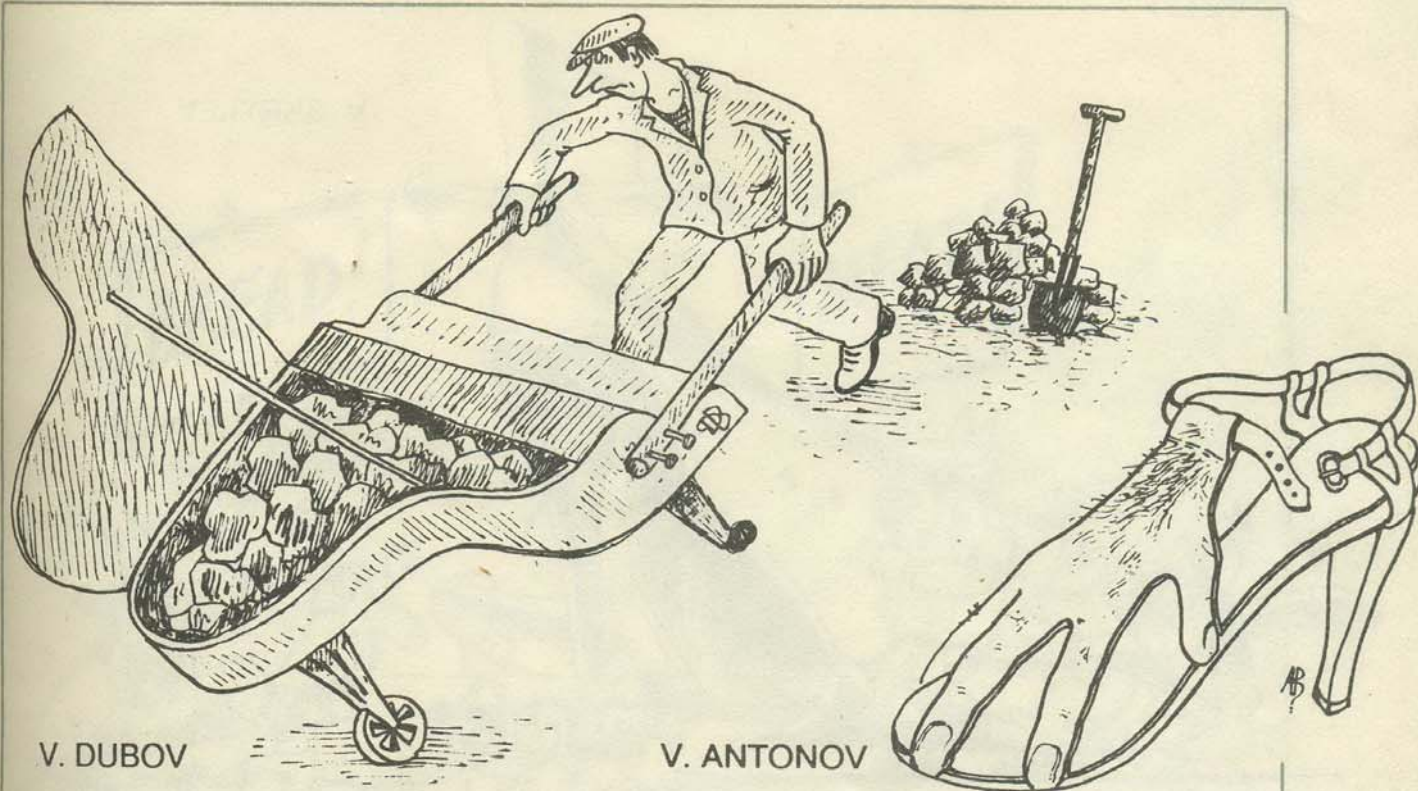


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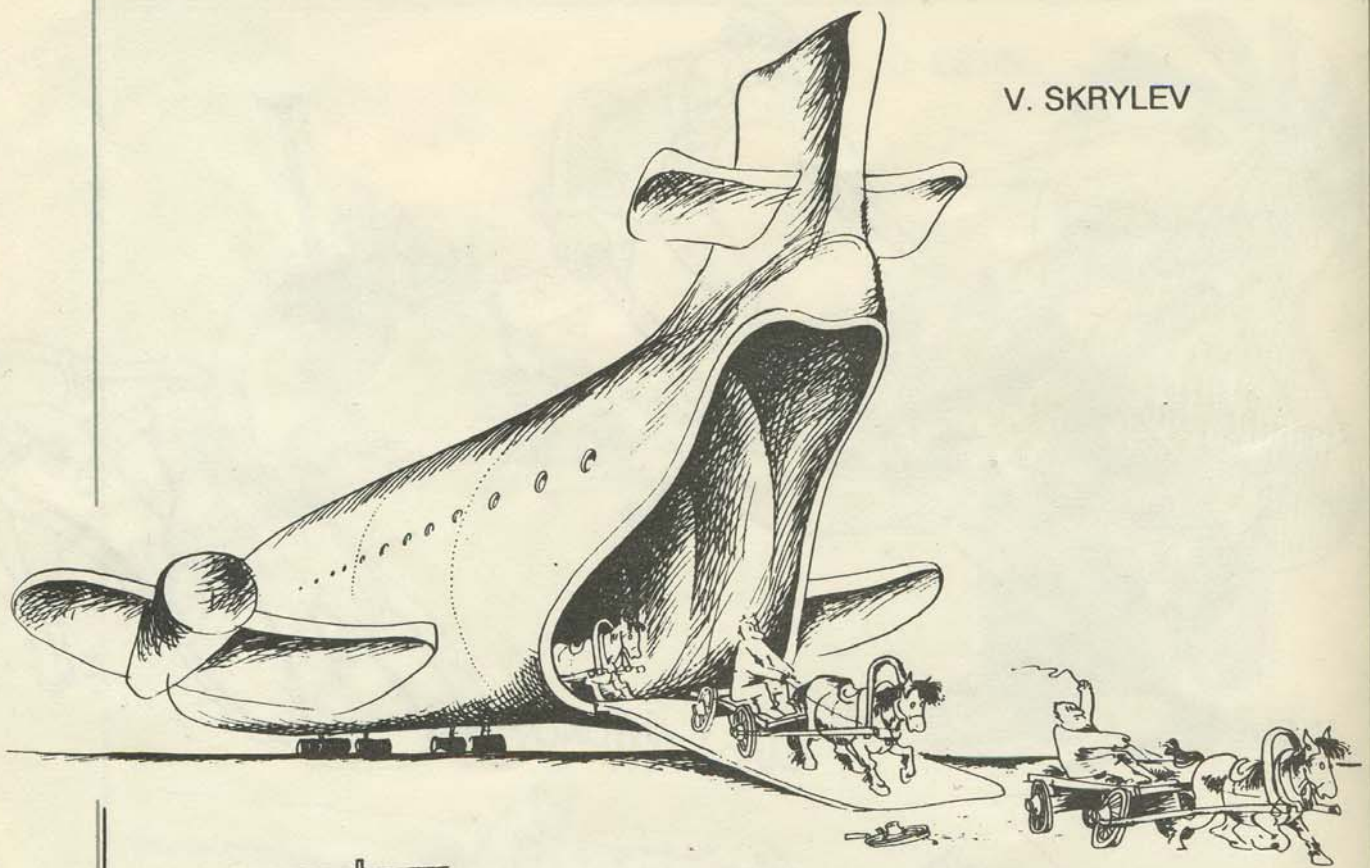


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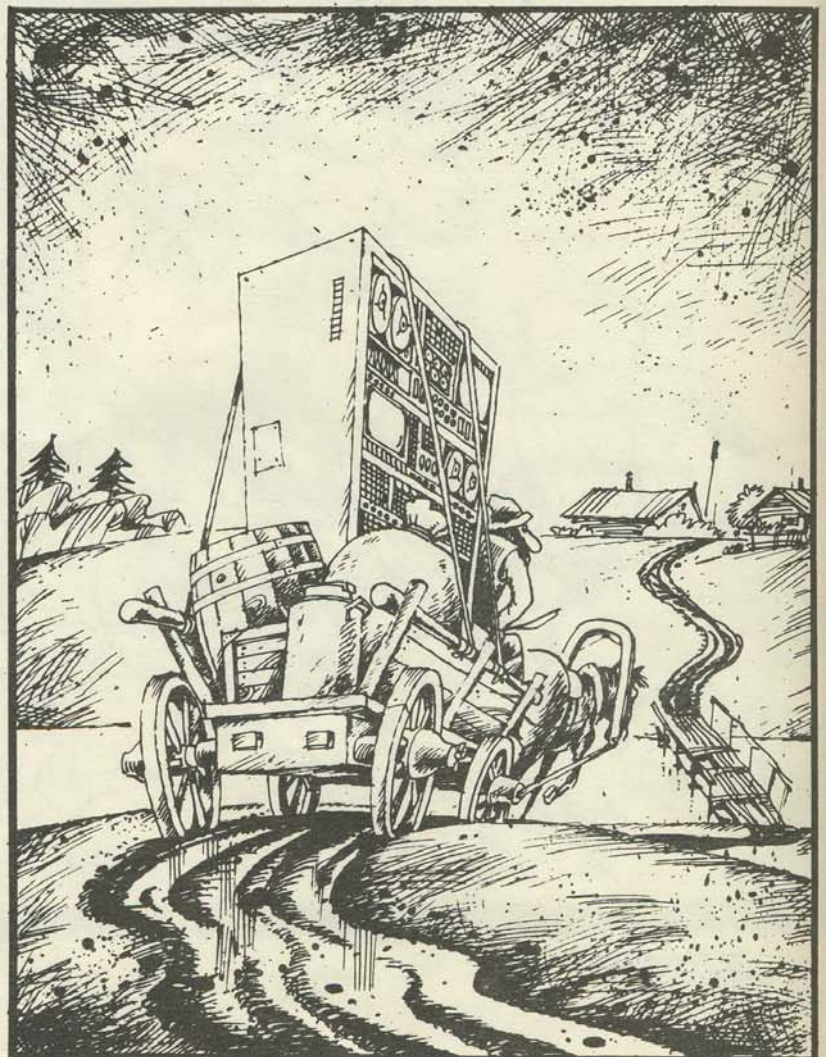
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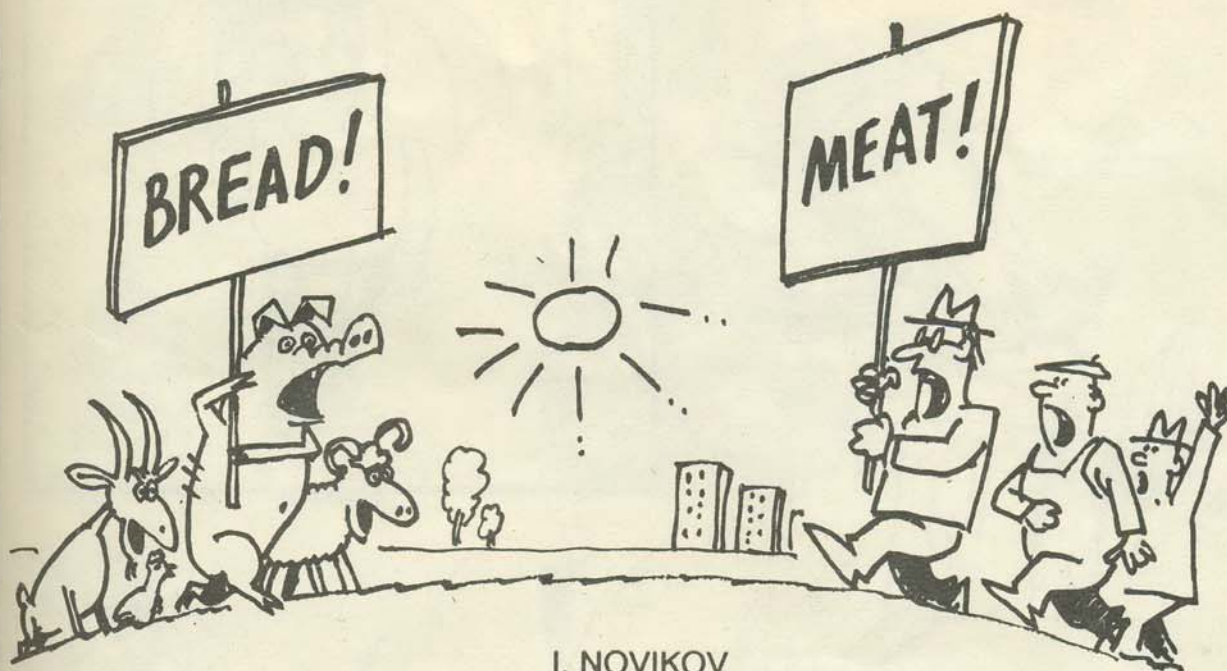
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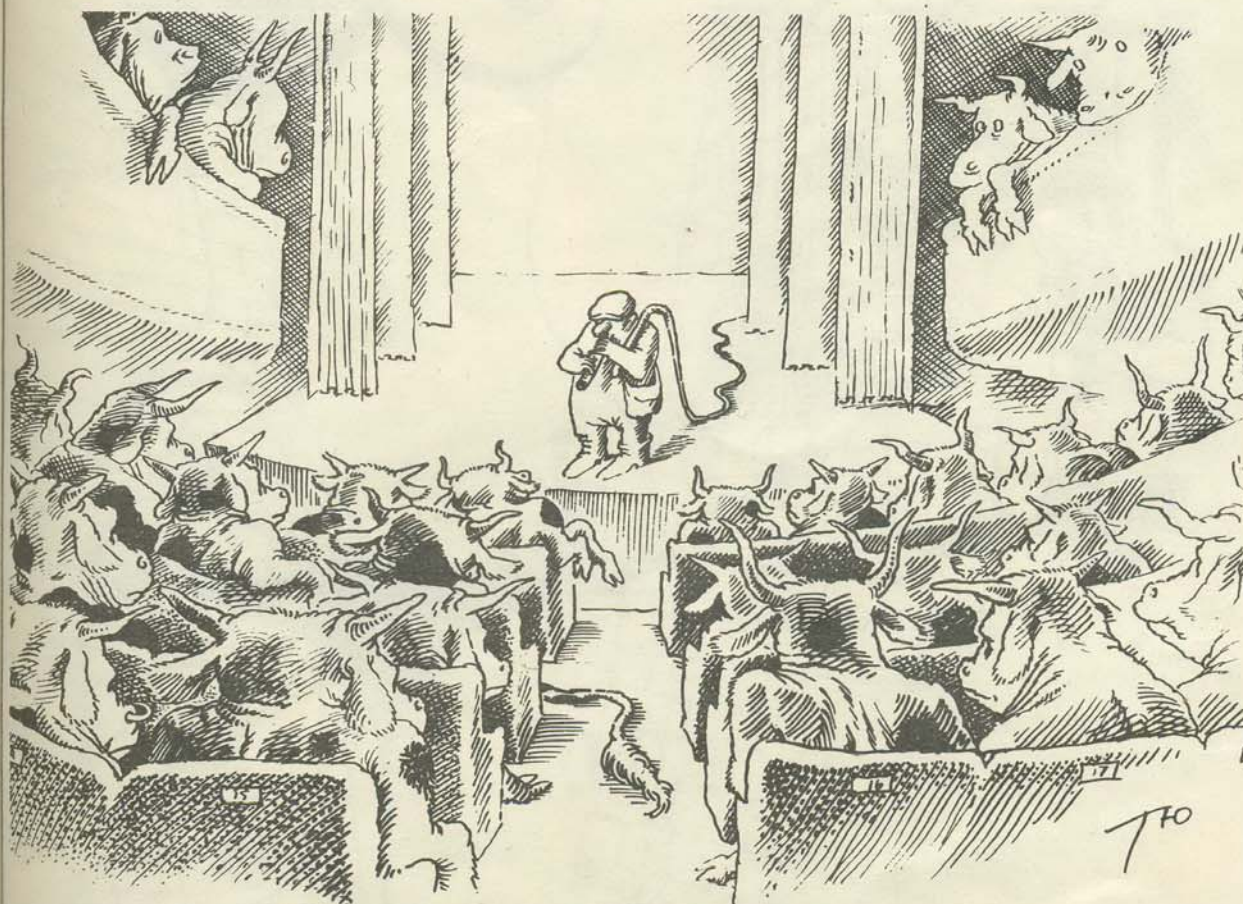
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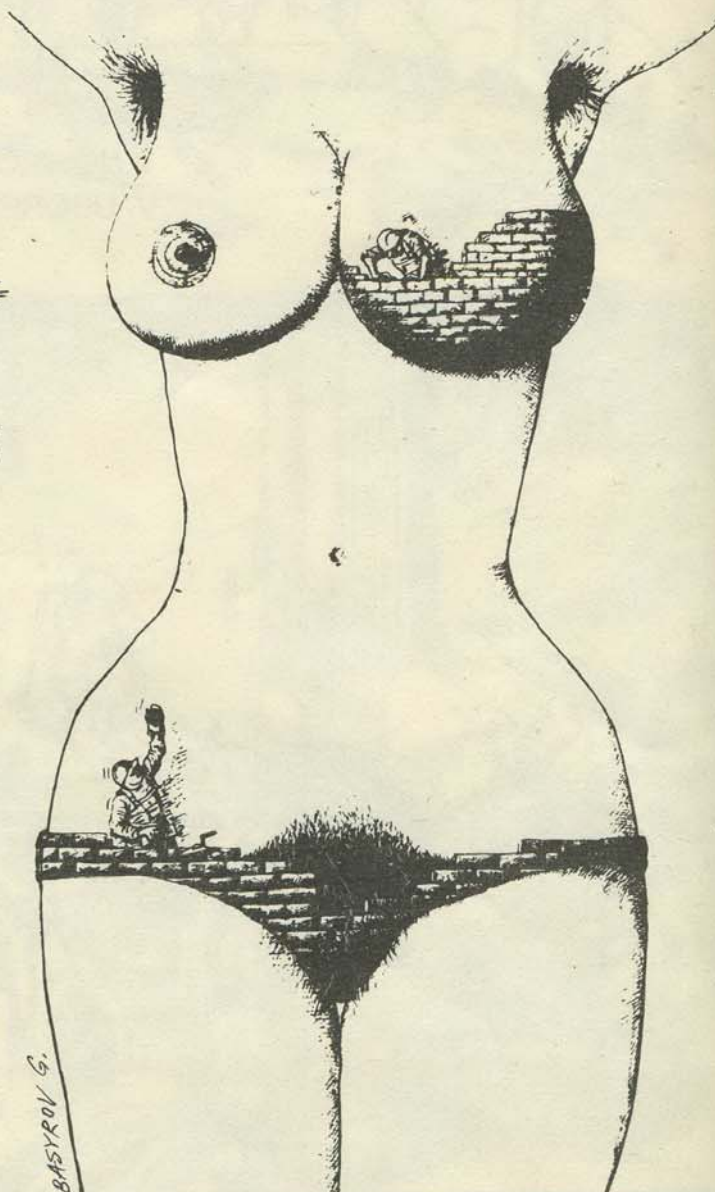
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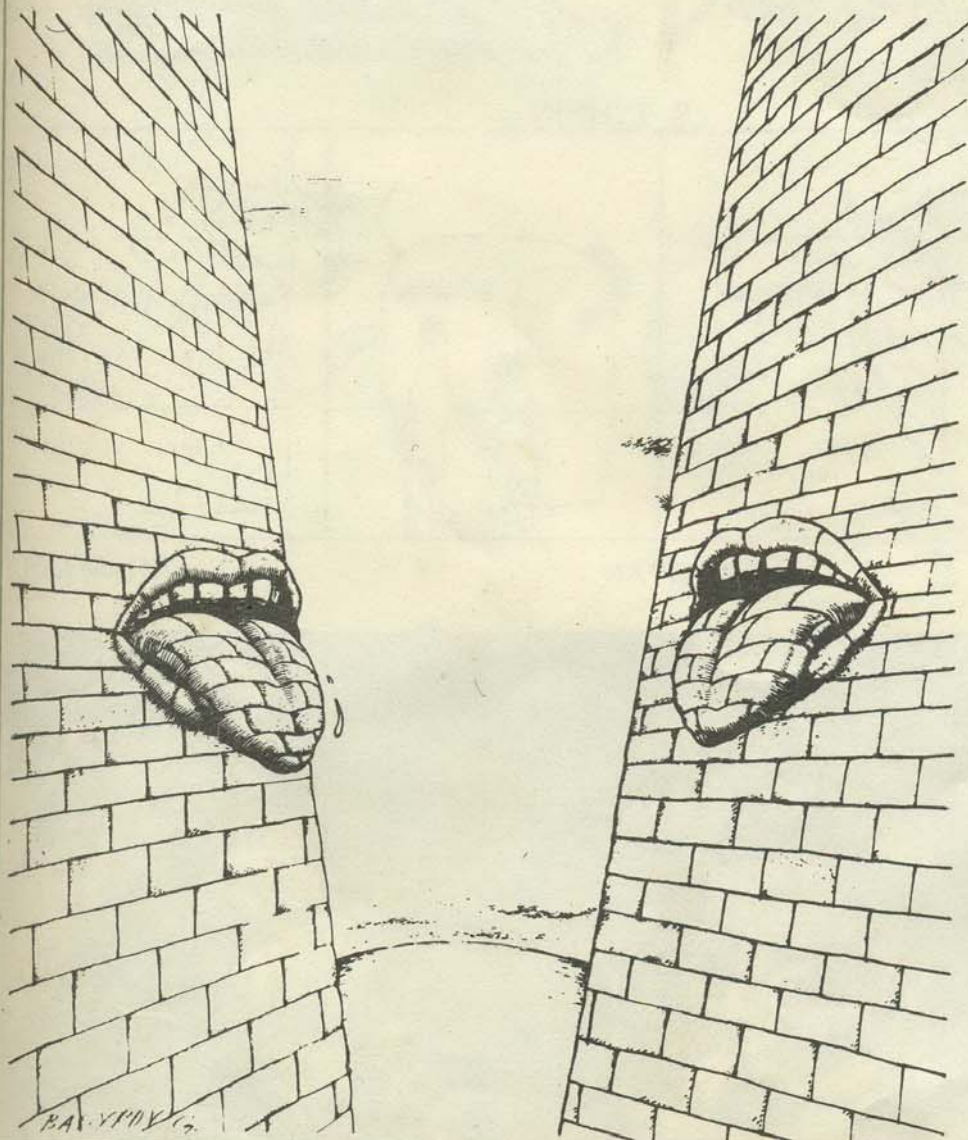
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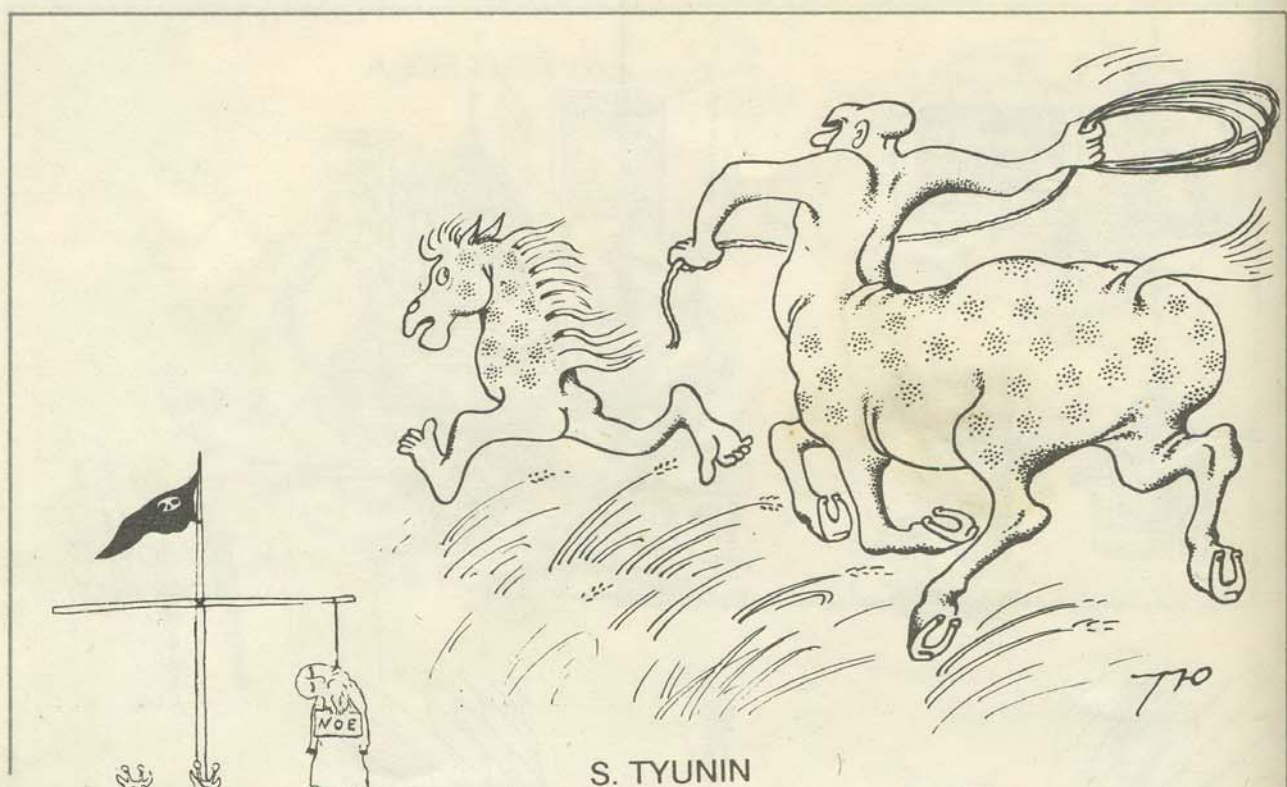
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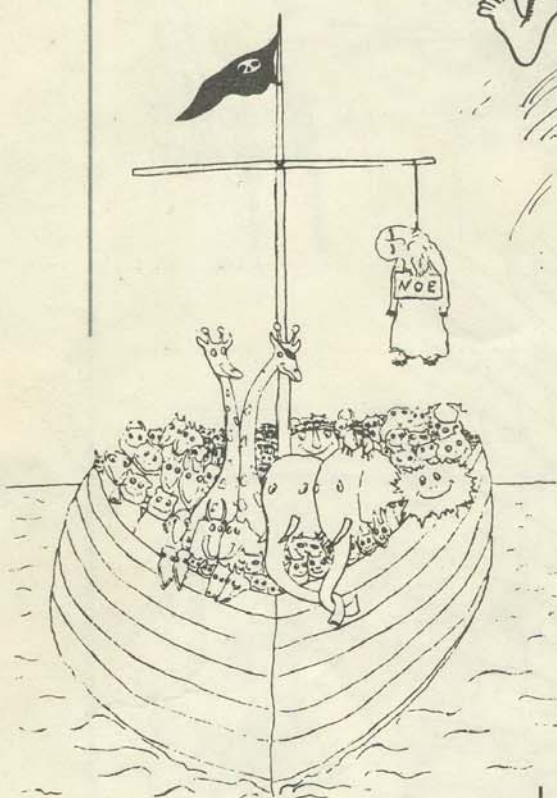
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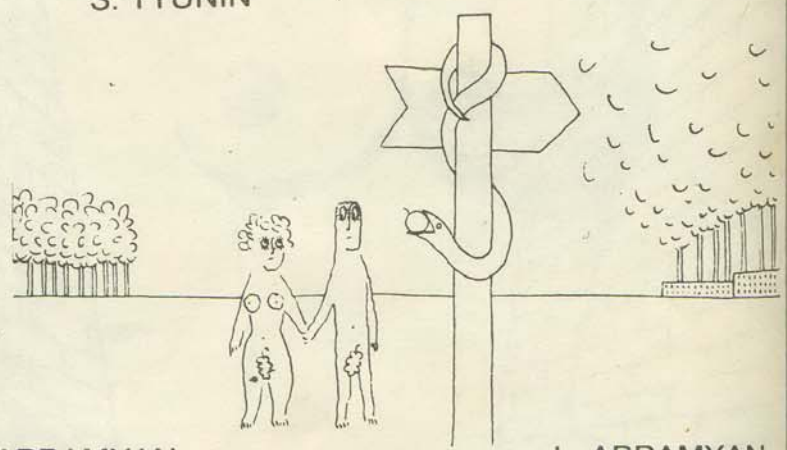
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L. ABRAMYAN

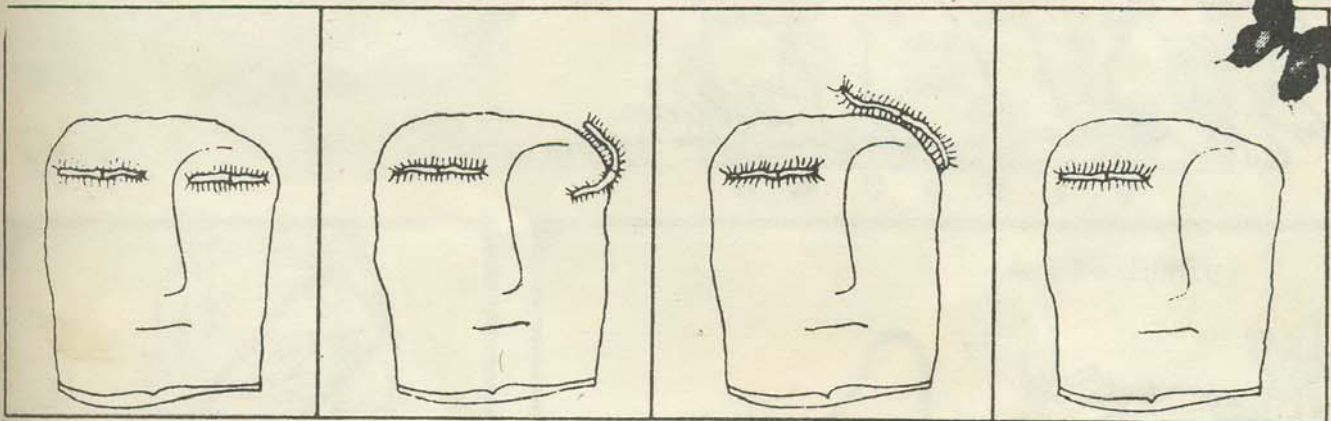
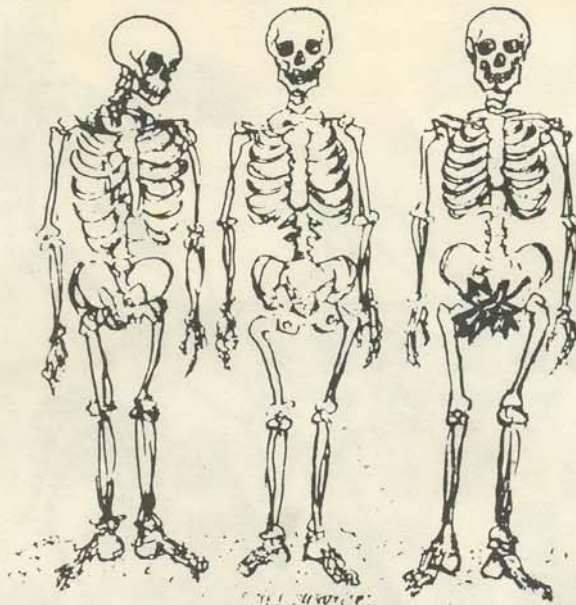
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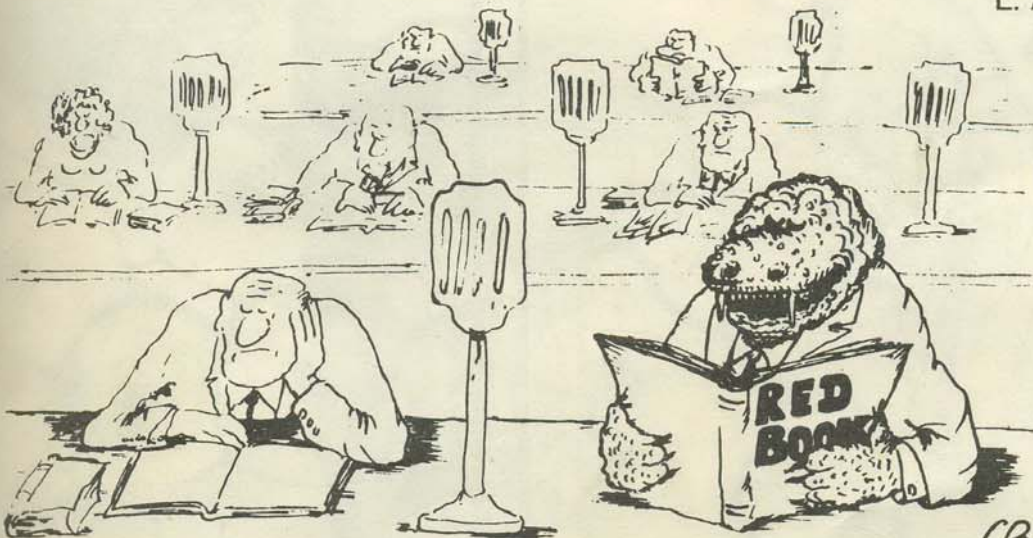
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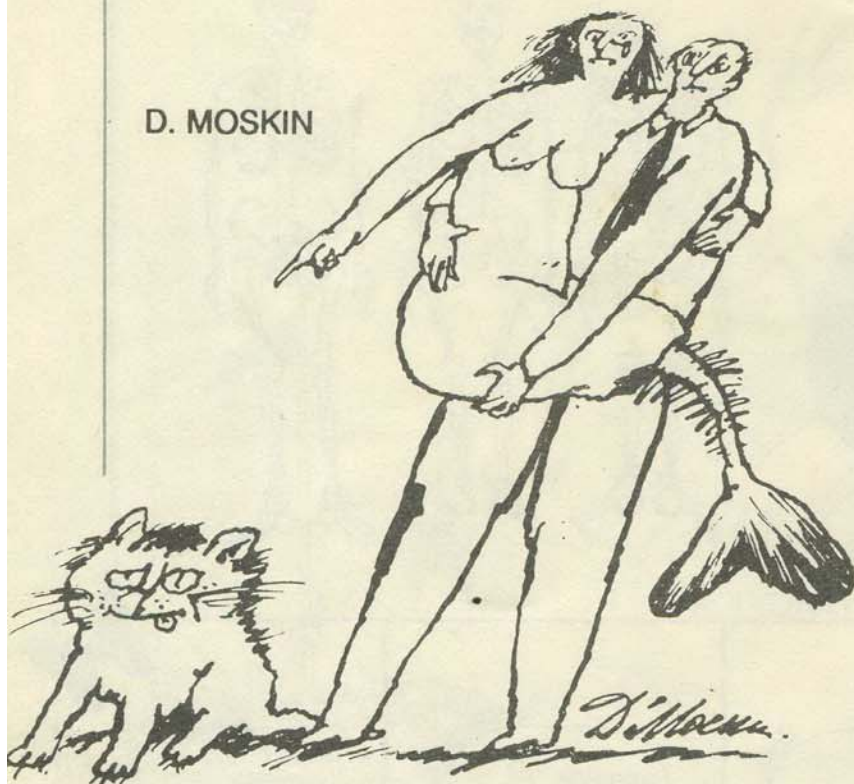


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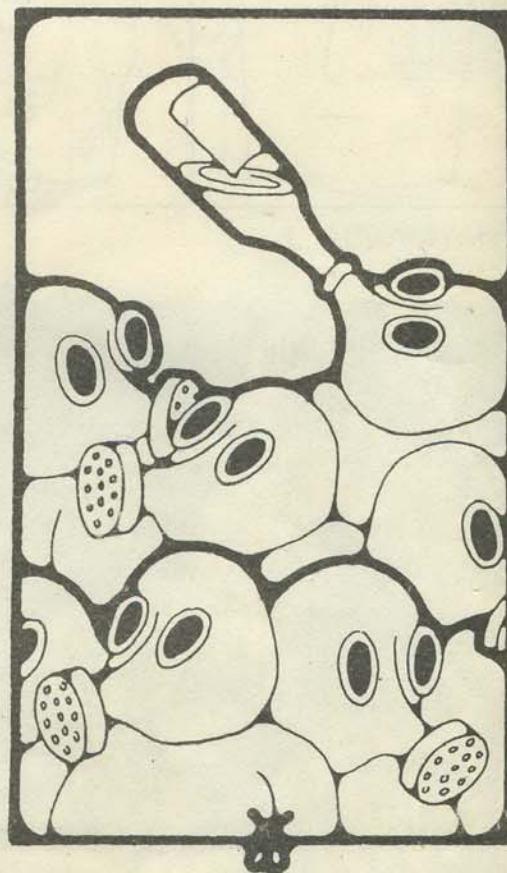
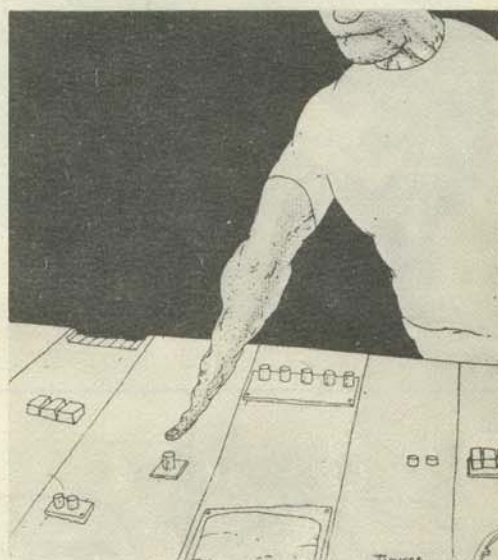
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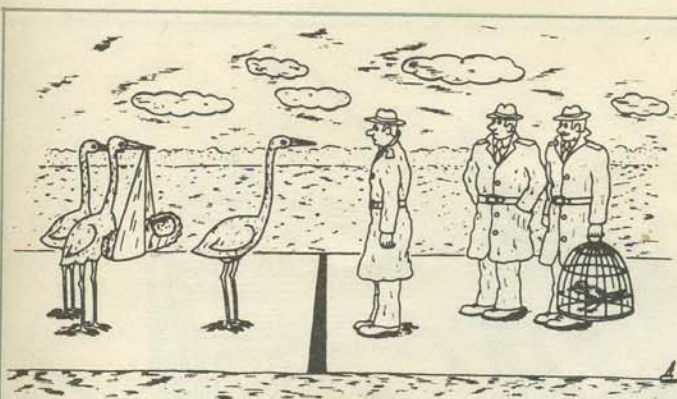
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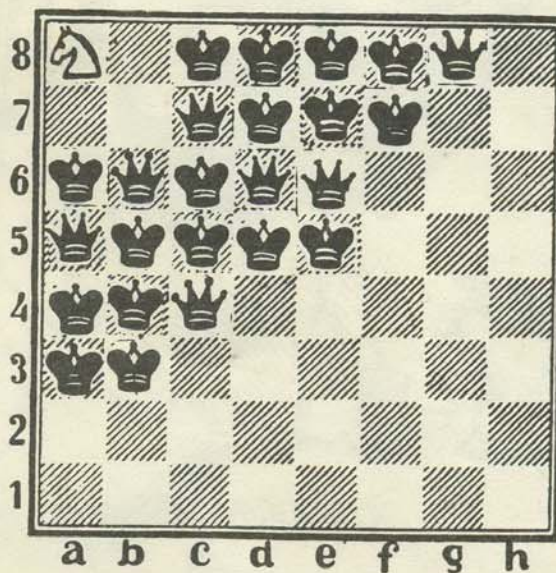
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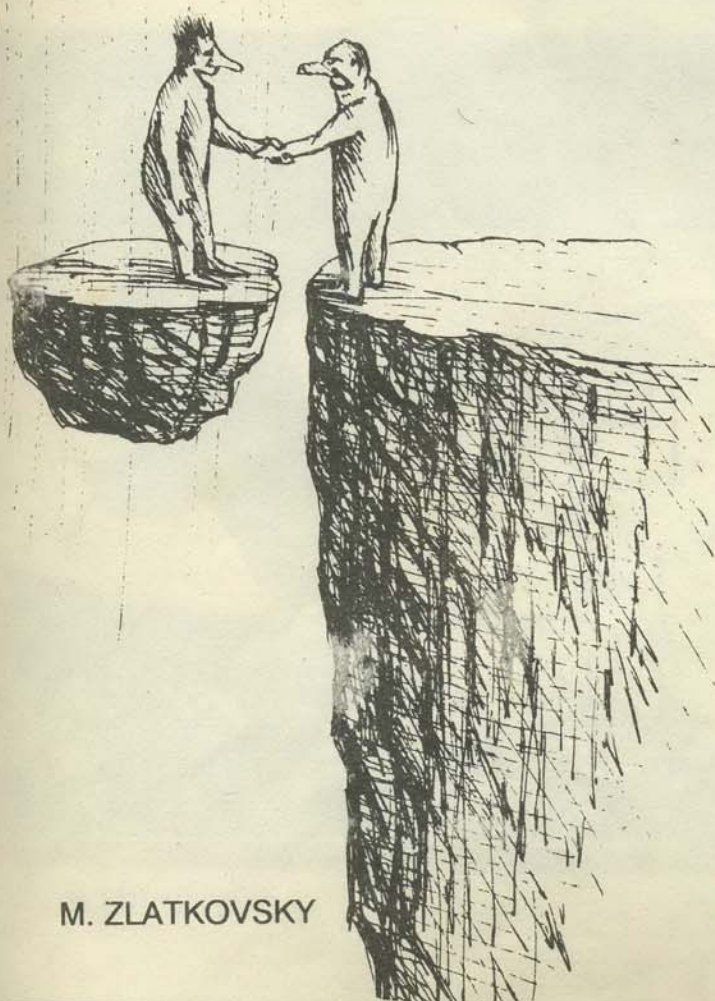
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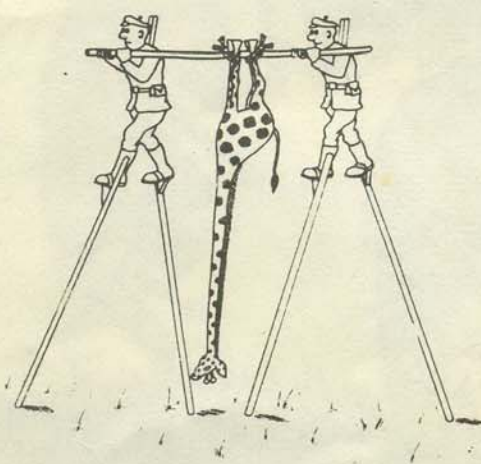
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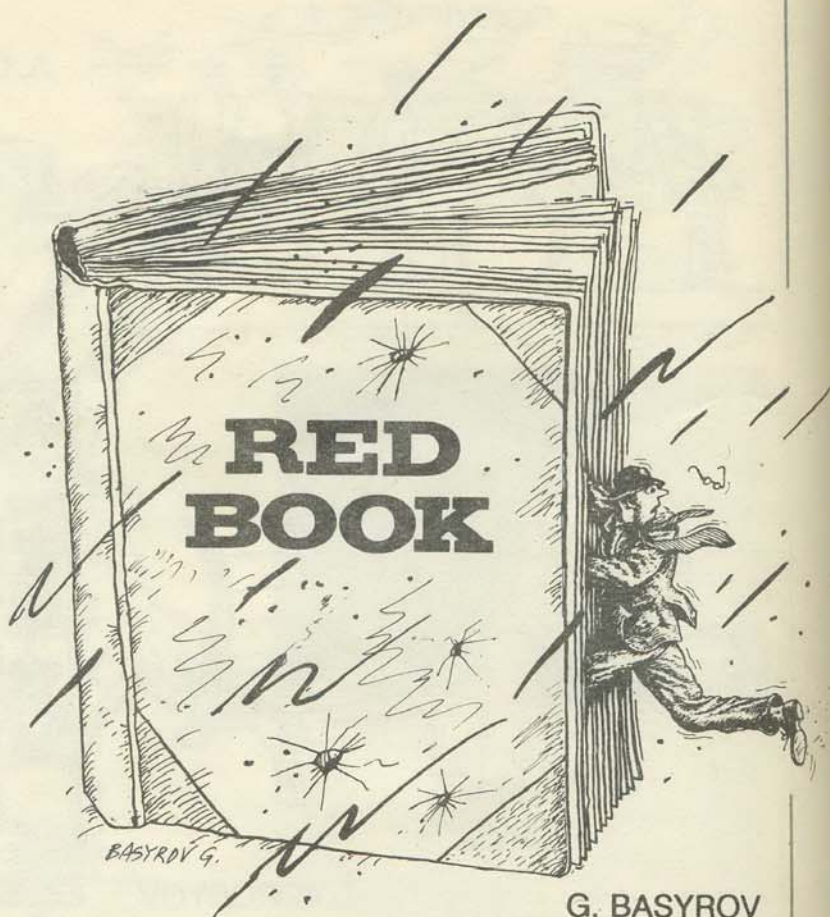
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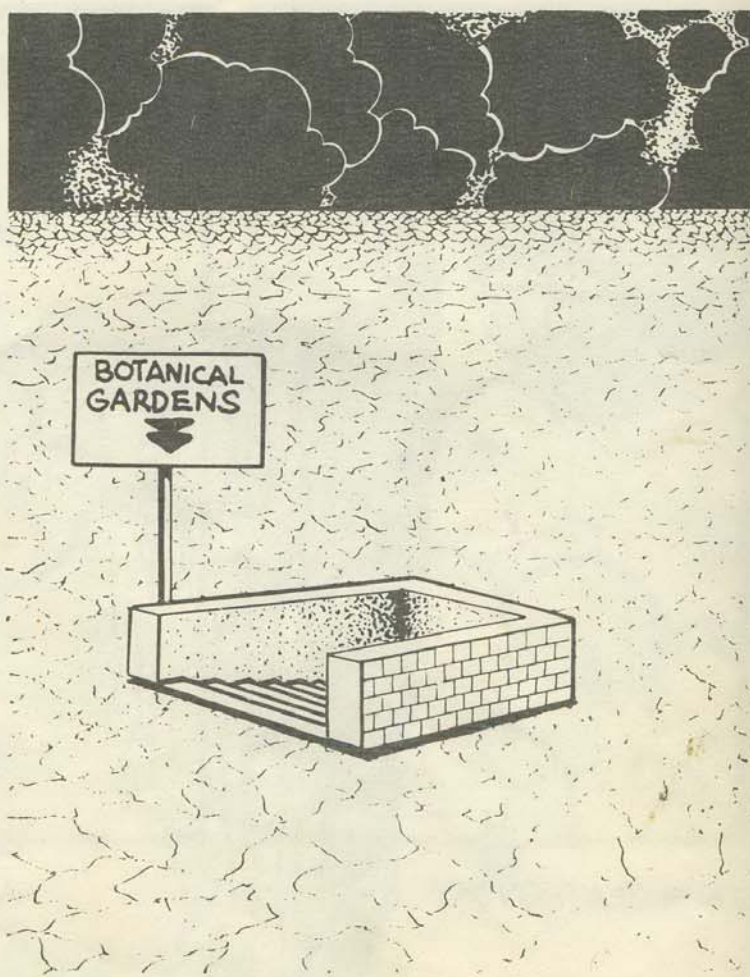
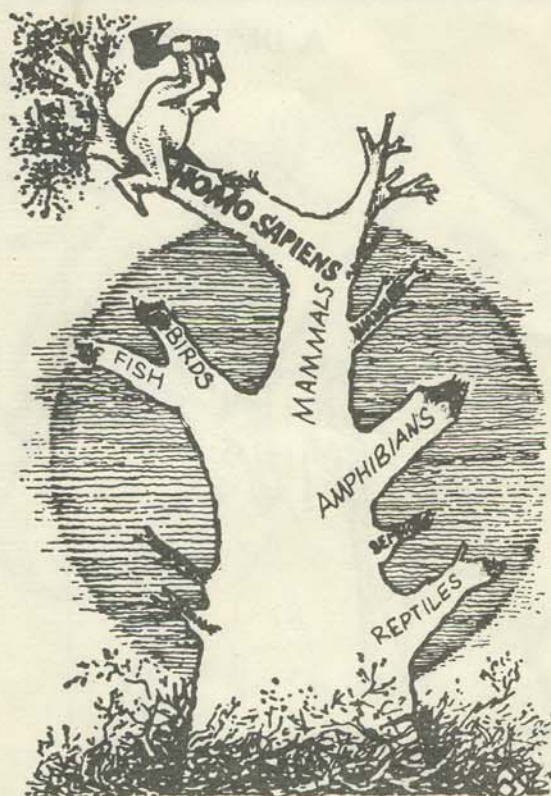
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V. BOGORAD



G. BASYROV





S. TYUNIN



M. ZLATKOVSKY



S. MEDŽIONIS

Chapter 5 in which OUR SOVIET BUREAUCRAT learns that he is not loved by the public

In our country bureaucrats have never been objects of affection, but at least earlier they were pitied for having to sit there at their desks, shuffling paper and performing a boring, worthless job.

But as soon as certain things were allowed in our country, the true face of the bureaucrat soon became apparent. It became clear that he is more than just a paper shuffler or someone who tortures petitioners by requiring endless references. The fact is, he has positioned himself squarely in our saddle, taking the reins firmly in hand and depriving us of our last bit of freedom. Yet he is in constant fear that should he let go of the reins even for a second, he would instantly come plummeting to the ground.

Several stereotypes still remain. To this day we continue to portray bureaucrats as being either exactly alike or as completely faceless creatures, and we present bureaucracy as if it were a paper shredder which grinds up all that is human.

If only our bureaucracy worked like a well-oiled machine and churned out the products that a machine did! Something like the much-dreamed-about classical rational bureaucracy, by whose existence we would have to pay for the boons of civilized society.

But who has seen this spiritless, unhuman machine and where? Everything in our bureaucracy is inspired, permeated by the animated creativity of the bureaucratic masses, with our so revered human factor. And where is it, this stereotyped bureaucratic product? Everything in the bureaucracy is mediocre and amateurish but bears the mark of the creative individuality of a specific producer or group of producers.

Our bureaucrats have to pretend all the time that they are worse than they really are. Our bureaucrats have to pretend that they are heartless formalists when in fact they are inspired creators of a body of rules and instructions which exist nowhere except in their imaginations. And when they tell you for the n-th time, "Stop by tomorrow," you know that under the mask of cold indifference toward your problem are burning truly Shakespearean passions of the bureaucrat's own tiny personality cult.

Must we say that bureaucracy has infected only middle-level offices? Does not bureaucracy also lie higher, especially among those who complain loudest about it and who are trying to turn it into another bugaboo similar to the "wreckers" of the 1930s? And does it not lie lower, in everyday life, especially every time "It's not allowed!" is invoked by us simple folk? Don't we sometimes begin to behave like inveterate bureaucrats when talking with friends, with our own children, in bed?

Yet already today we are so defiantly portraying the decline of bureaucracy! Doing this—erecting triumphal arches before the battle has begun—is totally in the spirit of bureaucracy.





G. BASYROV



G. BASYROV



V. BOREIKO



G. BASYROV

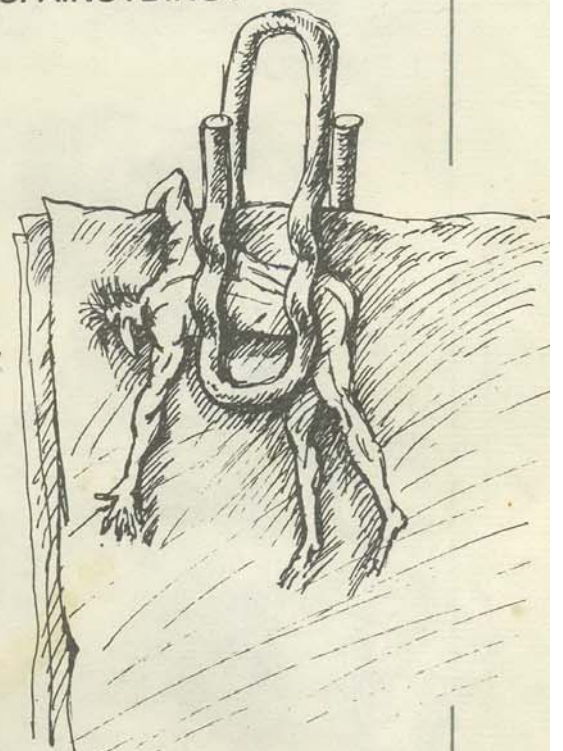


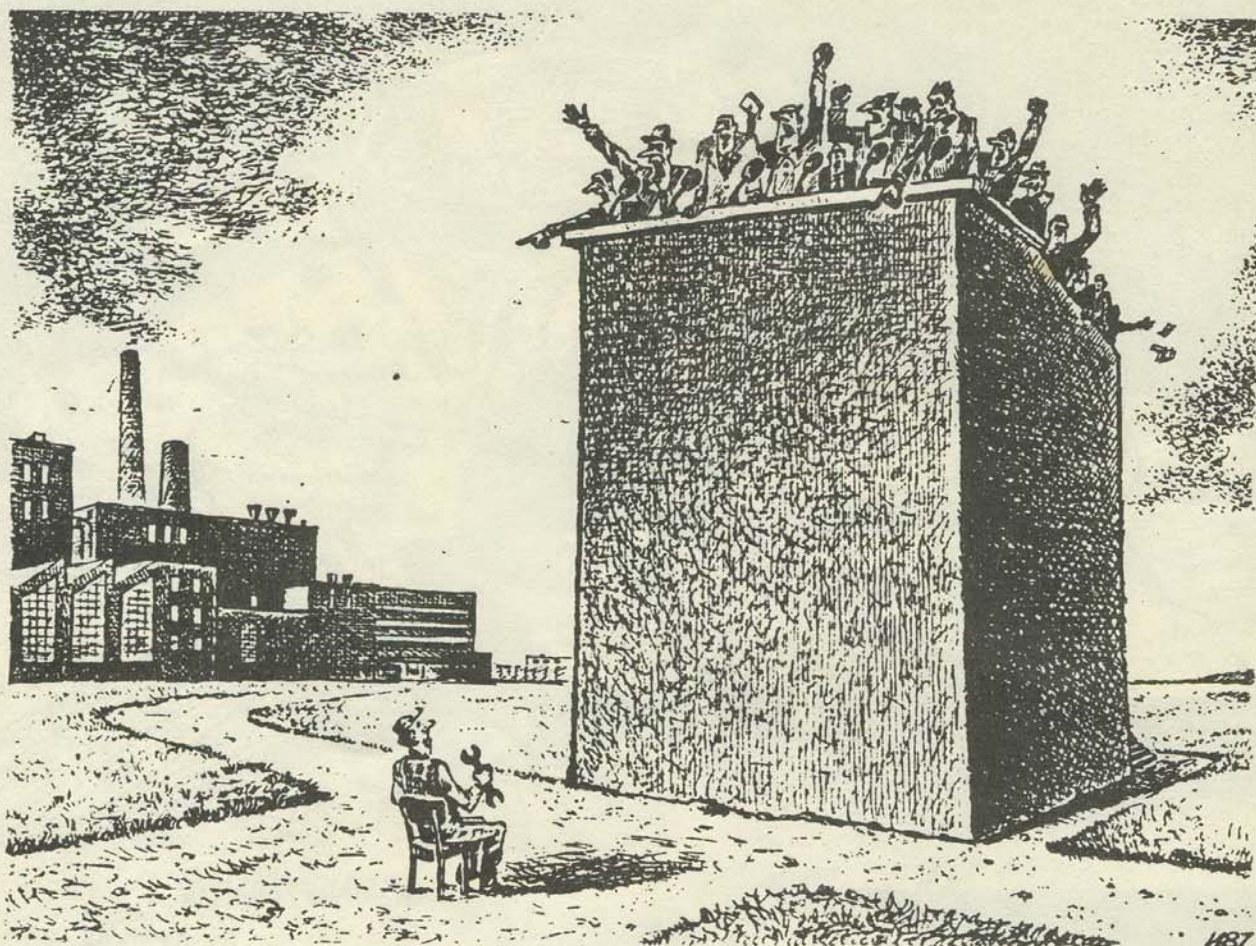
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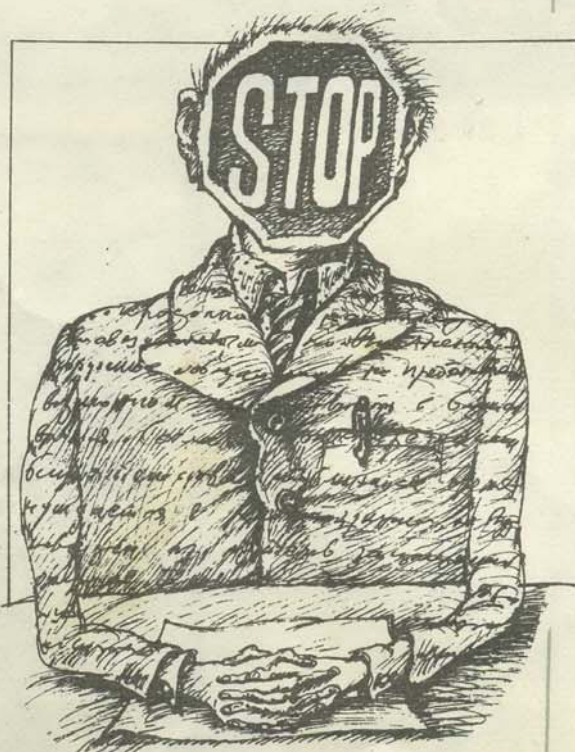
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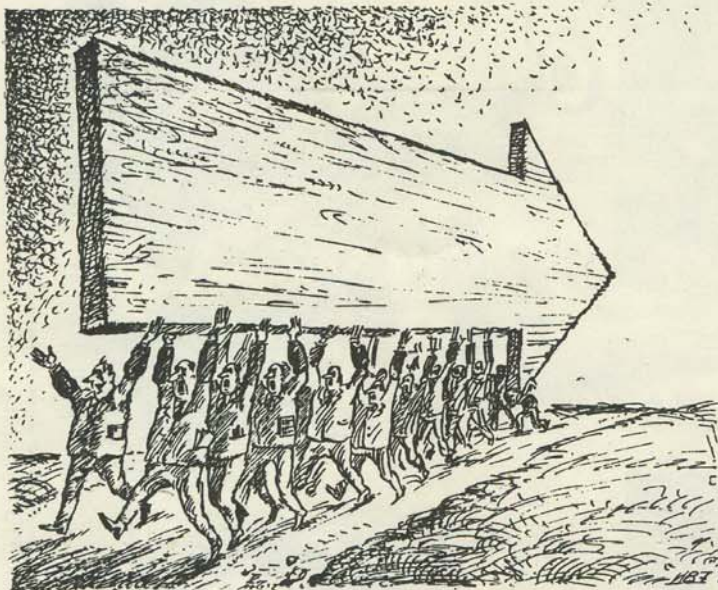
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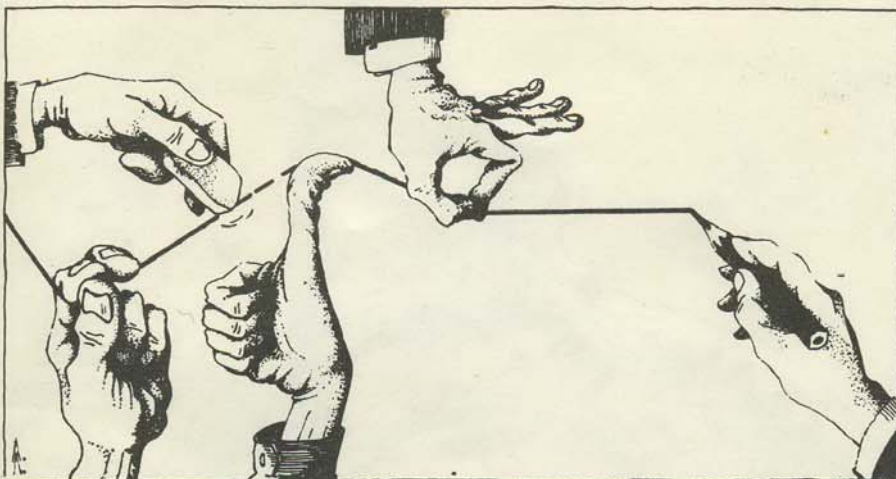
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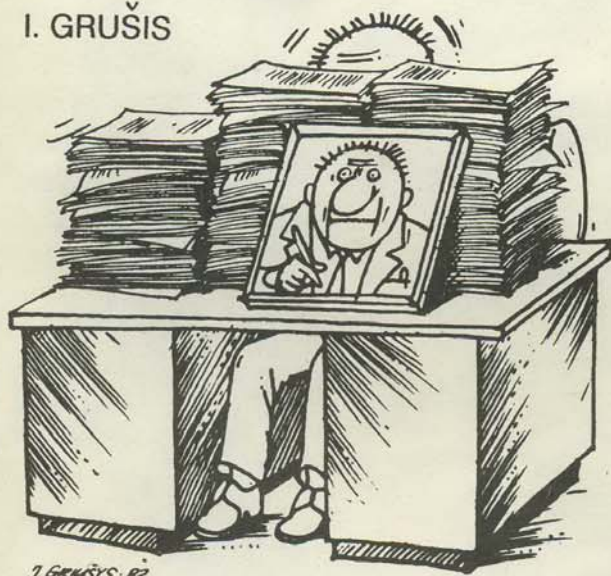
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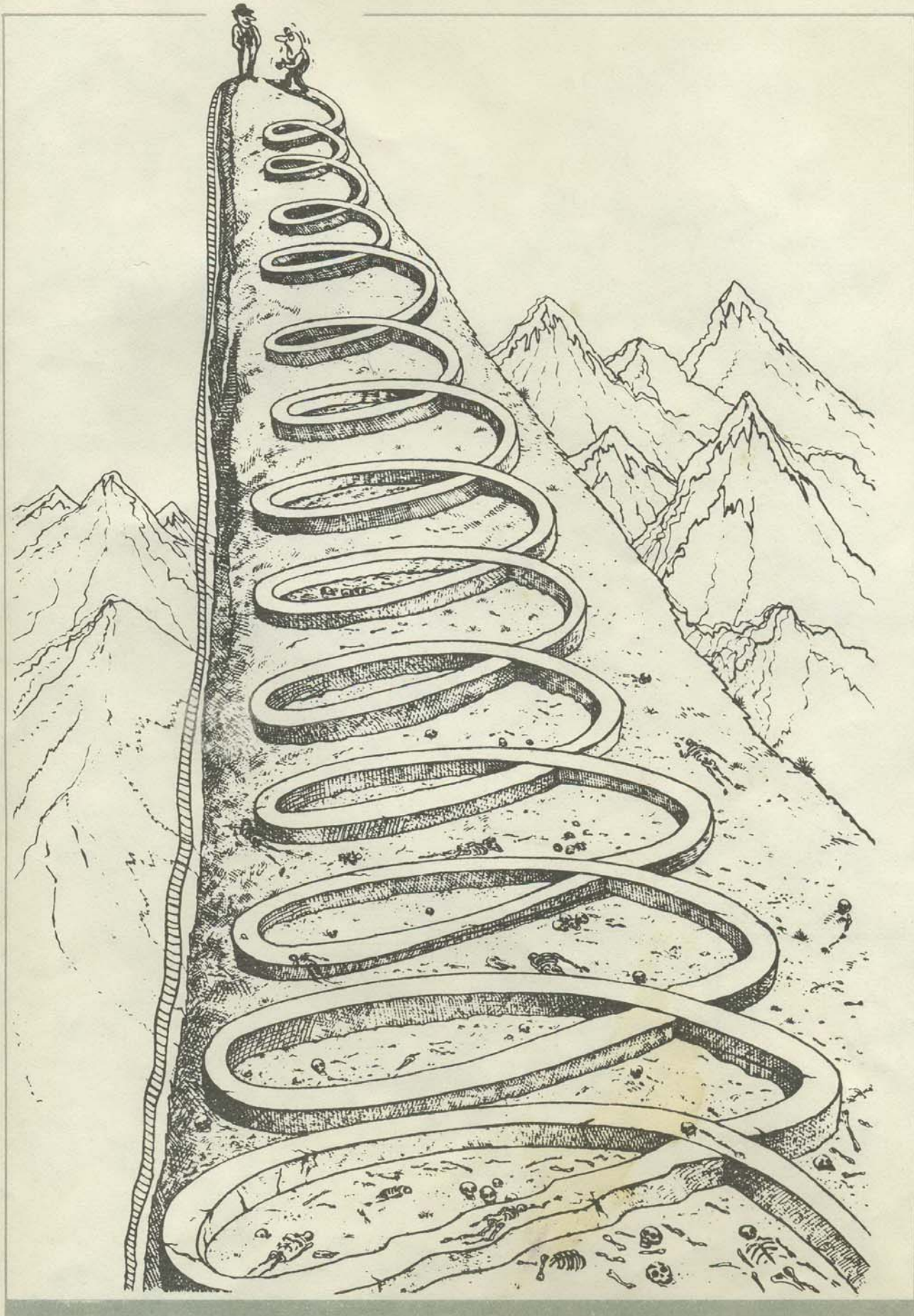
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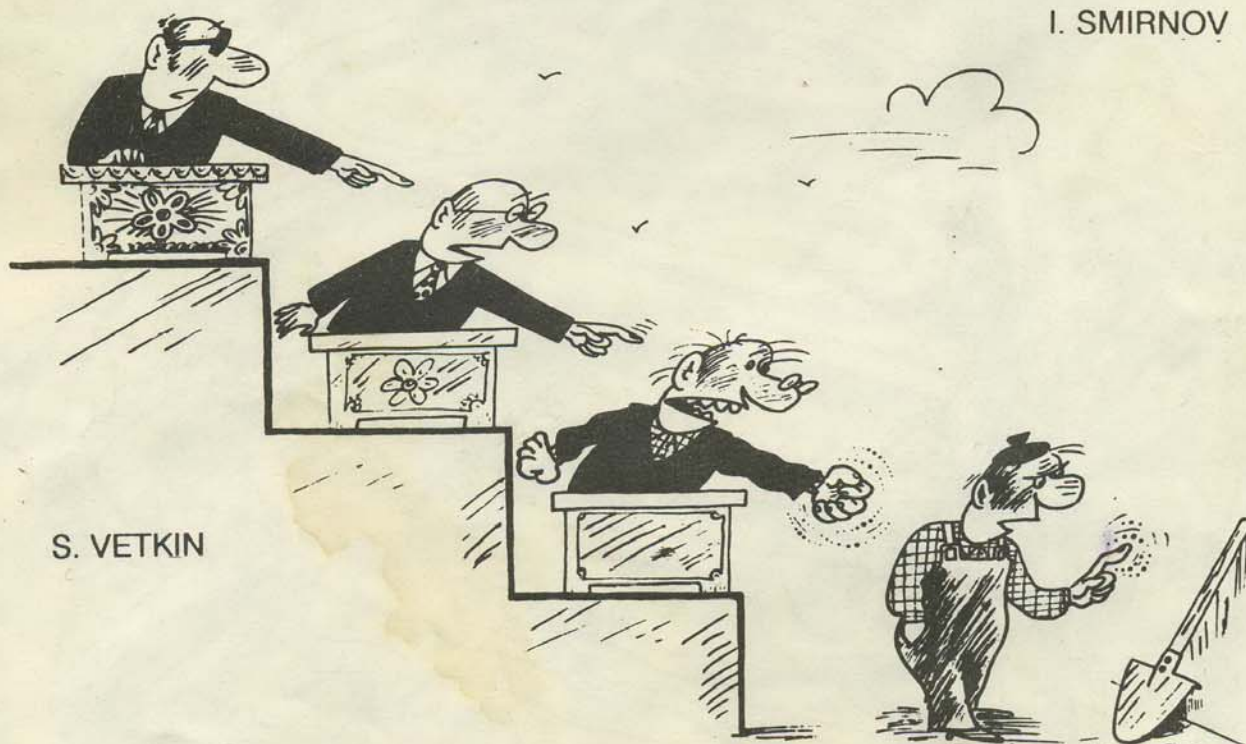




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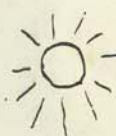
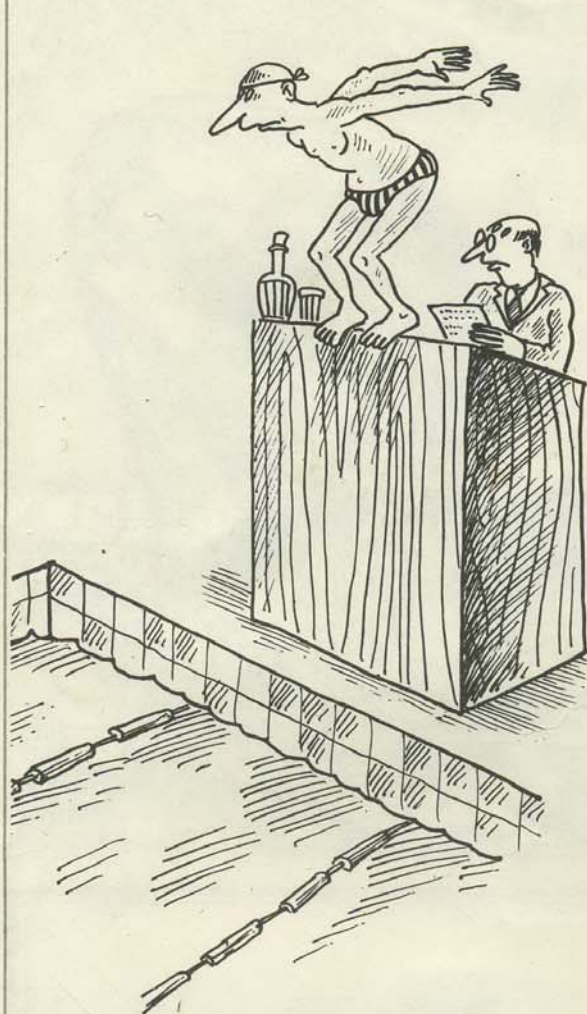


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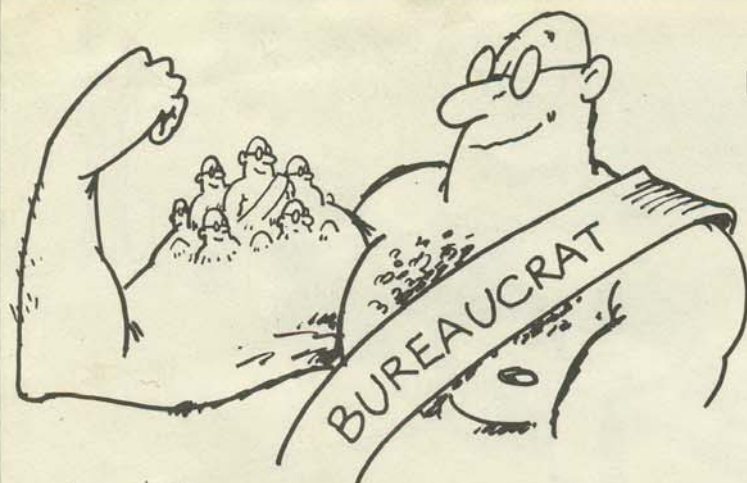


S. VETKIN

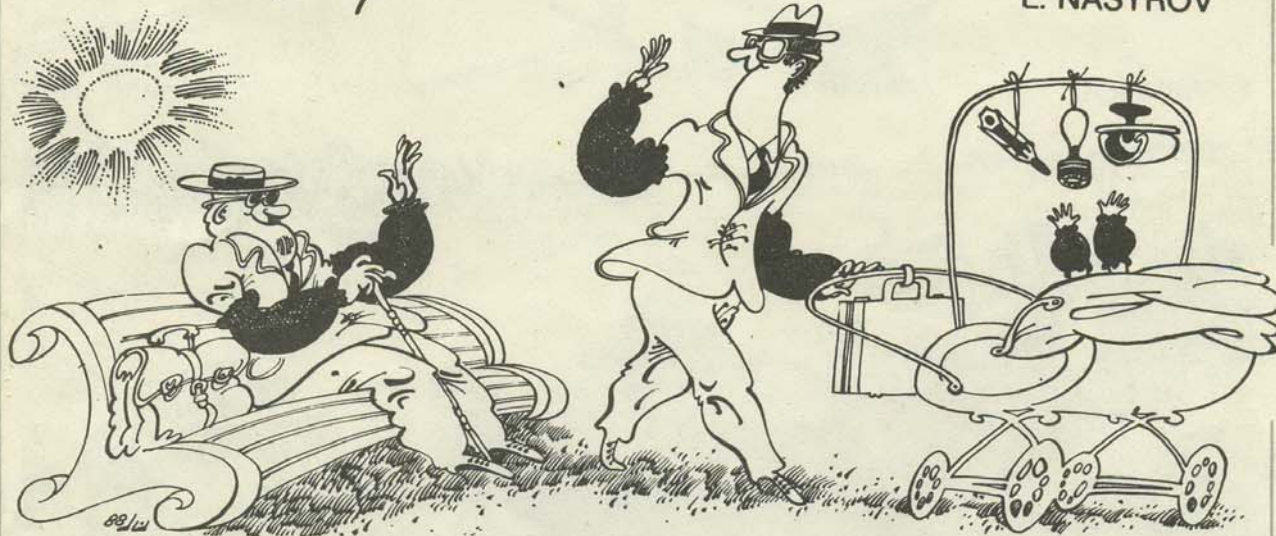
I. SMIRNOV

M. ZLATKOVSKY





I. NOVIKOV

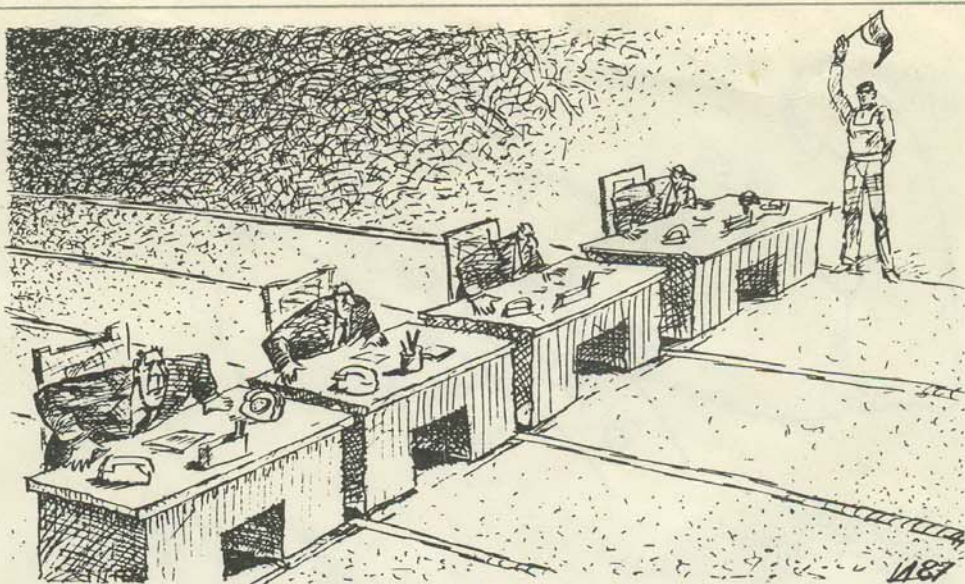


L. NASYROV



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G. BASYROV

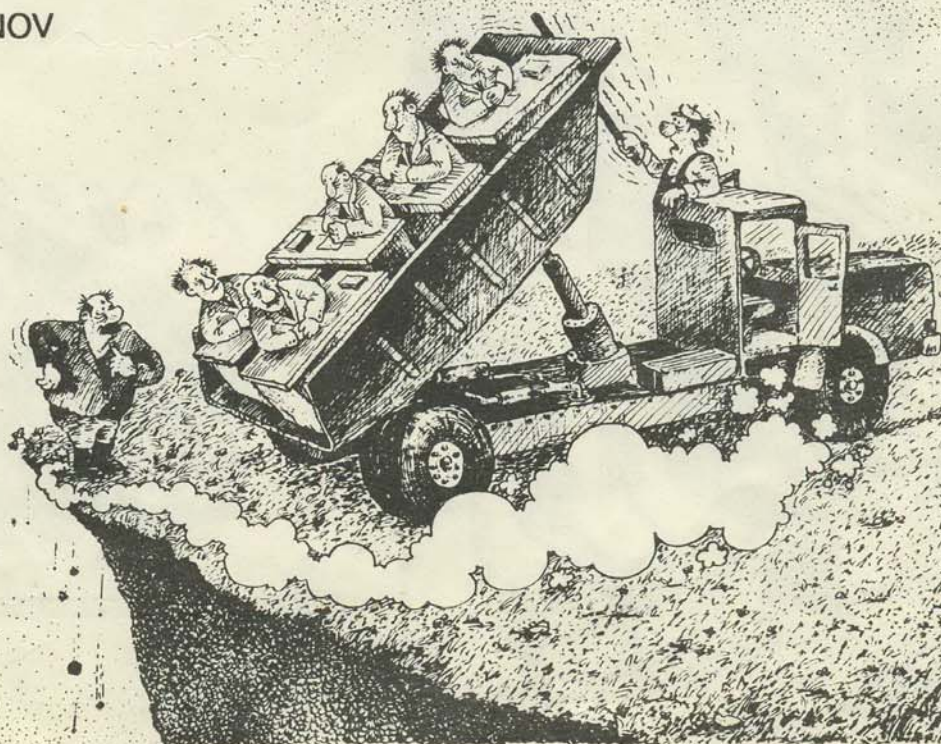
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I. SMIRNOV



S. AINUTDINOV



Conclusion

Leafing through this book, an irate bureaucrat in a tightly buttoned service jacket considerably softened by the wear and tear of perestroika will say: "We do, of course, have certain small problems, but why wash our dirty linen in public?"

Up to now we have listened to this angry person, taken his seemingly wise advice ... and sat up to our ears in what we were ashamed to hand outside.

But now the irate bureaucrat himself had finally become bogged down in that which he didn't allow to be hung outdoors. This has forced us to conduct a house cleaning. The more garbage we take out the easier it becomes to breathe and the cleaner our house becomes.

We will leave the drawing of cloudless pastorals to future generations. But only if these scenes are drawn from life.



M. ZLATKOVSKY

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JOKING ASIDE! ***Time to Laugh Seriously***

Great books are said to be portraits of the epoch.

The present book can also claim that honor. It depicts the "epoch of perestroika" — with a smile, which occurs not too often, for understandable reasons.

But then this smile — resembling that of Mona Lisa and the Cheshire Cat rolled into one — would put Leonardo da Vinci to shame.

One can smile either warmheartedly, or while showing one's teeth. In this book we do it both ways, starting off with "politically murderous" laughter and ending with innocent chuckles. And this is not surprising — like perestroika, this book has many contributors.

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