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The presentation of a book «Георгий Владимов: время рыцарства».

In this book, three genres interweave: a biography of the writer, an analysis of his literary works and a personal testimony based on friendship with Georgi Vladimirov. The book makes extensive use of archival materials.

Georgiy Vladimov's life is a biography of his era. He was born in Kharkiv on February 19, 1931. His mother was Jewish, his father - half Pole, half Belarusian. During the war his father perished in Germany, where he was deported for forced labour; his stepmother was murdered in the Holocaust; his little half-sister was adopted by another family, and Vladimov never met her. During the war he became a cadet in a Suvorov School.

In 1946, together with his friends, he committed his first act of civil disobedience: after the ruling on the magazines “Zvezda” and “Leningrad”, he visited Mikhail Zoshchenko, the writer who was under terrific attack by Stalin’s henchmen, “to pay him our respects”. The consequences were enormous: he was unable to pursue a military career, his mother Maria Zeifman was arrested a few years later and sentenced to 10 years in prison (Vladimov, *It’s a Long Way to Tipperary*, 2005)

At 21, after his mother's imprisonment, he found himself homeless and penniless. Having graduated from university, he spent three months working in a small newspaper in Leningrad region but soon began to publish literary criticism in the central press. His talent was noticed, and in 1956, when he was only 25 years old and without philological education, he was invited to become the literary editor of *Novyi mir*, the country's most important intellectual journal. Vladimov worked for the journal for three years, which by his own admission were his “universities”.

In 1960, he spent three months on a journalistic trip to the Kursk Magnetic Anomaly. The result of this trip was the novel “The Big Ore”, which was exceptionally warmly received by the critics. He was at once, bypassing the usual formalities accepted into the Union of Soviet Writers. But Vladimov considered that this work was the most misunderstood of his books. Neither the critics nor the readers of the time were prepared to perceive the subversive nature of the text. It was seen as a “production novel”, a description of the conflict between an individualist driver and the collective, ending in the death of the hero (Rodnyanskaya, 382.; Starikova, E. P. 208-212). In reality, the book was about the complete inability of the Soviet system to provide a normal life for its “génémon class” - the proletariat. Gladilin later wrote that “The Big Ore” was a “requiem” for the working class (Gladilin, *The Writer Who Took His Time*, P.5).

Vladimov's next great novel, *Three Minutes of Silence*, was published in 1969 in the journal “Novyi mir”. To write it, Vladimov enrolled as a simple sailor on a trawler which went fishing for three months in the Arctic Ocean. The plot of the novel: the crew of the trawler, close to being shipwrecked, goes to the rescue of the Scottish vessel, which is in an even more dangerous situation. It is a parable, a novel of epiphany, in which the nearness of death and great love reveal to the protagonist the meaning of his life on Earth. It is formulated in the novel by the oceanic Ecclesiastes, the First Officer from Volokolamsk: “We may be alive – only by

our moment's kindness" (Vladimov, 2/388). This novel became the most read of Vladimov's works, a favourite book of several generations. The nomenklatura hated it, and a barrage of official criticism fell on the author.

At the end of the 1960s, Vladimov was already known for two dissident actions: as the author of a letter in support of writers Sinyavsky and Daniel and also for his appeal to the IV Writers' Congress in support of Solzhenitsyn against censorship and KGB interference in the literary process. In 1975, Vladimov voluntarily gave up his membership in the Union of Soviet Writers, considering that during its existence the organization had violated all norms of professional and human ethics. He soon became head of the Moscow group of Amnesty International and a friend of Academician Sakharov.

His masterpiece, the novel *Faithful Ruslan*, was published in Germany in 1975. *Faithful Ruslan* is a parable, a tragic tale of a camp guard dog released into the outside world after the closure of the Gulag. But for the dog, raised in the "beautiful", as it seemed to him, world of the concentration camp, freedom proves intolerable. Ruslan's attempt to reclaim a bygone world ends in his death. The tale mirrors the post-Stalin period, when society struggled and failed to adjust to the new freedom, however incomplete. Magnificently written, this tale is still striking and terrifying in its relevance.

In 1983, Vladimov was forced to emigrate to Germany, where he edited the journal "Grani" for two and a half years, which led to an acrimonious conflict with NTS, an émigré organisation which with the help of the CIA waged a proxy war against the Soviets, and to which the journal belonged (Shnitman–McMillin, 396-452). Having lost his job, Vladimov returned to writing.

In 1994, a journal version of his historical novel "The General and his Army" was published, the story of the "war of generals" involving both real, like Khrushchev, Zhukov, Vatutin, and fictitious characters. A tale of utter contempt for human lives, of boundless cruelty, of meanness in the struggle for the Stalin's mercy, of the continuous civil war which had been for decades destroying Soviet society.

Vladimirov won two Booker Prizes for this novel. It was his last completed book. After his death, though, an unfinished autobiographical novel, *It's a Long Way to Tipperary*, was published.

Georgi Nikolayevich Vladimirov died in Germany on 19 October 2003 at the age of 72. He is buried in Peredelkino.

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