# MY DEAR OLD FRIEND MISHA

LARS BRINK
*Dept of Theoretical Physics, Chalmers University of Technology, S-412 96 Göteborg, Sweden*

I first met Misha Marinov when we lived in two separate worlds. It was 25 years ago and indeed life was different then. In the summer of 1976 the international high energy physics conference was held in Tbilisi in Georgia. The experiences that we, Westerners, had during that week were so interesting that I could easily write a long report only on those, but let me just mention my first encounters with Misha. One evening I was invited to a separate talk given by Felix Berezin. We were two persons from the West, David Fairlie and myself, and the rest of the audience came from the Soviet Union. After the talk we had a nice meal somewhere and I mentioned to Berezin that I was working on spinning particles and strings. He then said that he had a collaborator by the name of Mikhail Marinov with whom he was working on similar things, and the next day Misha came up to me and we had a long and very fruitful discussion and we compared our methods and ideas. Eventually we wrote up papers with very similar content on the action for a spinning particle.

The next time I came to the Soviet Union was in 1981 when there was the first Landau-Nordita meeting. It was a marvelous meeting with unmatched hospitality from the Russian side. Alan Luther who had organized the Nordita delegation, where only two or three people really worked at Nordita with the rest of us just Westerners, had insisted that the meeting should be open to everybody. One day I met Misha there. He told me that he was since some time a refusnik and he told me of his hardships but he was still very optimistic. He was worried that he would be thrown out of the meeting and could only come for a few days since he had to work to support his family. Officially, of course, he was not allowed to work, but he managed to find some odd jobs to translate between Russian and English and later on he helped to build houses. A year or two later I got a message from Misha through a man whom I knew from a Swedish association to help refusnik. I got Misha's address and started to send him letters now and then. I was told that the refusniks who got mail from abroad were better treated since their situation was watched from the West. Of course, Misha could not reply but he did obtain some of the letters to some encouragement, I think. When we had the next Landau-Nordita meeting in 1984 I packed a suitcase with clothes and fortunately the

Soviet customs did not ask me why I traveled with mostly clothes for young girls. I asked my friends Misha Shifman and Arkady Vainshtein how to meet with Misha, and they managed to get in touch with him and Arkady and I went there one evening. We had a very, very nice evening there with food and wine, but I could see that the hardships had taken its toll on him, but at the same time he had kept his optimism. At some time during the evening there was a knock on the door. During a few seconds I could see the last five years of terror against him flick through his eyes. This was evidently the way KGB would come in the evenings to harass and interrogate him. The room became completely silent. He then went to the door and opened it. There was his friendly neighbor who told him that he had a telephone call from Israel. The relief I saw in his face I can still see when I close my eyes.

Even though he had been away from the ITEP for some five years he had written a paper which I brought with me and had published, and I also started to help him in his attempts to secure a job in Israel. I was negotiating with the Negev University for him and I think I was more or less successful to get their attention. I was, of course, just a small piece in this endeavor. He had friends who had already managed to get to Israel who could do more than I, I am sure. When we came for the third Landau-Nordita meeting in 1986 I met him again, this time at the refusnik seminar. He had then broken his leg while constructing a house and did not look too well, but when he saw us his big smile came back. The refusnik seminar was indeed quite historical. All the famous refusniks were there and we got so many questions why the West had forgotten about them and why we did not do anything for them. We tried to explain that we had tried but not enough evidently. When leaving the seminar I asked David Gross when we walked back what chances he gave these people to be able to emigrate. He said zero and I agreed. Six months later they were all in Israel! The development was so rapid and the measures that were taken during the Perestroika were so surprising, even though they were all logic, of course, but logic had not been the trademark of communism.

In 1987 Misha emigrated to Israel. This was the first time he was outside Russia and the shock was great. His appetite to learn about this kind of life was, of course, formidable. I invited him to spend a month here, in Göteborg, and this visit was really his first real visit to the Western world. His months in Israel had been spent learning Hebrew, getting a job and getting acclimatized, so he had not discovered so much of the world outside those spheres. I remember taking him to a Chinese restaurant and he was so amazed about the various dishes, like a schoolboy's first visit. (On his next visit a few years later he excelled in eating sashimi.) Now I learnt to know the real Misha, lively, optimistic and interesting in every detail of life. Remarkably enough, he was ready to discuss modern physics, and his eight years or so outside academia had not left too many traces. We had a wonderful time together.

He then visited me several times and we kept a fairly close contact all through the years. When I learnt about his illness I called him when he had come home after his radiotherapy. First he answered rather weakly, which I am sure reflected his status, but when he heard it was me he raised his voice to a normal level and became the good old Misha full of optimism and love of life. It was wonderful to hear him but so sad knowing the odds. We then had contacts during the summer when he managed to travel to Germany, but then I lost contact with him for a month or two. When I finally called him later in the fall there was no answer...

I cherish my fond memory of Misha. He taught me a lot about life, about the human nature and that willpower can help you through really bad conditions. I miss him a lot but am glad that I did get the chance to learn to know him.