

July 12th 1992

REHEARSED READING



A MAN WITH CONNECTIONS
BY ALEXANDER GELMAN

C A S T

in order of speaking

Andrei Golubev John Turner
Natasha (his wife) Julia Cooke
Alyosha (their son) Ian Harris

The time: 11.00 p.m. one night in the first week
of August in the early 1980s

The place: The Golubevs' bedroom. Their three-roomed
flat is quite luxurious in size and
furnishings when judged by the standards of
the large provincial Russian town in which
they live.

This translation by Stephen Mulrine was first staged at the
Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh in 1988 and the following year
at the Royal Court Theatre in London.

Stage manager Leila Bayandor
Sound recording James Bedbrook
Director Mary Davies

With thanks to Elaine Orchard, Ann Scurfield and Nigel Worsley

A L E X A N D E R G E L M A N

In the late 1980s Gelman, born in 1939, was one of the Soviet Union's most frequently performed playwrights. Even before 1985 and the dawning of glasnost, a number of his earlier works had contrived to evade theatre censorship while subverting the dogma of the Communist Party. Set in the workplace, they had appeared to satisfy the criteria of socialist 'production drama' by unmasking inefficiency and corruption at managerial level but the personality clashes they examined were grounded in reality rather than on formulaic, political 'correctitudes'.

T H E P L A Y

Michael Glenny gives some notion of the context of this play in his Introduction to Stars in the Morning Sky, the collection of new wave plays in which 'A Man with Connections' was published by Nick Hern Books in 1989:

Gelman's ultimate target is the mechanism of the Soviet economy ... Being the kind of writer that he is, Gelman is not particularly interested in whether or not Soviet industry produces enough missiles or concrete or machine-tools or nuts and bolts: he is interested in people, and he has singled out an industrial manager as a particularly glaring example of the - literally - inhuman pressures with which the system bears down on the people working in it.... The only means by which this lumbering, Heath Robinson mechanism manages to function at all ... is through the desperate efforts of managers at all levels, who deploy an astounding array of under-the-counter deals, 'old boy' arrangements, barter and 'fixing', fudging, bribery and coercion. And because most of this has to be done on or beyond the fringes of legality (Soviet law prescribes very severe penalties for 'economic crimes', up to and including the death penalty), to be a manager in Soviet industry is one of the most stressful occupations in the world. It is only made tolerable by the often considerable chances open to them of feathering their own nests, and by the fact that because they are all in it, most managers are themselves too compromised to risk betraying their colleagues.

C R E D I T S

The image on the front of this programme is a detail from a Soviet poster designed to exhort construction workers to greater efforts to fulfil the Plan.

The songs played before the play and during the interval are popular Russian standards.