

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

SCHOOL OF HISTORICAL STUDIES

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Dear Ralph,

The boss¹ dictates, the sthinker [sic] writes. Both thank you for your most interesting letters. I was not jailed but I am glad to hear you were almost jailed in Charlemagne's tomb.²

Only a small choice of points which seem to demand an answer:

1. *Bidet* – I know that arrangement well, of latrine-cuisine with bath tub and other paraphernalia. The bidet has been used by me both in Brussels and in Rome very successfully as a dish shower. If, however, you should in your *necessitas sexualis* (cf. 2) get gonorrhoea, the bidet is useful for cooling your prostata. (Michael recommends both uses at the same time, and am convinced you shall do so.-M[ichael Cherniavsky].)

2. *Necessitas sexualis* – do not try for the sake of using the bidet (cf. 1) to catch some V.D. It won't do you any harm if what English ladies at strictly ladies-teas call coyly and disinterestedly (and I close my eyes and think of England) the Lovestick (Michael asks whether this instrument should be capitalized), gets a short test of a few weeks until your French has improved.

3. *Work* – I'm proud that the Bibliotheque Royale treats you like Ranke and Rostovtzev combined. Something of your distinction reflects upon us. Of course, the more you work, the more glamour for us, including Bobchen [Benson] who really works 12 hours each day or more. Michael too does some work, not for me, but I for him. I am maneuvered into a position of being his assistant and I'm afraid that I'm not doing too well. Hitherto he has not blown up though, and so I may keep my job for a little while.

4. *Sightseeing* – That you get thrilled by St. Denis is not surprising since it has been more or less built by you (and Suger) and invented by you. I'm sorry though that you do not enjoy the "dirty" Van der Weydens as much as I do, especially those in Brussels and Antwerp. Also, worth looking at and not to be sneezed at is Breughel's Icarus, I believe in Brussels. Those painters should give you thrills too, since, as you know, your boss has been working on those "dirty" paintings.

5. *Family* – The cooperation of M. and myself works hitherto smoothly and nicely (cf. 3)

¹The nickname for Eka used regularly by Michael Cherniavsky (Eka's assistant at the Institute), who is typing this letter by dictation from Eka (and inserting some thoughts of his own.)

² An allusion to [a photo](#) (taken by Gordon Griffiths) which I had sent to Eka, of just my head sticking out of a subterranean prison cell (*oubliette*) in Aachen, where Charlemagne is buried.

and I try to behave well. Lucy [Cherniavsky] was in high spirits so long as she did not make any money. Now she has a job and she seems less happy. (Michael will tell you more about this.) Bobchen was and is very nice indeed, though always haunted by work, so long as one has him alone. Together with the future mother of his children it is less so and more the way you can imagine.

6. *New Garrison*. Princeton is charming and not cold at all. No chance that M. freezes his (we did not know whether this word began with B or A) but whatever it may be, he has a good reason to hope that he will come safely through the winter. As for myself, I do not mind the cold so much as the heat.

How do you like *champagne de nature*??

Greetings to the Griffiths, write again and just as funny.

Love,

Eka.³

³ This “signature” is typed in (Michael Cherniavsky was writing it from dictation), spelt with a lower case “k” as almost everyone except Eka himself did (he signed it EKa, as will be seen in his letters below). Thus he preserved his German acronym ‘EK’ when he moved into the English-speaking world, where it was enhanced with a terminal ‘a’ so that the ‘k’ could keep its German pronunciation (i.e., always Kah, never Kay). Adding the ‘a’, however, converted the acronym into a nickname, wherefore the ‘K’ shrank into a ‘k’.