

Price \$3.95

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## DRINK UP DEPT. A BETTER LIFE



Roustam Tariko, a forty-three-year-old, six-foot-three Russian entrepreneur, introduced his Imperia vodka here earlier this month with a party for a thousand guests at the foot of the Statue of Liberty.

"I just like people—many, many people," he said out at Liberty Island on the eve of the party. "I want to do something for people. This drives me. I am president of Russian Standard Company, biggest luxury vodka in Russia. My bank, Russian Standard Bank, issues biggest number of credit cards in Russia. I want for Russian people to have their own best vodka, their own best bank, their own best credit card."

Tariko has dark, thick hair, long to the collar, and he was dressed in rumpled Armani. His assistant, Tatyana Polyakova, with short blond hair, had on sneakers and an embroidered silk jacket. ("Bought in antique market in Shanghai," she said.) She watched her boss attentively as he directed arrangements for the enormous party. Beams of red light shone through rows of clear, red-capped bottles of the new vodka. "More red!" Tariko shouted.

"Roustam is a hands-on president," Polyakova said, in slightly Oxford-accented English. "Roustam always knows. I go with Roustam to work in all the countries. Always flying. In Roustam's plane, making international business. I am from Estonia. I learned my English from the BBC. Roustam grew up in Tatarstan. His mother was Communist Party official. Very stern Communist," she said pleasantly.

Tariko turned to consult with a crew hanging giant Russian and American flags near the red-lit vodka bottles. He then supervised the positioning of an entertainment stage on a docked barge, and he checked the acoustics for an orchestra that would be playing Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky.

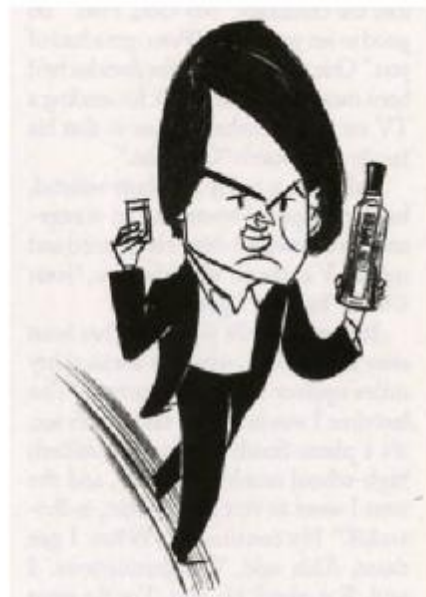
"Roustam, look," Polyakova said, indicating the lit-up Statue of Liberty.

"So important," he said. "I knew my party must be with Statue of Liberty. Symbol of a better life." He went on, "Guests will sit on big black velvet pillows decorated with gold crest, like Romanoffs. We follow menu of Tsar Alexander III. Best beluga caviar, served only with blinis and sour cream. Highest quality piroshki! Russian meatballs in vodka sauce on black toothpicks, quail eggs with horseradish cream, red borscht, whole roasted sturgeon, suckling pig, beef Stroganoff. Chilled Imperia vodka! We drink, we drink, we drink!"

Tariko said he had no sense of America when he was in school, in Tatarstan. "I was proud of my Soviet country, of wearing Young Pioneer uniform, bombarded by my mother's Communist propaganda," he said. He went to Moscow for the first time at seventeen, to enroll in the Moscow Institute of Transport Engineers. "I had English grammar book and started to teach myself," he said. "I read 'Catcher in Rye,' in Russian. I was amazed at freedom in 'Catcher in Rye!' Freedom to have those perceptions of life!

"My biggest entertainment in Moscow was to go to the subway and watch people," he continued. "When American students visited, I watched them, I learned English from them. They took me to only pizza shop at that time in Moscow, 1979, for first pizza. One incredible guy, from Texas, gave me jeans, gave me polo shirts. He was a poor guy, but with a big heart. In Tatarstan, I never had a drink of vodka. At student party, I drank vodka for first time. Terrible taste, so we put it with Coca-Cola. We students did not have

ice. Americans took me to hotel for foreigners, and I had ice for first time, with Coca-Cola and vodka. But still vodka had terrible taste. Imperia is only luxury vodka in Russia. Is now seventy per cent of premium vodka consumed in Russia. Is good for people.



Roustam Tariko

"Better life for people," he went on. "I go where I want, when I want. I live, in Moscow, in best residential area. I have a house in Sardinia; I just bought it, from wife of Silvio Berlusconi. I never do anything I do not like. I do not moralize. I never distinguish between work and pleasure. I admire Bill Gates. I aspire for a private meeting with Bill Gates. I want to ask, 'What drives you?'"

—Lillian Ross