[WHEN I LIVED IN SOCHI](http://www.kutanin.com/?p=572" \o "Permanent Link to When I lived in Sochi)

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[](http://www.kutanin.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/%D0%A1%D0%9E%D0%A7%D0%98-%D0%B1%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B9%D0%BA%D0%B025.SDC10288frg.jpg)

*When I lived****in Sochi****,*

there were more muscles in my body

*and more minds in my head,*



When I lived in [Sochi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sochi), the Black Sea was wider. Once I swam from the beach beyond the buoys so far that the rescuers who darted after me on a cutter couldn’t catch up with me, because they went out of gas.

When I lived in Sochi, some Moscow girls loved me so much that one of them even gave in to persuasions of a guy who had promised to take her to a resort – with the sole purpose of meeting me.

When I lived in Sochi, at the sight of an interesting girl some parts of me – shoulders, chest, eyes, purse or something else, but anyway neither belly nor bald patch – constantly widened, protruded or sparkled.

When I lived in Sochi, to take a drive in a taxi cost ten kopecks – and one ruble in addition for a tip, pomposity for ten rubles, and pleasure for one kopeck.

When I lived in Sochi, [Moscow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow) was the capital for all the people there, not an alien land.

When I lived in Sochi, there was a swing in the form of a big rectangular plank, hung across the cross-beam like a tool for destroying walls, in a yard opposite the Teatralnoye café. When I was 5 years old, this swing, loaded with a dozen of guys and girls, slashed one of my ears with a whistle.

In the same side-street, across the road, the building of a polyclinic, guarded with military points, also looked out at the Kurortny Avenue. There was a dental engine in it which could be set in motion with a foot pedal. It was very similar to the ill-starred swing. They cured my teeth there. Luckily, not to death either.

Maybe,[Nikolay Ostrovsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolay_Ostrovsky), who lived formerly a block up from there, in his future museum, was treated with that engine too. But he was a hero, unlike me.

When I lived in Sochi, hordes of black cockroaches wandered about the town, seizing everything they could reach, as well as some pickpockets and militiamen. I think there are more pickpockets and fewer cockroaches there now. In any case, at least one of these communities for sure has survived for the good of holiday-makers, who are unable to dispose their property themselves.

When I lived in Sochi, the Sun and the Moon often competed, which of them would surprise more with their dimensions and color my grandfather’s kinsfolk and guests, who passed after the evening tea from the north balcony to the south one in order to look at the sunset.

When I lived in Sochi for the first time, I had arrived there by air from [Chita](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chita,_Zabaykalsky_Krai). But my younger sister was brought in a car from a maternity hospital.

When I lived in Sochi, a lot of girls in the streets looked not only fine, but familiar too, while I saw only their backs. Most frequently, when I left them behind, I had to be disappointed in the both senses.

When I lived in Sochi, once my father came there for a short time, and we went to the sea in the foul weather. There was such a storm that even the rescuers had hidden somewhere, probably, to get warm. I didn’t want to swim, but my father who had grown up at a river and didn’t know the perfidy of the sea, went into the water. Enormous waves pushed him out over them waist high, at the same time raising him in my eyes too. To my surprise, he came out of there without a scratch, and since then I considered him lucky.

When I lived in Sochi, my grandfather’s house was situated on a slope of a mountain, over a crossing of four roads and a long stone staircase which went in the direction of the sea. Everybody who reached this point on foot or in a car had to do a choice: to rise or to descend. And only we, on coming there, could stay on that level.

When I lived in Sochi, the mountain Batareyka was so high that in August even at the road you could find some [blackberry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bramble), not only on the very summit which few people could reach.

When I lived in Sochi, the autobus to the Krasnaya Street couldn’t accommodate even one tenth of those who wished to get on, and when it conquered the asphalt on the steepness of the Morskoy Side-street centimeter by centimeter like a thick-bellied, sharp-nosed beetle, these efforts seemed to be unnecessary, as the crowd of those who hadn’t found room in it which went behind, could push it as far as the crossroads.

When I lived in Sochi, the crabs in the port were as big as plates. Exactly this association ruined them, I’m afraid.

When I lived in Sochi, the river Sochinka flew under the least bridge in the town. But under the huge one which had tremendous height you couldn’t see even a brook. It simply connected our mountain with the next one, and without it you wouldn’t be able to get to the airport by car.

When I lived in Sochi, my grandfather had perfect eyesight. Even without waiting for clear weather he repeatedly showed me the town of Adler on the horizon, but to no purpose: being already short-sighted then, I didn’t wear glasses yet.

When I lived in Sochi, almost nobody knew about creams for sunburn, and the skin could peel off the working people five times in the year: three times at work and twice during the holiday.

When I lived in Sochi, the tea was still from Krasnodar, the accent was Georgian, and the shore was Soviet.

When I lived in Sochi, the tomatoes on the mountain Akhun grew as big as pumpkins, and the watermelons brought to our place were so huge that behind some of them you couldn’t see those who were carrying them.

When I lived in Sochi, the Sun rose far off behind the mountains, but the happiness wasn’t so far off.

When I lived in Sochi, everybody had his own motherland too, but nobody forced it upon him.

When I lived in Sochi, the countless number of famous musicians came there, from [Van Cliburn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Van_Cliburn" \t "_blank" \o "Van Cliburn) to [Iosif Kobzon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iosif_Kobzon" \o "Joseph Kobzon" \t "_blank), but none of them noticed me, and concerning Van Cliburn, I myself didn’t see him behind the crowd.

When I lived in Sochi, the oaks were very high, but the acorns fell to the roots just the same.

When I lived in Sochi, I had a gramophone record which I gave as a souvenir to two girls-newcomers whom I had met on the beach, making an inscription for one of them on the record, and for the other, on the envelope. They were extremely dissatisfied. But now it is, probably, the only thing which reminds of the former friendship to one of them.

When I lived in Sochi, a lot of fascinating events came with an instant before I had time to realize that I hadn’t had time to join them.

When I lived in Sochi, subtropical showers were so heavy there, that in short time completely washed the local population away. Principally only new Russians, girls-seducers, young Armenians and old bureaucrats have fixed themselves there.

When I lived in Sochi, the Sun scorched the people on the beach so much, and they got so hot that sometimes, on making hardly their way to the sea through the insensibly lying bodies, they found themselves standing in the crowd between the shore and the breakwater, where you couldn’t even wet your feet.

When I lived in Sochi, the morning used to begin so early, that my grandfather had had time for going to the sea and coming back before I could dream for the first time.

When I lived in Sochi, the buns were still called French, and their taste made the life acceptable even on this side of the “iron curtain”. When the buns were renamed, the “curtain” had to be broken. But indeed, it wasn’t worth doing it with tanks, moreover through Lithuania.

When I lived in Sochi, I thought the television tower was the ugliest and the most useless thing in the town, because we had no TV set, and an ordinary day in this town was more fascinating than any TV show.

When I lived in Sochi, we also had no mirror, so I didn’t notice my height increased to one meter eighty seven centimeters.

When I lived in Sochi, one day I got heavily ill and for a long time was in bed with high temperature. My condition was getting worse and worse. At last a very stupid idea occurred to me. I decided that if Yura Samarin from the Alpiyskaya Street came and played the ‘cello for me, I would get better. But I didn’t send for him. I think the very wish to hear music cured me.

When I lived in Sochi, was fifteen years old and played the piano a little, Marina Kopyova from the Leningrad Conservatoire for fifteen minutes explained me such a wonderful thing as solfeggio. You take completely unknown notes and reproduce the melody written in them without any instrument, with your voice. Sometimes only fifteen minutes are between you and a wonder… but there isn’t a necessary Marina beside.

When I lived in Sochi, I could go down from my grandfather’s house to the sea in the morning for ten minutes. In order to rise back in the heat I needed not less than fifteen. This fact accustomed me since my childhood that it’s much more difficult to get out of some situations than to fall into them.

When I lived in Sochi, thanks to my grandfather, a well-known music lover, we didn’t miss a single symphonic concert. The best Soviet orchestras came there. Unfortunately, all of them played approximately the same. But there isn’t harm without good. So I learned to tell the best performance from good one.

When I lived in Sochi, you could meet fire-flies in my grandmother’s garden at night. Sometimes I caught one of them, it crept about my palm, lighting it up with little greenish fire, then flew away. Later they disappeared for ever, illustrating with their fate one of the fundamental principles of our time: the less you are seen, the longer you live.

When I lived in Sochi, you could easily penetrate into Georgia under the pretext of an excursion to Lake Ritsa and come back, even not suspecting that you had been abroad. However, the bus which went there was open, with the tarpaulin roof, so the visual control could be easily ensured with a turning of head in your direction.

When I lived in Sochi, I saw a living Englishman for the first time, and soon, a living agent of the Security Service. The first one told me his name and began talking to me about music, and the second one didn’t tell me any names, he photographed us imperceptibly and modestly went away. Probably, the quality of the picture wasn’t very good, because I didn’t have to tell any names to anybody either.

When I lived in Sochi, once my sister found a little kitten swarmed round with flies of all dimensions in a remote corner of our garden. Either somebody had thrown it from the Krasnaya Side-street, or the kitten itself got through the boards of the fence. In that kitten prematurely taken by the flies for an object for digestion I see a precursor of the contemporary holiday-maker…

When I lived in Sochi, Iosip Broz Tito came there. A crowd gathered on the both sides of the Kurortny Avenue. When the cortege appeared, my Daddy seated me on his neck. The row of cars rushed past, I kept in mind the profile of a passenger, but I am not sure if he was Tito. Since then I have realized: a governor is not interesting by his manner of driving, but by his manner of governing.

When I lived in Sochi, some liners of various dimensions appeared in the port, sometimes we sailed on them to Odessa. Later the liners became bigger, appeared more seldom, and the tickets for them rose in price to the limits, inaccessible for my mother. It’s clear from this fact that the concentration of capitals began long before the abolition of the building of communism in a separately taken country.

When I lived in Sochi, one of my brother’s class-mates who lived on the mountain Batareyka liked to ride on a bicycle about the town. Imagine an ascent to Mont-Blanc on a scooter. How he managed to return home, I don’t know. If only he didn’t keep his bicycle at home, but in a boat hangar.

When I lived in Sochi, I used to see huge butterflies of extraordinary beauty in the bushes near the crossroads. Later they disappeared for ever. Maybe, the present Sochi is as similar to the former one, as the asphalt covering this corner near the road now is similar to the butterflies which once frisked here.

When I lived in Sochi, my grandfather threw me into confusion and then enraptured me, imitating a cat’s mew very successfully. This “cat” was the most suitable for our calm corner, because the real cat, settled by our lodgers in the plinth afterwards, in a moment strangled any bird which had penetrated into the garden without allowing it even to build a nest.

When I lived in Sochi, it didn’t even occur to me to have a rest on the seaside near Odessa.

When I lived in Sochi, a ticket for a film cost ten kopecks. But two hours lost outside these streets, plants, the sea, cost much more.

When I lived in Sochi, once at the beginning of the bathing season I came into my brother’s room, seized the flippers which had been lying in a corner since last summer, and put my right foot into one of them. My thumb ran into something hard, and it began moving. I dragged my foot out quickly, and at once a spider-anchorite which had spent the winter comfortably in the flipper jumped out of it. We remained extremely displeased of each other. Not knowing it, I infringed the principle formulated by my brother later, when he was an engineer in safety precautions: “Don’t poke your nose or your finger where you won’t poke your dinger”.

When I lived in Sochi, I was young!

When I lived in Sochi, I liked to bathe with the approach of evening, when the heat fell down. There were some defects in it too: the people were leaving the beach as actively as the passengers leave a sinking ship, and this fact somehow deprived me of my peace of mind. And I had to bathe in solitude, in certain sense tête-à-tête with the element. Once, on swimming further from the turbid coastal water, I moved along the shore looking at gigantic stones at the bottom covered with dark moss. “What else hides between them?” – I thought. – “If a sea monster appears, nobody will save me”.

The line “From the sea bottom, from the sea bottom” began sounding in my mind.

“No”. — I thought. – “I can attract a misfortune so”.

With an effort of will I changed the text to the contrary one in sense and began repeating: “To the sea bottom, to the sea bottom…” Until I realized that something was wrong.

It was precisely not infrequent case, when the medicine turned out to be more dangerous than the illness.

When I lived in Sochi, especially in the first years, a lot of people in the town, even completely unacquainted with me, recognized me at once. On meeting me, they followed me with their eyes and said behind my back with surprise, condescension or contempt:

“Foureyes!”

Later glasses stopped to be a rarity.

When I lived in Sochi, skirts “mini” and bathing suits “bikini’ became the last word in fashion.

The women who wore mini and bikini weren’t goddesses, but I thirst for them now.

I have nothing to say about it anymore, I can only remember, because the present minis and bikinis, and especially fashionable naked navels don’t make such powerful impression as it seems to their possessors.

When I lived in Sochi, I liked to sing in a loud voice on the balcony of the first floor, following the legend, in which a producer or a boss of a recording firm, after hearing by chance a driver (a blacksmith, a grave-digger etc.) sing, promotes him into the Big Art. My wails resounded year after year in all the Krasny Side-street, half the Krasnaya Street and reached the middle of mountain Batareyka, but it had no effect. At last I had to go down from my balcony, to find [Sergio Ortega](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergio_Ortega), a composer from Chile, who had come to Sochi to the festival “Red Carnation” and to get an appointment with him. I don’t know if Sergio liked my voice, but he announced the musicians and journalists that he had found a genial composer, and soon I began to be invited both to the radio and to TV. But a producer hasn’t been found so far, and a record would be interesting now only for an audiophile and not for everyone.

When I lived in Sochi,[Maria](http://bdn-steiner.ru/glossword/index.php/term/%D0%A0%D1%83%D1%81%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B5+%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BE%D1%84%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B5+%D0%B4%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5.,%D0%A1%D0%9A%D0%A0%D0%AF%D0%91%D0%98%D0%9D%D0%90+%D0%9C.%D0%90..xhtml), [Alexander Skriabin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Skriabin)’s daughter who like her father had passion for anthroposophy, tried to teach me to think like [Steiner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Steiner), the founder of this idealistic trend. My Lord, it would have been better if she had taught me to play like Skriabin!

When I lived in Sochi, once on a breakwater, distant from the shore, I witnessed the following scene. A guy who was flirting with his girl began massaging her with sea water, and so zealous that the upper part of her bathing suit turned aside, baring her bosom. The girl screamed either with surprise or with delight. Nobody on the shore heard it and noticed anything. And I dived from the breakwater thinking gloomily that in vain I hadn’t obeyed my parents. A lot of times they told me not to read under the table in order to avoid myopia. It would have been better if they had explained me beforehand that it’s impossible to swim in the sea with glasses on.

How many beautiful women did I meet in water in my life? Maybe one thousand and one, and maybe – no one. I will never know it. I didn’t get acquainted with anyone. A short-sighted man cannot get acquainted: he doesn’t see eyes.

When I lived in Sochi, I saw milk in paper wrappings in form of pyramids for the first time. It’s strange: in Egypt the pyramids have been standing for millenniums, but as milk wrappings they appeared – and soon disappeared almost completely.

When I lived in Sochi, I met an eighteen-year-old waitress in the Teatralnoye café. My sister named her “a cook” behind her back, but she was lean, with thin white arms and without a front tooth, rather similar to the heroine of a story by Andersen – the girl with matches. At the very first date, as soon as I had time to take her arm, she announced she had a guy, a very malicious Armenian who could kill me with a knife. Probably, that guy was a big tyrant. I let her go with peace. In her working time on the distribution she gave to thousands of men everything they asked her for, but in her leisure time she was entirely given to a single man.

When I lived in Sochi, there was a shoemaker’s booth a little lower from the entrance to the Nicolay Ostrovsky’s house-museum. The life was in full swing around this booth, the people hurried to and from the seaside, even the loaders of a store, situated opposite, ran with boxes here and there, even local old and young women hurried to line up for milk and then scattered. But he went on sitting and knocking without hurrying anywhere. Probably, he had realized an important truth long ago: the more you are in a hurry, the more shoes and boots you spoil. And not only shoes and boots.

When I lived in Sochi, one day I found woman’s pants in the bushes near the seashore. It resembled a tiny ball of short white braids with a stitched rag with an inscription: “cotton 95%, elastin 5%”. How they contrived to count out 5 more per cent of it, I don’t understand!

When I lived in Sochi and was still a child, a new fashion appeared – swimming trunks with laces on a side. It was very comfortable after going out of water not to stand in a line to the cloak-room, but to put on spacious “boxer” shorts over the trunks, to untie the laces on a side and to drag the trunks from under the shorts on the other side, pulling them off the leg. However, after coming to the beach with the trunks, I didn’t manage to put them on the shorts and then pull the shorts from under the trunks. Probably, I wasn’t a single person who had this problem, so the trunks with strings on a side got out of fashion very soon, and the lines near the cloak-rooms increased.

Once, when I came to Sochi, our house turned out to be broken open and plundered. As soon as I dozed off, I was woken by a shaggy fair-haired guy with a screwdriver in a hand. Taking me for an adventurer like himself, he swept away half the money which I had laid out of my pocket, from the night table and advised me to clear off, because some very serious people were involved in this business. I wasn’t frightened very much of his screwdriver, for all that I am not a robot. Although, if I had been a robot, I’d have given him a thrashing! The serious people didn’t appear, and concerning the fair-haired guy, later I saw him in the post of a rescuer on the quay near the hotel “Leningrad”. However, I tried not to prolong our acquaintance. Since then I began distrusting the “rescuers” and afterwards – the other people at the state service as well: “custom officers”, “militiamen”, “firemen” (every citizen is sure to enlarge this list). Excuse me that I put all of them in inverted commas. They put us worse.

When my mother still lived in Saratov, at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War she like most of Saratov’s young people actively took part in the building of protective fortifications at the approach of the city. The anti-tank ditches which they were ordered to dig, as it turned out afterwards, had such dimensions that the German tanks would have rushed by them easily.

I made such a conclusion from it: don’t dig a pit for another man, because he, maybe, won’t notice it.

The other case with fortifications is connected with Sochi. After my grandparents left this world, some irresponsible persons began penetrating into our garden in search of either shade or a toilet. In order to defend our garden from the intruders somehow, one day my mother tied the wicket round with thorny branches. Probably, the intruders didn’t appear on that day, and the first victim of the thorns turned out to be a tender creature from my kinsfolk.

From this fact I made the following conclusion: the first persons who will suffer from the thorns will be those who put them into common use, but not those whom these thorns are meant against.

So it was the country-creator of the peaceful and not peaceful atom who suffered from the catastrophe in Chernobyl, not the USA, though all the atomic elaborations were directed against them first of all.

In the same way the things go with the atomic submarines: the heroes and specialists of the country which build them perish in them, not the potential enemy at all.

When I lived in Sochi, the asphalt on the quay got so hot that some people went barefoot in order not to spoil their shoes, but the other wore shoes, because the asphalt was too hot for their feet.

When I lived in Sochi, one day I met a man, a woman and a little girl with white skin on the shore. I liked them and tried to get acquainted with them. But they couldn’t give a clear answer to my questions: “Do you speak English?”, “Parlez-vous francais?” etc. in a dozen of languages, accessible for me. Accordingly, it was impossible to learn, what country they had come from.

I felt so, as if I tried to mix with aliens from another planet. But these three persons unlike the aliens couldn’t even point in the direction of the constellation where they had arrived from.

By the way, this is a story about the case, when the people wanted to understand each other. It’s much worse if they don’t want it.

There were always a lot of insects in Sochi. My sister was “lucky” to meet even scorpions, but not in my grandfather’s house.

When my friend Alexander Kravchenko lived with us, he conceived a story named “[The last battle](http://teramult.org.ua/mult/1989_ua_poslednij.boj/)”, where two dismissed generals throw hordes of insects against each other. Later the animated cartoon after this story was shown in the cinemas before the main film, because the theme was close to every inhabitant or habitué of Sochi.

As my grandfather lived on the second floor, the wasps which had made a nest on the south balcony annoyed him first of all. They weren’t lazy to fly to the north balcony in order to sit down on his plate during a meal. My grandfather got angry, turned his fork over and – bang! – put an end to the wasp. He never used either tobacco or alcohol, and he didn’t poison the insects with any chemicals. If one of them annoyed him, it answered for its deeds personally.

When I lived in Sochi, once two new-comers began making advances to my sister and her girl-friend. I didn’t notice them show especial zeal for sea bathing, they didn’t lie on the beach under the Sun, and in general his peak of activity took place in the evening and at the beginning of night.

*- How do you rest here, what do you do? – I asked one of them privately. — Restaurants, girls. — And at home? — Well, girls, restaurants… — So why on Earth do you go so far and pay huge money for dwelling? – I was surprised.*

Now I understand: there was an especial spirit in summer Sochi, illusion of a constant wonder, balancing between proximity of the unattainable and crash of the attained.

*A fragment of a street talk: A woman: Aren’t you afraid of being infected? A man (with kindliness): Everybody is well in Sochi!*

It seemed that the sea which exercises beneficial influence over the skin, and the Sun which burned the stones on the beach had exterminated any infection.

Some people had to pay much for this illusion.

When I lived in Sochi, a lot of famous conductors came there. [Odyssey Dimitriadi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odysseas_Dimitriadis), a Greek from Tbilisi who worked in the Bolshoi Theater, was especially picturesque. In 1975 I had a chance to take part in the performance of the “Dance with sabers” conducted by the author,[Aram Khachaturian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aram_Khachaturian), but nobody conducted it so powerfully and sparklingly as Dimitriadi did. Once all the Letniy Theater was applauding him on feet for fifteen minutes.

I made some pencil sketches of the conductors with pleasure, but Dimitriadi was so energetic and impetuous that I didn’t even try to portray him.

Afterwards I myself got two conductor’s diplomas, but I didn’t become conductor and prefer to consider myself an ordinary musician.

Really, a conductor’s tool is an orchestra, it is splendid, but it’s not always convenient to call a crowd of people with instruments in cases, when you simply want to perform a waltz or to express your intimate feelings by means of music in front of your beloved creature.

When I lived in Sochi, I was in that happy age and place, when and where lacks seem to be surpluses, weakness – accumulation of energy, dreams – reality, hopes – a capital of full value, promises – the beginning of happiness, and expectation – its prolongation. The plane trees which shed their bark, wounds of which would be filled with lime or cement in the central region of Russia at once, in Sochi seemed to be baring trees without shame.

But you can get used to it and stop noticing.

Not far, in Kolkhida, ancient Greeks not only discovered the golden sheepskin, but made considerable efforts in order to steal it.

As the local inhabitants affirm, something like that didn’t take place here.

Either they don’t notice or have hidden it well.

So is the youth. A lot of my contemporaries are sure that it left us long ago. But maybe, we simply don’t notice it?

Translated from Russian by **Alexander Kravchenko.**