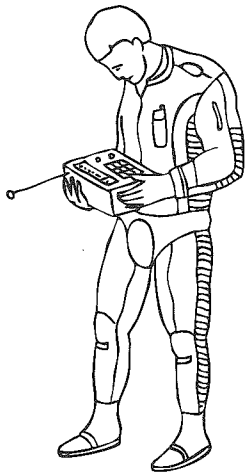
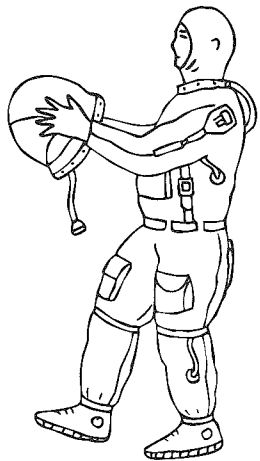




la Biennale di Venezia

50ESIMA  
ESPOSIZIONE  
INTERNAZIONALE  
D'ARTE



# MARKO *und* KAIDO

*By John Smith*

2003

Translation: Tiina Laats

ISBN 9985-9321-5-3

© Marko Mäetamm, Kaido Ole

Published by:

Center for Contemporary Arts, Estonia

Hello. My name is John Smith and I am a German citizen. To be more precise, I am a child of emigrants and was merely born in Germany. My parents were Polish who fled to Germany during the Second World War in order to avoid concentration camps. My mother was already expecting me at the time. So why do I have such an un-German name? Simple: my dear parents wanted my life in the western world to be easier. They assumed that this universal and international name would cause me least problems. It was obvious that we could not go back to Poland.

I am a gene specialist with a PhD from the Goethe Institute, and my dissertation was titled "Gene Combination of the Common Man". I was interested in the most ordinary, the grey mass as it were, that constitutes the majority of the world's population. It actually is the world's population. What are left over are, after all, only the extremes (especially talented or stupid). I tried to find an answer to the question: what determines a person's belonging to this grey mass? Are the reasons external, i.e. derived from society, or is it something inborn? I had a fantastic supervisor (Dr Heinrich Strauss) and although my thesis failed to reach a concrete answer, the defence was nevertheless successful and I got a job in the top-secret gene research institute in Stuttgart. Why am I saying all this? Because I want to explain to you why I have been

living in Rapla (somewhere in Estonia) for years now, and why I do what I do (it's art if one may call it that).

As a young energetic specialist I was included in a team of yet another research project. This happened in 1965, and being top-secret, the project's only title, as was the custom of those days, was a random combination of numbers and letters - N-5024. The content, however, was quite close to my doctoral dissertation: "The Grey Mass in the Soviet Union and Its Genetics". My task was to go to the westernmost Soviet republic Estonia for five years and settle about 50 km from the capital city Tallinn in a backwater little town of Rapla. I was to present myself as a teacher of German and art sent here by an exchange programme from East Berlin. Naturally I first went through all the necessary training courses and even acquired (at least to some extent) certain skills of drawing and painting! In reality I had to examine people and dispatch monthly reports to the Stuttgart laboratory.

I thus arrived in Rapla in the August of 1967. Everything had been arranged to perfection: I got a job at the local school plus a small, practically rent-free flat in the suburbs (the suburbs in Rapla are a ten-minute walk from the city centre!). Thanks to the vicinity of Finland, Estonia was one of the most westernised republics in the Soviet Union, and the arrival of a for-

eigner was not that unusual. People had heard of them before.

In addition to school, I also had a weekly art instruction lesson at the senior group of the local kindergarten. As it happened, it was the kindergarten where I selected my two research subjects. Two quite commonplace boys Marko and Kaido, both from equally commonplace working-class families. None of their parents had a university education or any special ambitions. The two families lived in little boring grey houses with toilets without running water. Everything was just as it was supposed to be, and I started to study the boys carefully.

In kindergarten Marko and Kaido were just two ordinary boys. They did not try to stand out in any way, and when a scuffle broke out because of a toy, they usually suffered defeat. They did not easily make friends either and largely kept their own company. They were also quite frequently ill and had to miss kindergarten. I gathered their hairs and regularly analysed their DNAs.

When the boys went to school next year, they ended up in the same class, to my great delight. And I became their drawing teacher. Truth be told - compared with the rest of the class, they certainly displayed very little talent, at least as far as drawing was concerned. They were hardly better in other subjects.

In their third year, just like most boys of their age, Marko and Kaido took up model aeroplanes. Although they were not too skilled there either, this was at least something that fascinated them and they took it very seriously. They often stayed behind, asking the teacher to explain the things they had not understood, and diligently took notes. This is how Marko and Kaido finally got to know each other.

They were quite similar in many ways and thought along pretty much the same lines. Even more - their homes, too, turned out to be not that different. They quickly became friends and soon also desk mates. Besides, it was easier to face other children's daily bullying together. And they shared an interest which took up all their free time!

Marko and Kaido became ever more inseparable as time wore on. After secondary school they both got a job at the local garage as mechanics. Their hobby now required more money, but they were unwilling to turn to their parents. In fact they did not want to live with their parents any more and thus moved into the house of Marko's uncle who had recently passed away. My task of observing them became ever more complicated and forced me to concoct new cunning plans. I had to tap their phone (although the calls weren't many) and in their absence install cameras, microphones and what not in the house. Oh yes, it should be

mentioned here that my scheduled five years were long gone, but I had asked to extend my stay from year to year, presenting various invented reasons as a pretext. The real reason, however, was that somehow I had become addicted to my two research subjects and was quite unable to abandon them. I simply couldn't bring myself to do it. I had to be near them, observing, all the time. I bought a new house for their neighbours (that cost me a packet!) and moved into the house next door. They of course knew their old teacher which made it the more difficult to do what I was doing. I peered at them through my binoculars between the curtains, dropped in occasionally to borrow something, wrote up my notes and sent them off to Stuttgart. Totally unperturbed, Marko and Kaido kept themselves busy building something inside the house. Thus passed days and years. In the world outside, quite a bit was changing: the Soviet Union disappeared and Estonia became independent. The garage where Marko and Kaido worked closed doors as well, and since that time they did not go anywhere at all, but devoted themselves to building.

One day they emerged from the house and cast a square concrete foundation in the garden. Soon enough a weird cylindrical contraption started taking shape, which in a few weeks time looked definitely like a rocket. It had a sharp end pointing towards the sky and wing-like things

around the lower part of the cylinder as rockets have. There were no windows, just a door where they constantly crept in and out carrying mysterious bits and pieces of engine with them. Inside the house, from what I could see on the cameras, they were busy - in addition to the usual turning - sewing and trying on strange white costumes (only later I realised that these were space suits). I watched them incessantly, trying to understand what was going on. At last I could take it no longer. I went to see the boys and said I wanted to paint them and whether I could take a few pictures of them (I simply couldn't think of anything else). The boys agreed on condition that it wouldn't take too much time. During photographing I managed to casually inquire about the weird contraption in the back yard. They said it was a rocket. I hereby present our brief conversation.

*I: Incidentally, what's that thing you've got behind the house?*

*Marko: A rocket.*

*I: A rocket model. Of course.*

*Kaido: It's not a model, it's the real thing.*

*Marko: Yes, it's a real rocket.*

*I: You are building a real rocket!?! How on earth can you do this?! And why?*

*Kaido: We studied the books and some things we just know. Pure logic. It's not so very complicated at all.*

*Marko: We intend to fly off into the universe.*

*Kaido: Yes, we don't like it here. It's a totally pointless place.*

*Marko: We were born for something much better than just vegetate here. This is a challenge.*

*Kaido: We want to become famous so that people would talk about us.*

*I: But you are well known here! And you have everything you need here too!*

*Kaido: Rubbish.*

*Marko: Real things happen elsewhere.*

At this point the film ran out and I had to leave. I was completely baffled. All my theories about average human beings collapsed. I found the boys' very first gene samples taken at the kindergarten and compared them with the latest ones. Everything was the same. No changes whatsoever. No new combination or chain! So the same quiet boring boys from a small nondescript town in a remote country suddenly want to do something extraordinary and fly off into the cosmos!

From that day onwards, something in me changed. I understood that things were happening next door that I was totally unable to explain. I began observing the boys' activities from quite a different aspect. What aspect that was I couldn't exactly say, but it was different. On the one hand I felt deep respect, on the other

I was oddly sad and embarrassed. I of course knew that all this business of flying into the universe would come to nothing, and sooner or later the boys will become the laughing stock of the whole town whose doings will be greatly ridiculed and mocked. I knew that, but could not very well go and tell them. Wrestling with my contradictory sentiments and shame, I started to paint the boys for real. I felt that in this way I could somehow make amends for my guilt in front of the boys (I couldn't explain what guilt, but guilt it was). Since there were not that many artists in Estonia, my paintings were at some point accepted so that now I can truly call myself an Estonian artist, strange as it may be. That's then my life in Rapla: I paint, take part in exhibitions and observe (now more out of habit) the boys' doings in the house next door. I don't have to file my reports to Stuttgart any more as I was removed from the project because of my unprofessional attitude towards my task.

**John Smith**



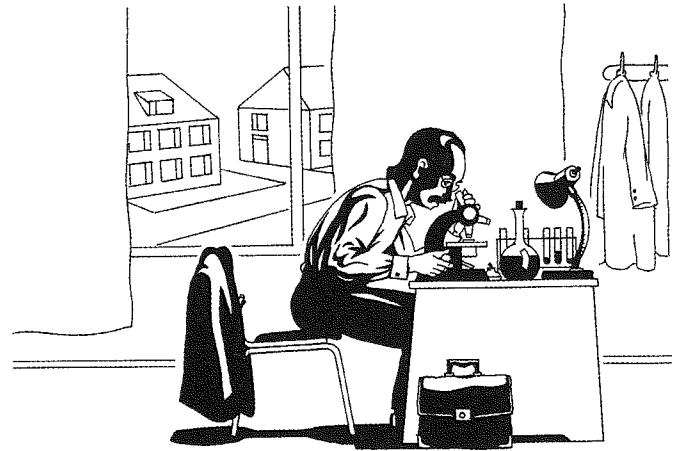


05.09.69

A special day. I probably found someone to observe at last. Not probably, but certainly. And not at school as originally planned, but - guess where? In kindergarten!! Those two dumb boys who can never get dressed in time, or make their beds and who are on the whole hopeless losers. Today I saw their parents and it suddenly struck me that this was precisely what I was looking for! Simple, ordinary, grey people of a small town. Probably poor as well, which I must check - their jobs and salaries are surely noted down somewhere. They are decent folk, no doubt about that, and I personally have nothing whatsoever against them. They are polite. Modestly, but cleanly dressed. A bit tongue-tied, but then they are all like that here. I'm still rather new around these parts so no-one probably trusts me yet. And why should they... The boys, however, are ideal for observation. This is actually quite funny. I never thought I would find my research objects

in a kindergarten. The plan was to look around at school or maybe somewhere in town, I mean select an adult. To whom I could introduce myself, start a conversation and ask around to my place, and who knows what else. After all, I had to get the genetic code of the person and that required several strange things like hairs and spit and various rather intimate things as well. You must get really close to the one you research. As close as possible. There could naturally be more objects than one, should I find someone suitable. Five years is a long time and you never know what might happen. Anyway, I decided to start with the two boys. Nothing could be easier. They are children and will hardly understand my ultimate motives. I can ask them anything and they have to answer because I am their technology teacher. Their hairs are all over the place, especially after a struggle for a toy or another. These wretched hapless boys get a good hiding practically every day. Of course I then interfere although, truth be told, I am not really sorry for them. I shouldn't be either - it would not be right. Working with a larger group of people, even children, you cannot pity someone more than others. Everybody must be treated equally, getting fond of any one person is out. Objectivity towards all of them. Especially towards these two as they are my research objects.

They are called Marko and Kaido. They are pretty similar and I actually keep mixing them



up. They have such nondescript faces - it's impossible to make out who is who. They also wear more or less similar clothes; a sort of flannel shirt with a faint pattern, beige cord-like children's tights and black shorts with braces. And brown sandals (these are quite common in this kindergarten, but luckily not in my group). The only striking difference between them are Marko's really bad teeth. They are black and look truly revolting. When he keeps his mouth shut, this is of course very little help. And he does keep mum most of the time. However, I am sure I will get used to them and learn to tell them apart.

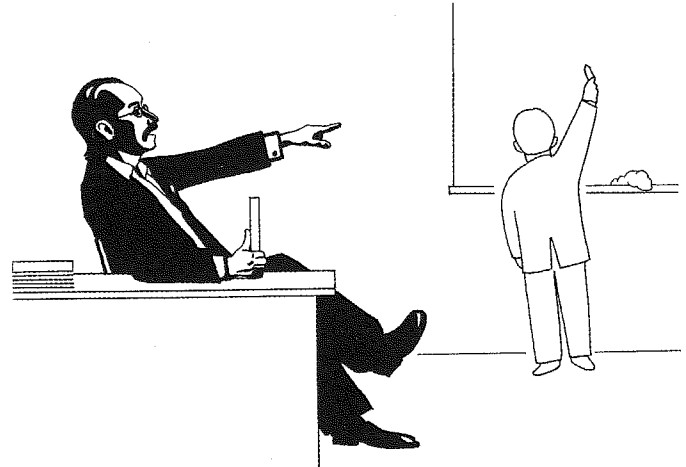
At first opportunity I must try and establish some sort of contact with them. They are two shrinking violets, but I have to win their trust one way or another. Must praise them for something... This must of course happen casually so that other children, teachers and carers would not start suspecting anything. And I need a few hairs off their heads as soon as possible, for DNA. Will have to draw up tables for monthly entries and all such things... I'll tackle that first thing tomorrow.

29.08.71

This year I was appointed the form master of one of the first classes! I have obviously gained the director's trust, there's no other explanation for it. Can't say we are special friends - after all I try to keep a bit of distance with everybody so that the real reason of my stay would not accidentally be revealed. I never attend parties or get-togethers organised by teachers, and quite frequently I must say, in the director's summer cottage. Maybe it's my being foreign. Maybe they think I am different or something, cleverer or better educated... Heavens - if only they knew the truth! Still, that's not really bothering me. The main thing is that I'm going to have an entire class of children to look after, which means quite a lot of extra work. My dear boys will also go to school and I hope that at least one will be in my class. I could naturally ask the director to place Marko and Kaido there, but this would seem suspicious. Let things take their own course. I'm sure I will manage.

1.09.71

The first day at school. You never guess what happened! Marko and Kaido are both in my class!!! Yes! Unbelievable! Most extraordinary! This must certainly mean something, things like that don't just happen! Huh! I certainly hope I haven't been found out. Still, if this were so, the boys would have been placed in some other class, or sent off to another school altogether. And heaven knows what else they would do to me... No, no, it most certainly isn't the case. They suspect nothing. It was pure luck. Funny but I didn't know about it until the very last minute. Not that it was any secret, the classes were simply compiled this morning just before the opening ceremonial meeting. At that time I was already in the big hall and did not even know whether I will get class A or B (classrooms are small here, children are in plenty, so there are usually two or even more classes each year). Everything was decided at the last minute.



I saw my boys sitting in the hall. Nicely turned out too. Tiny black suits, white shirts and ties. Their hair was even more closely cropped than in kindergarten. It was obvious they were apprehensive and timid, although their parents were present as well. Every child had to step forward, he or she was given a pupil's certificate and some flowers and the director shook their hands. It seemed to me the two boys were about to weep.

Anyway, after the meeting the director told me in the teachers' room that my class was on the uppermost floor by the stairs on the left where I usually had my drawing lessons. And that the children were already waiting for me. First B.

Climbing the stairs I think that I probably felt just as awful as those first-year pupils when they had to go and get their certificates in front of a hall full of people. Such fear to make one weep. And enough reason too - 30 first-year schoolchildren waiting for me behind that door, and I am to be the very first teacher in their lives!

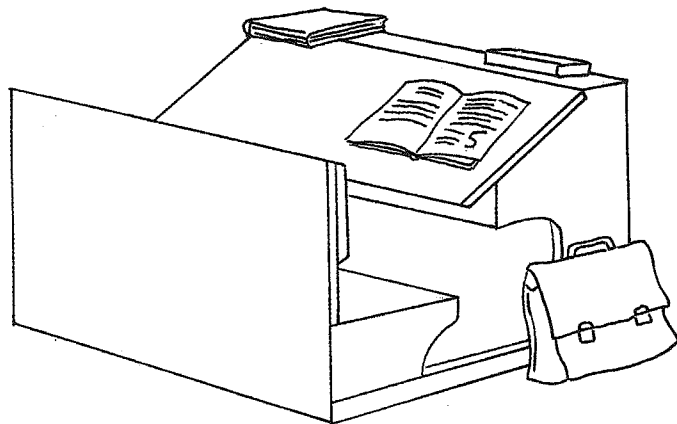
It is rather quiet inside. I open the door, step in, say hello and announce that I am their form master. I am hard put to conceal my surprise, not to say shock. In the back row, one in one corner and the other in another, sit Marko and Kaido, both alone.

17.01.72

My dear research subjects are real dimwits. I wonder whether they actually possess any brain at all!? The simplest tasks are beyond them. If a squirrel has ten seeds and it eats eight of them in the course of winter, so how many has it left over by spring? Kaido says five and when I ask Marko, he says five as well, without the least attempt to think for himself. They just don't think along. The others at least try, but these two are merely cowering in their seats. At the same time they do seem to make an effort. They are no lazybones. It looks as if they really wanted to understand, but their mind is not up to it... And they are not mischievous. At least compared with their classmates. During intervals, both walk round and round in the corridor as required by school regulations, and do not rush around like crazy as do the other boys. It could of course be that the others simply refuse to let them join in, because they are such losers. Oddly enough they do not get together either...

25.03.72

Congratulations, kaido! The first highest grade, a five, in nature studies! And congratulations to me too as I received a coded letter from Stuttgart today, confirming their satisfaction about my work. They are also amazed that I was able to arrange everything so cleverly, being the form master of my research subjects. Naturally I didn't tell them that it was all pure accident. Let them think I've done everything myself! Better for me. It doesn't matter from the point of view of my research, because I am conducting that as best as possible anyway. It is, however, significant for my career. The higher opinion of me they have, the more secure is my future. I have no intention to stay here. A few more years, and I'm back in Stuttgart, hopefully no longer a young apprentice. Once back, I will probably be the head of a research group - quite another story... In every sense... This, however, requires a good CV and that in its turn requires first-



rate work here. OK, enough of daydreaming. There is the children's schoolwork to check and another chemical DNA analysis to do. A boy from another class slapped Marko around a bit today, causing nosebleed, and I managed to clean the blood off his face with my handkerchief (totally sterile and meant especially for such occasions). The hanky is sitting nicely in a plastic bag, waiting in the lab (actually the darkroom!) together with some hairs. The latter are Marko's too. Pulled out during the struggle. Kaido in the meantime was simply looking on at a safe distance, picking his nose. I really need a more substantial sample from him as well. It almost sounds as if I wished someone would punch Kaido's nose too so I could rush to rescue with my sterile handkerchief and mop up the blood. Rather cynical, isn't it? On the other hand I am, after all, a scientist who must have maximum information about his research subjects. Now I really must tackle those exercise books.

08.06.72

Today I sent copies of Marko's and Kaido's school reports to Stuttgart. Just as an addition to my usual dispatch. Neither had a single 'five', the highest mark. Mostly 'threes' and a few 'fours'. What were they now... Marko had a 'four' in spelling and Kaido in nature studies... Something else, wasn't it? Oh yes, he had a 'four' in technology.

This means absolutely nothing. First-year technology is nothing complicated, merely some painting and gluing.

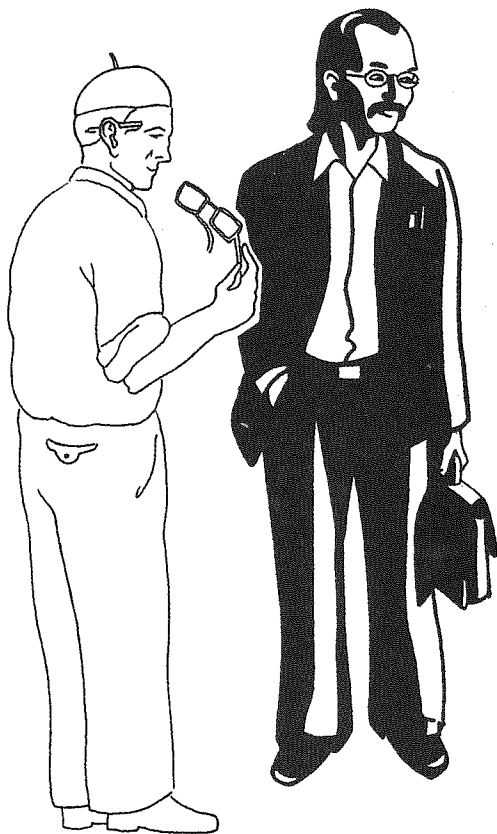
## 4.10.74

Something new! Marko and Kaido started going to a model aeroplane club. They are no exceptions of course - practically all third-year boys do that (model aeroplanes start in the third class, they don't accept anyone younger). The club supervisor is Aleksander, a colleague and quite a good friend of mine, so I can ask him about the boys. It is only natural that the form master is concerned how his pupils are doing. I can't help wondering how Marko and Kaido actually manage there. Despite being primitive stuff for children, some elementary knowledge of mathematics and physics is still essential. My boys are pretty helpless in that area. They hardly fare better in technology, two worst butterfingers in class. It's dreadful what they look like after the technology lesson! Covered with glue and paint, including their hair. They just cannot get anything right. Besides, they are too shy to say if they don't understand something. They nod their head

and embark on the task, and when you later have a look at their effort, it's usually a mess beyond repair. Both are like that. Another teacher would have made them repeat class, but it's not in my interests. They are lucky to be in my class. And poor Alexander must now build rockets and airplanes with them. He has my sympathy. I should drop by one of these days and see what they actually do there.



28.10.74



Had a long chat with Aleksander today. He says Marko and Kaido take everything very seriously. Utterly ham-fisted, of course, compared with other boys, but dedicated. Nearly most dedicated in the whole group. I find it difficult to believe. However, there is no reason in the world why Aleksander should lie to me. Sure, the boys are very slow on the uptake, can't keep up with the others. When the lesson is over, Marko and Kaido usually stay behind, examine and compare their drawings, quietly muttering to themselves. The instructor then explains all the confusing bits to them again, which means that he practically has to go over the entire material. Aleksander nevertheless found that the main thing was the boys' interest and that something of all that is going to stick. I naturally thanked him for his immense patience with the two boys. I even felt slightly guilty that I was so selfishly making use of them myself, spying after them, with-

out any concern whether they make progress in their schoolwork or not. Whereas a model airplane instructor sat up with them until late in the evening, explaining and teaching patiently.

17.04.76

Marko and Kaido are now sitting at the same desk. Yesterday morning they simply moved their things to one desk, just like that, not even asking my permission. I would not have vetoed it, of course not, I was merely amazed at their enterprise and show of independent spirit, certainly something totally new in their case. They have always merely obeyed orders. I suspect, actually am convinced that it's everything to do with the modelling club. Aleksander told me a while ago that the boys have become friends and are forever plotting and planning something. They go home together and occasionally even arrive together. Besides, they are endlessly comparing their drawings and models. They stand out in the club, if not for anything else, then certainly for their eagerness. Aleksander is such a kind-hearted person so he is probably exaggerating when he praises them. Although, admittedly, the boys have become more sensible. They don't actually learn

better now, but their attitude seems to have changed. Can't tell exactly... Maybe they are just getting more mature...

8.05.77

A most embarrassing incident today. I thought to have a little test in the morning maths lesson. So the children get their tasks and to prevent them from cheating too much, I keep walking between the rows of desks, as I always do. It's awfully boring to just sit at the teacher's desk in front, and besides, time goes quicker when you move around. I thus walk up and down the classroom, stepping over the schoolbags, and I notice that Kaido's bag is especially large and bulging. But I do not dwell on it and walk on. During my next or so round, however, my foot gets caught in Kaido's bag and I crash face down to the floor between the desks. It's not difficult to imagine the children's reaction, but the worst is still to come. I get to my feet with an effort (hit my leg against a bloody bench corner) and discover the 'culprit' - Kaido's bulky bag. Or, rather its contents, since its zip has become unfastened and everything is scattered on the floor.

Some are the usual school items: notebooks, books, a ruler, a few pencils. But it has another object in there that obviously had made the bag so bulging. A rocket! A red ugly tube-like thing with blue round windows drawn on it. Also bearing huge white letters: "crew members Marko and Kaido". My fall had smashed the contraption quite badly. The two boys sit petrified, crimson-faced, while the class roars with laughter. And I'm not at all certain whether they laugh at my expense, although I must look incredibly ridiculous - covered with dust, dishevelled, clutching a large heavily dented rocket. Indeed I fear they are laughing at Kaido and Marko and their rocket. I don't have a clue what to do or how to behave. Several versions rush through my head - whether to pretend that nothing had happened, or yell silence!, or perhaps I should take it out on Kaido, because it was his bag, after all. Besides, why drag such a thing around in one's schoolbag? Yet I know that the boys were having their rocket club that evening. While straightening my back I am still hesitating as to how to solve the awful situation. I feel most acutely that I am no teacher, but a stupid scientist, and a cheating one, who is using small children to his own gain. But this is not the right time for such thoughts. The class screams on, and already several items fly towards Marko and Kaido. I walk, rocket in hand, to the front and say (with as much calm



and dignity as I can manage): "we better carry on now. Otherwise we must do another test, and this time after lessons." Turning to Kaido I add: "You will get this back later." The children calm down a bit, as nobody ever wants to stay behind after school. Nevertheless I have the feeling that I failed to solve the situation. I sit down at my desk and pretend to have something urgent to write in the class register. In reality I simply doodle. The chaos in my mind is even worse than before. Te-rr-i-ble! What now? I decide to talk to Kaido afterwards and apologise. Maybe. Or shouldn't I? Perhaps it's not proper for a teacher to apologise to a mere sixth-yearer? Don't know, just don't know. I look surreptitiously (so the children wouldn't notice) at the cause of all this - the rocket. A true monster. At closer inspection very badly done indeed. The body seems to have been made of a thicker cardboard and covered with paper. The latter is painted (probably with gouache) red and is hanging loose. Or does it hang loose because it's battered? And why is it battered? Because I crashed into it. Dear, dear, it's all so embarrassing. The children are luckily scribbling away. I take a covert look at Kaido and Marko. Scribbling too, but... Kaido's eyes are in tears! He weeps, soundlessly, head bent over his work so the others wouldn't notice. I feel a lump in my throat. Luckily the bell rings. I gather the papers, qui-

etly keeping an eye on my boys. Kaido forces his way among the others and hurries out. Marko starts picking up his things from the floor (I realise only now that the contents of Kaido's bag are still lying around). When I finally reach him, everything is back in the bag. Without a word, Marko hands me his own and Kaido's work, and before I have a chance to say anything (what!?), he leaves class, carrying two school bags. The children's voices become ear-splitting. I hear sneering remarks at Kaido and Marko's address, and much more besides. "Shut up!" I suddenly yell at the top of my voice. The class falls silent. They all make for the door and vanish. Some give a loud chuckle at the door, meaningfully.

Truly a most unpleasant incident. I took the chunk of a rocket to Aleksander's class so the boys could get it in the evening. However, I just phoned Aleks and he said the boys had not turned up at all. He was rather surprised because these two are never absent. The worst thing about this whole business is that it needs a solution of a kind, and I am the one to find it tomorrow. I must have a word with the boys and also with Aleksander. Maybe first with him. He could perhaps give some good advice. After all, he probably knows them better than I do. I mean what goes on inside them.

9.05.77

The boys were at school today and looked as if nothing had happened. I did not ask them or bother them in any way. Afterwards I dropped in at Aleksander and told him what had happened and asked what I should do now. He thought I should apologise. Primarily for breaking the plane model. Apparently they had made it together, over a few weeks. They had in fact said that they wanted to paint it and Aleksander allowed them to take it home with them. They had then obviously done the lettering, being too shy to do this in front of the others. And look what a mess it now is...! How on earth am I going to apologise...? I must do it when the others are not around...

Just had a brilliant idea!!! I will go to their home to apologise! Why didn't I think of this before?! I have been trying to imagine what their homes looked like, in fact planning to pay a formal visit as a form teacher. Now I kill two birds with one stone. Examine the homes and get

over with that distressing apology. Yes! Yess!! It's much better this way, otherwise I'd have to pay a visit to the entire class, and I'm not in the least interested in that. Not one tiny bit. Now, however, I can go to my chosen objects, and with a good reason too! Stuttgart should be overjoyed. Something totally new and intimate - the environment of ordinary people. How is one to access that? Not a chance. You cannot just bang on the door and say you've come to see what their boring little house looks like inside. They won't let you in. There must be an excuse. What a wealth of information! It's report time next week, so everything has turned out just right. I will go today, right away. What's the time? Half past seven. I will set off immediately!

10.05.77

Kaido's home: a small brick house. Grey, with a gabled roof. A tiny dimly lit hallway with a clothes rack, completely overflowing with all sorts of dark work jackets and coats. Underneath a confusion of boots, wellingtons, shoes, sandals. Then kitchen. Relatively narrow. And poorly illuminated as it only has one window and a thick bush growing right behind it in the garden. A wood stove. A square kitchen table with four three-legged stools around it. A shelf on the wall, and some small boxes on it (probably spices). A kitchen cupboard, a sideboard with sliding glass doors, containing glass bowls, coffee cups, etc. Then the living room. Dull brown wall paper. Light brown cupboard with various sections, a sofa, low table, TV set, a two-branched floor lamp. An armchair with a colourful woollen cover thrown over it that is probably supposed to hide the sorry state of this piece of furniture. Besides, the cover keeps slipping down. A flower

stand. Large-patterned, but rather dull curtains. All available spaces are filled with various bric-a-brac and souvenirs. An embroidered picture on the wall (autumnal landscape!). Kaido's room opens from the living room. For some reason the door opening has no door, but is instead covered by a thick fabric, maybe a tapestry or something similar. The room itself is very small and quite ascetic for a boy that age. A big light brown wardrobe in a corner, the bed in another (how on earth can he fit into it?!). The bed, by the way, is neatly made up. Writing desk with drawers stands against the third wall. In fact it looks more like a work bench, since it's overflowing with various pieces of junk: half-empty bottles of glue, wires, bits of engine, screwdrivers and bolts. Plus a hammer, tweezers, loads of files and pieces of sand paper of various shapes and sizes. A probably self-made lamp hangs above the desk, consisting of only the socket (there's actually no bulb!) and the plate with which it's attached to the wall. A large soldering iron dangles from a wire from it. By the desk I see a stool with little red vice screwed to it. Some pipes and tubes protrude from underneath the desk that could, with some effort of imagination, bear a vague resemblance to half-finished models of rockets or airplanes. One of those is suspended from the ceiling, but it is more complete and resembles the contraption that Kaido had in his



school bag. The fourth wall has a window, partly hidden by the same huge bush growing outside which makes the room quite dark even in broad daylight so that the lights must be on all the time (the lamp in the ceiling is a boring green cone). The toilet can be described thus: beige walls, the toilet seat in the corner, no running water.

That's it. I could not get any further, probably missing the parents' bedroom and something else, since I casually asked how many rooms they had. The answer was four.

Marko's home: The same type of brick house, only somewhat more oblong (Kaido's house is totally square!). No hallway to speak of, you come in and there's the kitchen where clothes hang in a corner. Again an overburdened clothes rack and a heap of footwear underneath. The kitchen unpleasantly dim, no proper lamp in the ceiling at all, just a bare bulb hanging on a black twisted wire. Max 35-40w. The same kind of kitchen cupboard with a glass-door sideboard on top of it, containing cups and glass bowls. Similar shelf of tiny boxes of spices. Wood stove. A square dining table. Four green stools. Another round table with a heap of laundry and an iron (I probably interrupted the ironing). In the corner near the table stands a small, ancient-looking electric stove with a tin dipper filled with water to the



brim. A chair with a back at the round table and another shelf on the wall, the contents of which are hidden by a piece of cloth with large floral pattern that can be drawn like a curtain. No sink at all, instead a big washbasin on a stool (the stool is covered by floral plastic). Slop pail under the stool. Living room. Large cupboard at one wall. Exactly like at Kaido's place. Similar television set. Flower stand full of some lush green plants. A string basket hangs from the ceiling above the flower stand with a particularly vigorous tree-like thing inside, the branches of which reach out into the middle of the room (clearly too large for this space!). Then there is a small low table with a plate of biscuits and two armchairs. Both shielded against wear by carpet-type covers, just like at Kaido's home, and the wall is adorned with an embroidered landscape scene, indistinguishable from what I saw at Kaido's. There is another small shelf, with two levels, on the wall. One level sports a wooden windmill and the other an angling fisherman, also of wood (and I am certain I saw the same windmill in Kaido's flat as well). Additionally, the room has a sofa, protected with a pretty striped knitted cover, and that's it. Marko's room. About the same size as Kaido's, but Marko has to share with his sister (reputedly older, but she wasn't in at the moment). Indeed, two beds: Marko at one wall, the sister at the other. A huge wardrobe

with all kind of stuff heaped on top of it. A few cardboard boxes, piles of old magazines, an accordion!, a big black suitcase, and heaven only knows what else. Up to the ceiling. Then there is a low closet and a small bookshelf on the wall above the sister's bed. A window in one wall, and an identical desk (I wonder why I'm not in the least surprised?) to Kaido's facing it. The desk is covered with a similar stack of wires, cords, glue and soldering irons. The only difference here is all that stuff spreads to precisely half the desk. The other half is in impeccable order: a few exercise books in one corner, with a triangular ruler and pencil case placed on top. An ordinary chair at the desk. Two similar chairs stand by each bed, plus an armchair at the door, again covered with the same striped woollen rug that slides down immediately when someone takes a seat. Thick dark brown curtains (with a sort of plant pattern). The toilet basically the same as Kaido's, without water, and absurdly long and narrow. Unpainted walls, whitewashed with chalk or lime or some such substance (I got my clothes all white in there, by the way). And a most revolting stink.

As for the boys' parents, it's really quite difficult to say anything specific about them. Ordinary people. Very shy, not good at conversation. Naturally they did not feel at ease with

me. It is one thing to see each other at a parents' meeting or some other function at school with everybody else around too, but it's quite another matter when the teacher turns up at home and a more intimate get-together takes place. They are very timid by nature anyway. Not in the least used to strangers. Typical of a small place. And the time I chose for my visit! Late in the evening, without previous notice. Knock, knock, the form master is here. And starts apologising to the children! This sort of thing would make anyone nervous. They are, however, good-natured and earnest people. At both places I was offered coffee and sandwiches and... The apologising was of course a pretty ludicrous affair. Still, I am relieved everything seems to be sorted out (the boys were at school today as if nothing had happened, and I am quite sure they won't tell anyone). And Stuttgart will get a nice report - a detailed description about the home and habits of the average man.

4.09.77

Stuttgart wants to call me back again.

I received a message today that they were no longer prepared to pay my salary. They said the information was sufficient, necessary figures and tables all there, and that's it. I was apparently needed over there. They wanted to include me in some Malaysian project. I was excellent at establishing contact, got to know people well, and adapted effortlessly - such an expert was in urgent demand, so I better start making arrangements about my immediate return. I truly can't imagine this... sell the house, throw a farewell party at school... And the boys... what boys - they'll be men in no time! In the seventh form already. Besides, I am the form master... Truth be told, I've been very lucky so far. When did they first call me back...? Let me think now... 68, 69, 70, 71, 72. In 1972. After all, I was initially supposed to come for only five years. Stuttgart, however, also realised that five years was too short a time, because it was only just get-

ting interesting then - the boys in the second form and I getting the hang of being the form master... My stay was extended for two years and I thought that this would actually do. What could possibly happen to keep me here anyway. But then came the rocket model thing and it was somehow not the time to leave. The bosses failed to see it my way and told me to pack up and threatened not to finance the undertaking any more. They even suggested that my boys were not ordinary enough if they took up such weird hobbies as aeroplane modelling. I had to prove otherwise saying that ordinary people here are exactly like that, interested in all sorts of peculiar things because life was so dull and mind-numbing. They argued that I was not sent there to examine ordinary life since life was ordinary everywhere, but I had instead been dispatched to the area to investigate an ordinary person and that no ordinary dull person would attend a rocket-building club or construct aeroplanes and that I was barking up the wrong tree. I claimed it was not so, they were simply not familiar with local circumstances and everything takes a lot of time, etc. etc. They finally decided to allow me another two years to conclude the matter. Definitely back in 1976. But in 1976 the boys graduated from the fifth form and were by now dab hands in the rocket club. I found I was getting really interested. I mean the boys' behaviour and their metamorphosis if I may call it that. They became friends, their studying improved and they were



8.11.78

no longer such hopeless nitwits. This time I again managed to get my stay extended because I said I had found a person very close to my research objects who could provide me with highly confidential material and that it would be an utter waste to break off at this point. I didn't actually have to lie too much. I had Aleksander in mind, and so it was practically true. It was necessary to convince the bosses that everything was as I said, and I succeeded. We agreed that I stay here until a place would be found for me in another project, in which case there would be no more arguing. That at the end of the day they knew better, and after all, they were the ones to finance my undertaking. They are perfectly right, of course. Still, I cannot even imagine leaving now and flying to Malaysia or some such place... It's probably yet another gene research project and everything would start from scratch. A place to live somewhere, strangers all around, another foreign tongue to master... besides, I had really reached an interesting point here. In spring my boys must decide whether to continue at secondary school or go on to a vocational school to learn a trade. It is of course also possible to find a job straight away, but I don't think they opt for that. They've been very diligent recently, and, after all, there is plenty of time ahead for work. I should have a questionnaire in class one of these days to find out their plans. Must concoct something for Stuttgart, though. Things aren't quite that simple.

Another message from Stuttgart today. They wonder why I've been so quiet lately. I should, in fact, be back in Germany by now, but instead I haven't even dropped them a line. Thing is, I haven't a clue what to write! How can I tell them that I'm not willing to return because I don't have the heart to leave my research objects. It is obviously no argument, rather a sign of my unprofessional attitude since a scientist is not allowed to become fond of those he examines. I have no excuses. Not a single one!

19.11.78

Sent a letter to Stuttgart today that I'm going to stay in here, at my own expense, for another year and a half. That I had personal reasons, which I will explain later... I of course apologised in regard of the new project in which I could not now participate, and hoped they would find someone else. I could join in about a year's time, if they so wished, or else would be happy to accept whatever job was available at the institute. In a word - I was grovelling, true and proper. There is no doubt they will find a replacement for me in no time. And I will be in a tight spot soon enough, but not now. I've got at least a year. Anyway, there is the children's school work to be checked.



28.12.78

Today was the last day of term, and everybody got their school reports. The boys are getting quite reasonable marks these days. No cause for alarm in any subject. Marko has even one top mark, 'five', this time - in biology. Sound 'fours' in technology for both. Could as well be 'fives', considering their real skills and all that rocket club thing, but the marks they've got during the term won't add up to that. It seems they simply can't be bothered with school tasks, and that is so not only in technology. The same problem in all subjects. I don't believe they only have brains for technology and nothing else at all. They just don't bother with other things. As a form master I could naturally have a chat with them and explain that next year is the final year, and they will be facing pretty difficult exams in maths and a foreign language and there's an essay to write in order to stay on at secondary school. Besides, the results should be

all right, no mean 'threes', but more or less decent marks. I will not be able to save anything since such significant exams are being marked by state committees. True, there were a few exams in the sixth and seventh form, but without my interference Marko and Kaido would have scored the lowest marks. I practically rewrote their papers, and they got their 'threes'. Otherwise they would have faced second exams. Considering their brain power (especially at that time) they would have failed again and would now be still sitting in the sixth form. They have not a clue of all that themselves, nor could I tell the parents how stupid their offspring really are, because gossip spreads and had it become common knowledge that I falsified their exam results, I'd have got the boot immediately. Maybe sent out of the country altogether considering I was a foreigner, after all. Heaven only knows what would have come of it... The phone's ringing!

Imagine that - Aleksander called asking what I was doing on New Year's Eve and whether I would like to come to his place. They were by themselves, his wife and him, terribly bored, and why should I sit there on my own anyway. I thanked him and promised to think about it. I will, too, although I probably won't go. Better avoid such places. We will start drinking, the tongue loosens, and it might all come out what I was really up to in that town. There is really no need for

that. I have managed so well up to now. Besides, I am not really a party animal.

Anyway, should have a word with the boys about the exams. And their future plans, whether they have any ideas.

18.01.79

I conducted a questionnaire today about what everyone wants to do next year and how many intend to carry on at secondary school. About half mentioned secondary school, the rest was divided fifty-fifty. Some aimed at vocational school to learn a trade, some straight to work. So as not to waste any more time on studying, but start earning at once. Only two wrote that they had no plans as yet. And these two were... Marko and Kaido! This was the last lesson and they all took off immediately so I could not ask any more questions. What's that supposed to mean - no plans as yet!? I must certainly have a word with them tomorrow, and seriously. When they leave school, what would be the point of me as a teacher? And a form teacher to boot! No point in any of this then.

19.01.79

Had a chat with the boys today, during an interval. Asked whether they really had not thought about their future, and encouraged them to continue their studies. I said they really got good heads on their shoulders, and their results were getting ever better. Marko then mumbled that they needed something to live on and will probably find a job. That they'd been thinking of something, which required time and money. I tried to get it out of them, and offered to help any way I could. As a form teacher should. At this point Kaido opened his mouth and said they greatly appreciated me as form teacher (he did not sound in the least convincing), but they frankly could not see how I might be of help. I said, fine, you'll go to work, but what job did they have in mind? Not much choice around here, surely. Neither had a driving license, or had learned anything useful in their lives. Marko claimed they did not care one bit what the job would be. work





for them was just a means to manage independently and do what they really wanted. I was just about to ask what it was they really wanted, but the bell went and the boys had to go to class. All for the better, as my last question sounded perhaps too intruding. It was clear they were reluctant to talk about this. I simply hope that they know themselves what they want. At this age youngsters tend to be too full of themselves, and who wouldn't want to be independent!? Only to have regrets later for not having listened to the adults.

17.05.79

Final essay tomorrow. Two exams behind us, mathematics and chemistry, and Marko and Kai-do failed in both. Neat 'twos'. It doesn't really make any difference now whether they write the essay tomorrow or not. Frankly, I am utterly confused and upset. They are doing this on purpose. Neither attended a single pre-exam consultation. Each time I asked whether they had any problems or needed help, they assured me everything was just fine. I had the nasty feeling that they refused to make any effort at all. But why!? I talked with Aleksander who said the boys turned up in the club every single day although the activities had ceased there, precisely because children could prepare for the exams. They, on the other hand, sit there and construct their rockets. Or whatever they get up to in that club. What a mess.

26.05.79

The boys wrote their essays and will probably pass. Not that it's any use as they failed at two previous exams. I saw them in town today and asked what they thought about it and whether they wanted to try again in autumn. I had done some research, and apparently there is a chance to try again. The boys, however, said in unison that they were starting work the day after tomorrow and were no longer interested in school. And you wouldn't believe where! The local garage, as mechanics. Both of them! How dreary! I was so bewildered that I could come up with nothing but 'really!'. Then I left. They did seem a bit more sensible recently. Oh well, I suppose everybody must choose his own path in life. The rest of the children in my class were more or less all right. Nobody failed the exams.

27.05.79

To pick up where I left off yesterday. On the other hand, everything is logical and right, so maybe I should be happy that my boys are such halfwits. After all, they are not supposed to have any ambitions and should be dull - this is why they were chosen in the first place. I don't know what's wrong with me. When the boys were small, I rejoiced each time they exhibited their stupidity. This confirmed that I had selected my research objects wisely and had plenty of material to report back to Stuttgart. And now I am irritated because they are such imbeciles. What on earth am I expecting then!? I certainly did not come here to examine a genius or two, but just this type of average boring people. OK, we might assume that the rest of my class is average - they pass their exams so-so, try to continue their studies somewhere, etc. Compared to them, Marko and Kaido seem like another extreme. Utterly hopeless, pathetic chaps, not even av-

erage ones. At the same time the fact that they make no effort at all seems to be an indicator of something special. The others do try, and Marko and Kaido did too, when they were small, but then realised soon enough that they were not up to the others and threw in the towel. That's the real average, if you ask me. When you don't even try to do your best. The others at least have an aspiration, whatever it might be, but these two go and work in the local garage as mere mechanics!

4.06.79

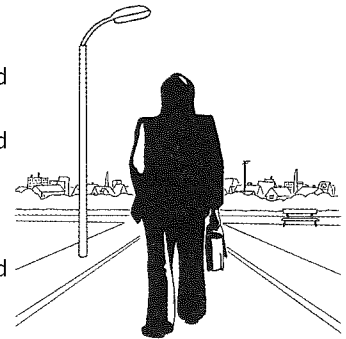
Not a squeak from Stuttgart. Quite a relief, actually. At least I don't have to decide anything. Plenty of time still left too. The 18 months of extension I asked for won't be up before the coming May, and by that time they will certainly let me know what happens next. Somehow I don't think they are going to send me to Malaysia to join the others; it will probably be something new. Anyway - we'll see.

19.08.79

I was summoned to the school director today. He asked whether I had given a thought to my future plans. Since my class will probably be given to someone else, I would then have to take on the next first-formers. I wanted to know why and he said for purely pedagogical reasons. It was supposed to be good for children to have a new form teacher from time to time, according to a kind of system: in primary and basic school there is one teacher and one style, so to speak, and another one at secondary school level. Nothing personal, he added, quite the contrary - it was obvious I was very well suited to younger classes. Well, I don't know... I somehow feel that's not all there is... Possibly my very own Marko and Kaido and their exam failures. I asked for a few days to reflect on this.

23.08.79

I asked the director today what would happen if I didn't want the first form. He said that in such case he had no job to offer me at the moment. For technology, they expected someone young this year, straight from the university, so this was out as well. Now that Marko and Kaido are no longer at school, I am frankly not that keen on teaching here any more. After all, I am not really a teacher! On the other hand, a job would be handy for another year, until I return home. Had I not asked for extension and gone back when they suggested, I would now be somewhere in Malaysia... But who could have thought the boys decide to leave school... I have a good mind to leave too and concentrate on the boys, with-



out any distractions. I can do that easily in such a small town, and I know where they live. This might be the most sensible thing to do. I have enough money to survive another year. The more so that I have specially saved the return fare.

28.08.79

Told the director today that I was leaving school. He made a wry face and asked why. I said personal problems and that I would probably soon leave altogether. Good enough reason to refuse the first form, isn't it just. If I accepted now, the next eight years would be guaranteed. But I, you see, think about the children, not wanting any interruptions in their lives, so I give them to someone else right from the start. No promises I cannot keep. Oh, yes, something far more important: saw the boys. In a shop. Both wearing overalls, blue and a bit worse for wear; they bought milk and bread for lunch. We said hello, and they seemed particularly joyful and content. Said everything was just fine.

9.01.80

I have been away from school for several months now, but still feel kind of empty. Can't explain it... Every morning children pass under my window on their way to school, and I feel I should go with them. Eight years was a long time for a habit to develop. And there seems to be too much spare time. I have worked out a system: I get up at seven in the morning, go for a stroll, in the direction of the garage, and wait for the boys to turn up. They won't see me (I have my tricks of trade), whereas I can observe what time they arrive, either together or separately or with someone else, and what they are wearing. Then I return home, write everything down, analyse and compare my notes. Then I read or simply while away the time until lunch. At lunch time I go shopping because then the boys mostly come to buy their food. I keep an eye on what they purchase, and with whom. There's actually precious little to observe. The two of them



come, buy a loaf of white bread and milk for each. I try not to be seen by them every single day, it would seem suspicious. A few times a week is OK. We have a little chat, I ask how they are doing, etc. Then back home to take notes and analyse. In the evening another stroll near the garage to ascertain how and with whom the boys return home. Indeed, whether they head home or somewhere else. Prevailingly they go together, to either Marko's or Kaido's place. I sneak after them and wait until one emerges and goes to his own home. It usually happens around nine-ten o'clock, occasionally a bit later. After that I can return home myself and note everything down. The same routine, day in and day out. A tad boring, compared with school, but I manage. Anyway, I only have to wait until May. The 18 months of extension will be over too, and they are hardly going to show any mercy then. I was trying to get used to the idea. Obviously my reports are not in the least interesting for them to read too. Nothing happens here, it's as simple as that. No point really to try and invent anything. I will be on my way soon enough.

15.04.81

Stuttgart seems to have forgotten me. Not a squeak. I haven't dared remind them either. They are probably very busy over there. Besides, my reports keep coming in and so they assume everything goes swimmingly. The trouble is that my money will run out at some point. The boys carry on as usual, not a change in sight. Work in the morning, shopping for lunch, back to work, one visits the other in the evening and then returns home.

8.09.82

Went to work today, after a long interval. I am now employed as an electrician at the local housing council. No big deal, really, but enough for everyday expenses. I was getting the nasty feeling that if things proceeded like that I must soon resort to my return ticket money, which I didn't want to do. There must be an emergency exit. Everything's the same with the boys.

18.10.84

I'm completely beside myself! Simply don't know... Something has happened... Merciful God! I... received a message yesterday that a parcel had arrived for me from Germany. Off I went to the post office today, and there it was... A large heavy parcel from Stuttgart... All my reports since 1978! Nicely packed, completely untouched... Jesus Christ... They haven't even looked at them! And an official notice on top that since 1978 no scientist called John Smith has worked at their institute, nor do they have any knowledge of a N-5024 project. It's all so bewildering that I cannot really take it in... Like a dream... So they axed me when I told them in 1978 that I was planning to stay on for a while. Already then!!! And they didn't notify me, not a squeak, calmly letting me send in my reports for six years! But why!!!! WHY?????





19.10.84

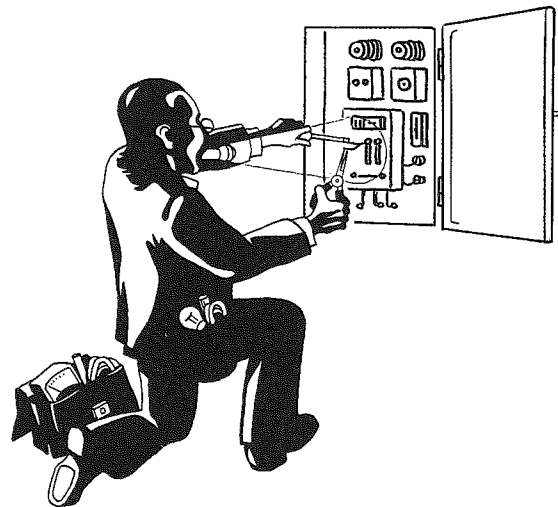
I keep thinking about the Stuttgart thing. Of course they have a point... A big important organisation, top-secret. And then an employee, from the middle of nowhere, tells them that the bosses' plan did not suit him at the moment and he decided to stay on, just like that. Everything is actually okay, no reason really to get so het up. Serves me right. I am just a stupid amateur, and they naturally do not need nitwits like that. I would do exactly the same if I were them. Oh dear, I hope my one-time supervisor Strauss will never know, he'll feel ashamed because of me... Come to think of it, maybe he already knows!? Could easily be - after all, they do see one another all the time over there... How embarrassing... And I kept sending my silly reports in the hope of impressing them as a correct and diligent person. Even imagined how they read them, and... Ugh... Merciful heaven, what a disgrace... What on earth should I do now? Not a clue! How can I pos-

sibly return now!? And return where? I have no job there any more, nothing. Nothing! Not even a place to live, since this, too, was allocated by the institute, together with the job. Surely someone else occupies that now, a young enterprising gene scientist. And my things probably stuffed into cardboard boxes, in a storage somewhere or maybe thrown away altogether. It's not impossible, considering how many years have passed. Why couldn't they tell me straight away that they didn't want me to stay on here. Actually, they did, but not a word about sacking me. I could have returned then, gone to Malaysia or whatever. Had I only known how it all would turn out! On the other hand, maybe they simply seized the opportunity to get rid of me...? Maybe they didn't like me even before, for some reason or another, and this was just an excuse? Jesus, I'm losing my marbles. I really am. I must not think any more, I must not think any more, I must not!

22.11.84

I still keep my diary. And carry on my research too. There's not much else to do here, quite frankly. There's the electrician's job at the local housing council, but only when something needs to be done or goes wrong. Otherwise I'm just sitting there. I've been thinking a lot these past days about going back, and it seems that maybe there's no such big hurry with this after all. When I received that dreadful news I thought I should return immediately and do something, but to be honest, what exactly can I do? Fly to Stuttgart, burst through the institute door and demand to be taken back? But they said, in no uncertain terms, that no-one by my name had worked there for years! This is what they would tell me should I appear. And besides, all my few friends have probably dismissed me from their minds. Who has simply forgotten, who doesn't want to remember - I behaved like an idiot towards my employers. I mean the gene scientists, above all

Strauss. Nobody is waiting for me there! Here, however, at least everything works: I have a place to live, a job of a kind, and what's most important - I can keep on investigating my boys. Although that's now my private entertainment... Maybe it's even for the best...



8.02.86

Heard a sad piece of news today at the local housing council. Marko's uncle died yesterday. I think I had even met him - a thin old man with a moustache, lived alone in his house, a house with a gable roof (it even belongs to our housing council, if I am not mistaken). A pity, anyway...

14.06.86

What do I hear today at the housing council! Marko and Kaido plan to move into Marko's uncle's house. Together. Don't know whether to believe it or not.

15.06.86

The news proved true. I asked the woman who keeps the register of people, and she said the boys had indeed written an application; well, Marko had, wanting to go and live in his late uncle's house. There is apparently no problem with that since the uncle had left the house to Marko anyway. Imagine - a huge house! And they move in there, both of them!

19.06.86

I arranged to bump into the boys today in the shop and immediately started talking about the house. They said everything was true. They wanted to move away from parents. After all, they were grown men now and wanted to be on their own. Besides, their hobby required increasingly more space. I pretended to wonder what sort of hobby they meant (I knew perfectly well about their aeroplane and rocket stuff), and they said it was technology, as before. They seemed friendly enough, but of course awfully tongue-tied as always.

30.06.86

Met the boys today quite by accident when I returned from work. They asked (probably just to be polite) where I was coming from. I said I was almost their personal electrician, working at the local housing council, so when they had any problems, they should tell me at once, and we'll see what can be done. I was sort of joking, because truly I could never have guessed that they would take me up on that, calmly telling me that indeed the entire wiring in the house should be renewed. However, this is precisely what they said, adding that all the wires were ancient and could burst into flames any time, the more so that they had quite a tension in there. welding and soldering and using all kinds of electrical appliances. I was surprised they didn't do the wiring themselves. They said they had no time for such things. what perfect luck! we agreed on next week. I could have started earlier (like tomorrow), but the boys said it was too soon.



2.07.86

Had a crazy idea in connection with the boys' house! Don't really know whether this is normal, but... How should I... In a word, the idea is as follows: to install cameras and microphones in the boys' house so I could keep track of them in there as well!? I have all the necessary equipment - had them sent over at the beginning, but have never actually used any. I somehow managed without them. And now when there is truly no need to watch the boys, I have an ideal opportunity to do just that! A private house, I am the electrician, in fact asked to change the wiring - what else is there, eh!!! what else, I say!!! Lets do it!

14.07.86

I did it!!! One camera in the kitchen and in three smaller rooms, two in the living room. They seem to use the latter as a workroom so probably spend most of their time there. Didn't put any cameras in the toilet or the bathroom. Every single room, however, now has a microphone. In the lamps, either in the ceiling or on the wall, wherever the lamp happened to be, so it could cover the whole room. I hid the cameras so well no one but me can ever find them. I had no idea there was a phone in the house. Another little gadget into that too. The boys' new place seems to be almost empty. A bed and chair in each of the smaller rooms, covered with heaps of clothes. The third small room is either a lumber room, or yet to be put in order. Uncle's stuff, presumably. The big, so-called living room, as I already said, seems to be their workroom. In the middle a large table, loaded with all sort of electrical devices and tools, a few chairs, old tv

set. A vice attached to the table. In the corner a floor-to-ceiling flower stand, obviously the late uncle's. Heavy brown curtains. A chandelier-type lamp with three bulbs hanging in the ceiling. This is the only different lamp in the whole house, all others are milky-white round lampshades, looking rather official, as it were, out of place in someone's home. Ideal, of course, for sneaking a microphone into them. So, all in all a dullish place, no lived-in atmosphere yet, but if I recall their parents' homes that I once visited, then the style is more or less the same, only fewer things here. But things accumulate, no doubt about that.

Now I can see their entire lovely little home here in my tv. I change the channel and take a look at a room, next channel, next room. Plus sound is recorded continuously so I don't have to sit at the radio receiver all the time.

9.08.86

Everything's under control. I simply haven't had time to write anything – the boys' surveillance takes up all my time. Real thrilling to watch them bustling around in there. They can't keep away from the engines and aeroplanes. They come home in the evening, fry some eggs in the kitchen, eat, wash up, and to the living room to build. The camera gives only a general picture, can't make out the details of whatever they are constructing. The picture is naturally black-and-white. The sound is tolerable. About the same when they show astronauts on the telly, up there. A bit dim and foggy, but understandable. Besides, they are hardly saying anything at all. Probably can guess each other's thoughts. It happens when people are so much together, they develop telepathic communication. These two have spent half their lives together. Nothing much to listen then. It's all pretty fascinating nevertheless. They practically do not use the telephone, occa-

sionally speak with their parents, but that's really boring stuff.

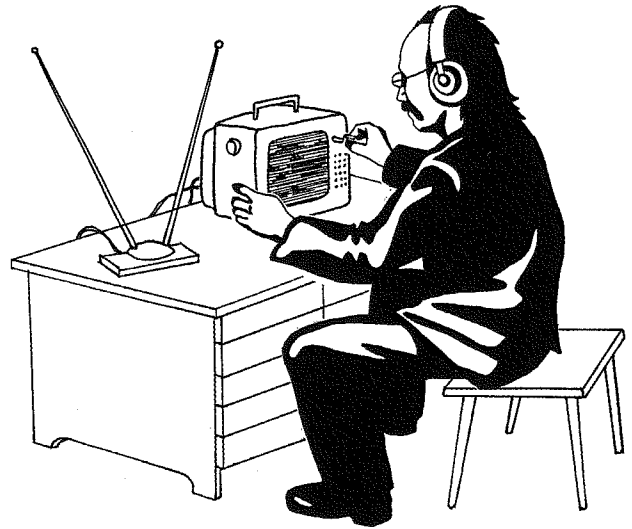
17.06.87

Sent a long report to Stuttgart yesterday! Just for the fun of it. To say that I was fine, watching the research objects at their very home, recording and filming. Maybe they will throw it straight to the dustbin, maybe not. They might take another view - hey, this man is acting independently! I added that I could send them the recordings as well, should they so wish.



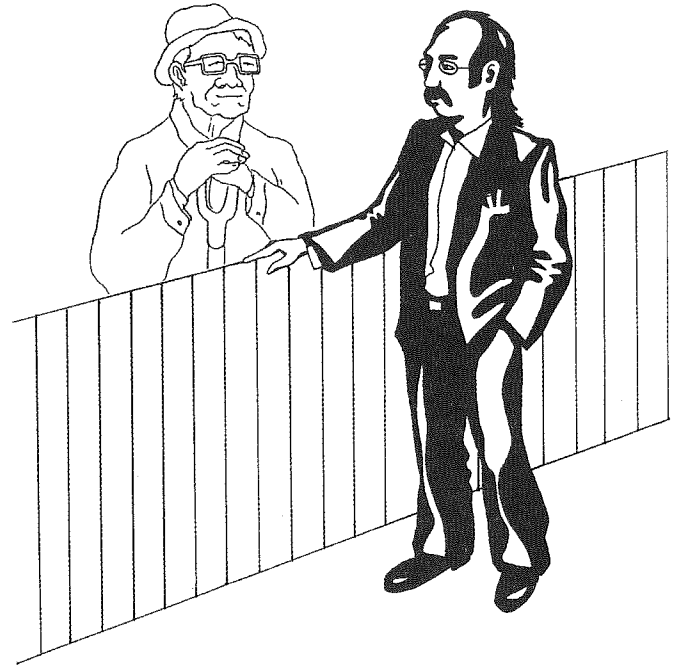
9.10.87

Everything as usual: I sit up at nights and watch the boys' life. The picture is still hazy, probably something to do with coverage. Too many houses between us and the antenna is just too weak.



15.06.88

Took a walk yesterday around the boys' house when they were away, hoping to perhaps get a peep in a window or something, and bumped into their neighbour. Came to the gate to have a chat. An elderly man, lives with his wife in a more or less similar house. We had met before, a few times, but I didn't exactly know him or that he lived there. I politely praised their house and garden. A lot to praise, actually, no such gardens anywhere else here, at least I haven't seen any. He, however, said there was nothing much besides the garden, in spring the water pours into the cellar and the roof leaked, and what not... The house apparently also needed an enormous amount of firewood in winter, and all in all, this house was far too big for two old people. At that moment I had a stroke of genius. I said, quite casually, that we could exchange. I give my flat to them and they give the house to me. The man was rather taken aback. This was all so sud-



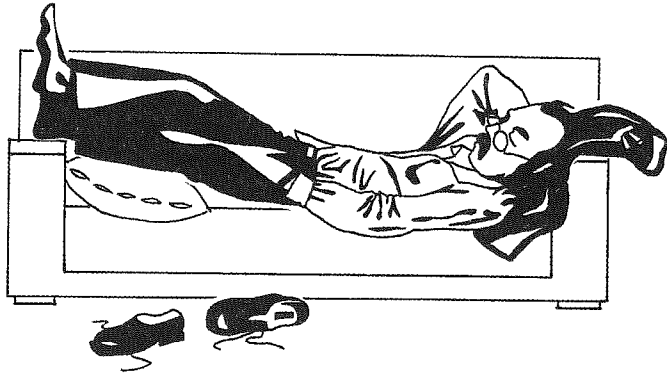
den, what is the wife going to say, and so on and so forth. I then suggested they both come and have a look at my flat - if they like it, fine, if not, so be it. Up to them entirely. He promised to consult the wife. The whole idea made him so agitated that our conversation just dwindled away. I meant to ask about the boys, what sort of neighbours they were, but to no avail. The man was all set to go and talk to his wife immediately. He vanished into the house.

Now if this business came off... I don't really believe it, but who knows...

30.06.88

The old man and his wife turned up to view my flat! Didn't say anything, but it was clear that at least he liked it (I had of course taken great trouble to clean it up). The woman looked a bit more sceptical. They said they would think about it. There's nothing but to wait and see. I hope they won't find the exchange too unfair (which in fact it is, to be quite honest). But it would be truly great. Imagine - to be the boys' neighbour... I could watch them from my own window, and the coverage of cameras and microphones would be perfect. Just like from the next room.

2.07.88



No sign of the couple. They let me suffer,  
old goofs. I must have their house, I must have  
their house, I must have their house!!!!

3.07.88

The old man turned up today. It's just as I feared - he would like to change, but the wife refuses to live in a flat. She must have a garden. She would move into a smaller place, but it must have a garden. That's it. Shit! In my thoughts I was already living in their house!!

4.07.88

I must have it, I must! What to do...? Why on earth did I start talking with that old man in the first place!

13.07.88

I made inquiries at the local housing council about any houses on sale, and it turned out there was a small one at the other side of town. Costs about the sum I have saved up. But this is the untouchable fall-back that I have kept for my return home. The fare. It would take me about twenty years to get this sort of money together again. So if I bought that house it would in fact mean that I would stay here forever! The flat I now have is connected with my job at school, and apparently I can stay there as a former teacher as long as I live, but I have no right to sell or exchange it. It thus turned out that I could not have exchanged the flat anyway, even if the old man's wife had agreed! Maybe somehow illegally... Oh dear, what on earth am I supposed to do now? If I dither too long, someone will buy that house.

... Should have a word with the old man, let them look at the house, see whether they like it...

16.07.88

The old man said they would exchange that house for their own at once!



20.07.88

I have decided. I will buy them that house.  
Come what may.

9.09.88

I have now moved house and am the boys' neighbour. What a house this is! An incredible amount of space for one person, especially when compared with my teacher's flat. Kitchen and four rooms downstairs, another room upstairs, several storerooms and sauna in the cellar. Plus bathroom and toilet, in a word - everything a house should have. Everything is of course a bit drab and old, but as I actually don't need all that, I am not bothered about this. I only use a few rooms and kitchen anyway.

The whole surveillance stuff, tape recorders and TV and other things I plan to install upstairs so nobody can suddenly turn up and see them lying around. And what a terrific view of the boys' window! I will set everything up tomorrow. Well, who could have imagined that only a while ago!



14.09.88

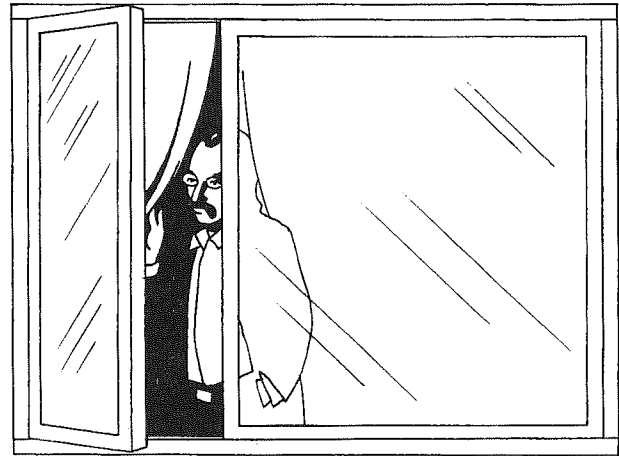
What coverage! The picture is crystal clear and the sound carries quite nicely too. This is espionage, true and proper! Although, quite frankly, there is still nothing much to observe. The moment the boys arrive in the evening, they immediately get busy in the living room and carry on until late hours. Then each goes to his room, and off to work in the morning. They are currently constructing something that looks like an aeroplane with a jet engine.

20.02.89

The boys haven't built anything for a long time, they just read. During their lunch hour they visit the town library and return with enormous piles of all sorts of technology magazines, which they take home, and then back to work. In the evening they settle down and pore over them nearly until morning. They don't eat, they don't sleep - I am quite worried about them. They hardly speak with each other. The tapes are full of single words such as "see", "look here", "that's it", or "we'll do that". It is clear they are looking for something, but it's impossible to guess what.

10.10.90

Life is incredibly boring. A few calls a week to fix some electrical problem, the rest of the time I sit here and watch my boys. My situation money-wise is quite modest compared to what it used to be when Stuttgart was still paying me a salary (seems ages ago!), in fact it's like day and night. I cannot afford proper clothes and finer food. Sitting here on my own, all kinds of thoughts come to mind. That maybe I made the wrong decision and should have returned while it was still possible... who knows... The trouble is that it's so bloody boring here. The boys are no longer boys, but completely ordinary mechanics, just like all the others who work at that garage. The only difference is their weird hobby, a fascination with plane engines. On the other hand, I think that this is the right thing, after all. It shows that I as a scientist had an excellent hunch all that time ago and I placed my stakes on the right persons - Marko and Kaido grew up to be



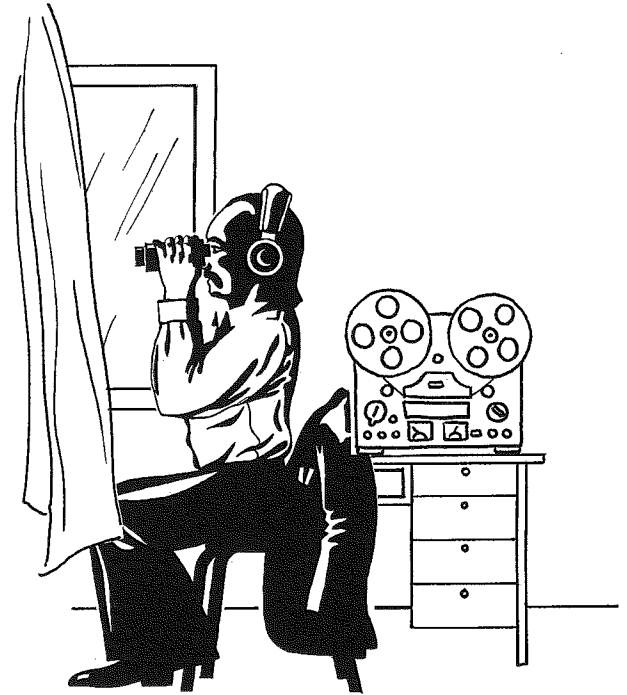
exactly the kind of oafs I wanted. It's just that the wise men in Stuttgart decided they no longer needed these subjects, me, or my research...

**4.03.91**

The boys now have their own lathe. Dragged the old ramshackle thing from the garage and set it up in the house. It was so big it didn't fit into the living room and they had to push one end into the smaller room where Marko's uncle's stuff was stored. They threw the stuff right out of the window and made the doorway bigger (in fact they demolished the entire wall). Can't imagine how they plan to work the lathe, and what they want to lathe in the first place. I am not sure you are allowed to do such things at home. To work the lathe in the living room. I am naturally not going to breathe a word to anyone, but still. They already have the welding equipment standing ready in the corner and I am waiting with horror when they will switch it on.

19.07.92

They told me at work that with the new republic and all that I could apply for the same passport as everybody else has. After all, I have been living here for ages and speak the language as well. I think I want it, why shouldn't I... To think that the country where I arrived years ago does not exist any more, everything's different... The life of my boys, however, goes on unchanged. Today they lathed the shaft of a huge engine. As far as I can make out, they are trying to force the engine. They have also dug an enormous barrel into the ground in the garden and every evening they bring petrol in a canister from the garage and pour it into the barrel. I can watch that easily with my binoculars.



16.01.93

Saw Marko and Kaido in the street and they said the talk about the imminent collapse of the garage was actually true. A matter of a week or two. No profit in it. I said I was sorry to hear that they were going to lose their job, and asked what their plans were. They, however, seemed quite cheerful, telling me that they were in fact pleased how things have turned out - they had no intention to find another job since they had plenty to do at home. The last argument sounded almost as if the house and garden needed their attention, and I had hard trouble suppressing a giggle. After all, I know only too well what they are up to at home, but they of course do not know that I know. Then I wondered how they, two young men, intended to manage without a job. Kaido said they were economical and had modest needs and had also saved up a bit. I can't imagine what savings they could possibly have, but who knows. They don't eat much, never go anywhere, and whatever their mechanics salary is, it's definitely bigger than mine.

13.03.94

The boys have stopped going out altogether. Ever since the garage went bankrupt (about a year ago), they have emerged from the house precisely six times. Just checked in my diary. Each time on a Sunday when they went shopping at the market. It means once every two months. All that time they have busied themselves with a sort of radio transmitter. Can't imagine what transmitter that is or why they need it. They use most ordinary parts of radio, but they assemble them in a most weird way. They seem to make one huge new radio out of ten old small ones, which still has the same parameters. The size is not in fact important, what count are the bits and pieces inside. But I cannot very well teach them, from my position at the window!

15.11.94

I was informed today that my job would be scrapped next year. Unemployed, that is. They of course consoled me that a decent person like me and a good electrician certainly finds something, but it is not so. I am naturally known around here, and some electrician's jobs will pop up now and then, so I'm not too worried. We'll see. On the other hand, I will have more time to watch the boys.

9.05.94.

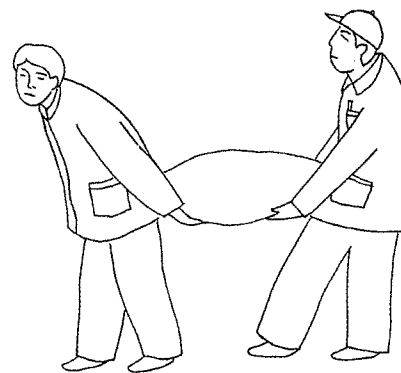
They are currently constructing a plywood box for their radio, of a most peculiar shape. They've been at it for three days already. As far as I know, they haven't even tried whether all that actually works or not. Excellent modellers indeed. And why do they need all this stuff anyway...? Their enthusiasm is remarkable, that's for sure.

30.09.94

They boys have been doing something in the cellar for two days. There are no cameras or microphones down there, so I know absolutely nothing about them! Such a helpless feeling, just like when you're used to having a watch on your wrist, and then leave it behind one day. I should have installed a microphone in the cellar too... The rooms seemed more important, and I simply didn't have so many gadgets to cover the entire house. And now they sit in the cellar, and the tapes run uselessly.

12.01.95

After a long interval, the boys emerged from the house today. Bought ten bags of cement and dragged all that home on a wheelbarrow. Must be starting renovation works.



19.01.95

Heaps of cement still standing in the hall, no sign of any renovation activities. What possessed them to buy it, I've no idea. And so much too. They keep working at the radio. One of them, usually Marko, goes out with a small gadget (looks like a self-made radio transmitter) and speaks into it, and Kaido listens inside by the big box. No luck so far. All that takes place at night, they obviously don't want anyone to see them. I am indeed probably the only one who does.

20.03.95

That weird radio actually started to work, and what's more - it's obstructing my cameras! The moment they turn on the radio, my picture goes all wobbly. This must be a coincidence. They don't know a thing about cameras and microphones. It's not possible. The frequency must be similar, or something. Marko keeps walking around the house at night and talking into the radio transmitter, and Kaido can hear everything inside. Aleksander has taught them well, no doubt about that.



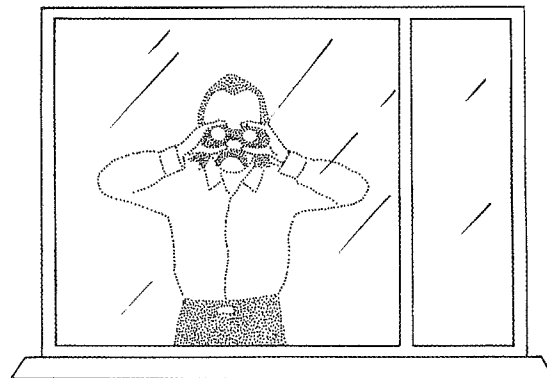
22.03.96

I cannot practically hear or see the boys at all, because their awful hunk of a radio is turned on all the time and is a terrible obstruction. At first it only interfered with the picture, but now the microphones don't seem to function either. Damn! I can barely make out the two figures, but who is who, is impossible to distinguish. Their talk sounds as a radio out of tune. Muffled voices, most words get lost. Occasionally a Turkish radio station interferes as well. I don't know what to do... In fact I do know what should be done here. I should install cameras and microphones that have another frequency, but how to manage that... Firstly, I don't have them, and I doubt if they exist at all, since these gadgets work at a frequency that shouldn't be found at anyone's home in the first place. The boys' radio is of course no ordinary thing, and it

is probably not even possible to find out the correct frequency anyway.

14.11.96

Nothing interesting is happening. The boys have been to the market a few times, and to the library after a long interval. I was called to fix the fuses at a place or two. Their bloody radio still prevents me from seeing and hearing what goes on in the house, but everyhting seems the same in there. The lathe occasionally works, you can hear it through the walls. They are now in the habit of pulling the curtains so I can't see much from my window either.



8.06.97

I haven't written for a long time because, quite simply, there is nothing to write about. Absolutely nothing is going on. I sit in front of the TV set all day long and watch two hazy figures moving around. The earphones produce songs in Turkish and an occasional word from the boys. I try to write them down in the hope of getting some sort of idea of what is going on, but on the whole it's a wasted time.

3.05.98

You never guess what happened today!!!! I must have nodded off in front of the TV and woke suddenly because of some thumping noise. Instinctively glanced at the clock, it was precisely half past seven. Another thump. I looked out - the boys were there! Hammering poles into the ground. In fact Kaido was doing the hammering and Marko was dragging the cement bags. They moved at tremendous speed. By lunchtime Kaido had put up a huge construction made out of boards that looked like a sandpit, and Marko had mixed a tin bath full of cement (manually, with a big oar-like thing!!!). Bathtub after bathtub they hauled the boarded construction full of liquid cement. They finished at four in the morning and vanished inside. It is now half past five in the morning. I should have a nap as well, I have a feeling this is going to continue.

4.05.98

It is already ten, but the boys seem to be still asleep. No wonder, considering the work they did yesterday. What the hell were they building? A stage, or a foundation? The foundation at any rate should be partly under ground... Besides, it's in a most strange place, bang in the middle of the garden...

Oh! They got up! My foggy picture shows two figures moving around in the living room.

Evening. They didn't come out at all, were busy in the big room, occasionally disappeared altogether, probably went down to the cellar. Still, Kaïdo did go out once to have a look at the contraption.

6.05.98

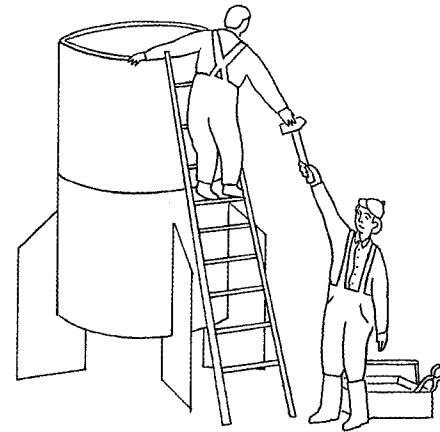
The boys spend most of the time in the cellar, I can hear banging and the sounds of sawing. And sometimes they come out and examine the thing in the garden, as if checking something. Haven't a clue what is going on.

8.05.98

They began building something upon that cement foundation! And what's especially strange - that something has a round basis! They put up scaffolding for half a day (must be a mighty high contraption), and in the evening they brought out crescent-like things, or ribs, placed them in a circle and started screwing plywood panels to them. They had previously bent these panels somehow. They managed one round, so I can now see a huge plywood barrel in the middle of the scaffolding.

9.05.98

Another plywood round today, and they did something inside too. I think they will have a thing or two in there...



11.05.98

The barrel is now four metres high and is beginning to resemble a chimney. But chimneys are not made of plywood, so I can't for the life of me imagine what they are making. Chimneys certainly have no doors, but this one has. I am tempted to go and ask, but somehow can't face it. It would look silly just turning up and saying that hello, dear boys, I happened to glance out of my window, and try as I might, I don't have a clue what this thing is. wouldn't be proper, considering I am, after all, their former teacher. Or would it? I think I'll wait a few more days, better not bother them.

14.05.98

The barrel keeps growing. I stole out there and measured it at night - six metres. It's a pity I could not see inside. When they finish work, they always cover the upper part and the door with tarpaper. Better not risk breaking in. They might hear and I get caught. I wonder what they would think...? That their old teacher has completely lost his marbles.

15.05.98

Today the tube acquired a sharp cone-shaped end, and strange things looking like wings appeared at the bottom edge. Four altogether. It's really beginning to look like a rocket. Yes! It very much resembles the rocket I smashed at the maths lesson all these years ago, only this one is much bigger and mightier. What can I say - the boys have gone bananas, no doubt about it.

17.05.98

The boys keep scurrying in and out of the tube, taking various items in there from the house. One thing I recognised, it was that radio. The picture in my TV set seemed to improve a bit. I am not quite sure, however, maybe it's just my wishful thinking.

21.05.98

For a few days already I've been trying to figure out what the boys could be up to in the house. Large white pieces of cloth like sheets or pillowcases are fluttering all over the place. Sometimes these white blotches take a human shape and walk about for a while, then vanish again. Can't see anything in my hazy picture. Today, however, all became clear. The boys came outside, wearing most weird white robes. Like suits of some sort. So this is what they were doing in there! Tried them on, walked around the room, and took them off again. The white human-shaped blotches! But what can all this mean?...

22.05.98

I can't take this crap any longer. Come what may, I must find out what's it all about. I must quickly think of an excuse to go over to them... what could this be... what...? Damn it... Step on it... Give me an excuse!

Got it! I will bring my camera and tell them I wanted to take pictures of them. I'll say I was painting, just for the fun of it, and wished to portray my former students and current neighbours. However, as I am a mere amateur, I can only do this with the help of photographs. Sounds really convincing, doesn't it! They are outside now, I better get a move on...





26.05.98

I ... What the boys told me three days ago... can't still understand it. They were not joking. I know them well enough for that... They are seriously building a rocket in order to fly off into the universe! Doesn't sound like a normal idea, does it? They said their place wasn't here, and ... they were going to challenge life itself and become famous. I tried to explain that they had everything they could wish for right here, everybody knew them too, so why would they want something like that, but they turned a blind ear to me. Moreover, they exuded an inner certainty and peace I had never noticed before. It made me quite nervous, because it was blindingly obvious they had no doubts, and my words never even reached them.

2.06.98

...Indeed, the more I think about it, the more it seems that these two are not the same primitive boys whom I have investigated practically all their lives... Or have I radically misunderstood something...? The whole rocket thing is of course utter nonsense. It will never fly anywhere. There's really no question about it. But the boys have faith in it, and keep building...

19.09.98

The rocket now has an engine which the boys tried to get to work all day. A few times it looked promising, but then died out immediately. Can't say by the sound of it what engine this is. They assembled it from bits and pieces. They get the fuel from the barrel in the ground they filled with petrol that they carried in canisters from the garage.

5.01.99

The few reports I sent off to Stuttgart, just for fun (about setting up cameras and about them building a rocket) came back, obviously not read by anyone. I am not going to send any more.

16.02.99

Today the rocket even worked for a few minutes. Sounds like the engine of an ordinary car. Filled the whole yard with revolting blue smoke. The boys rushed between the rocket and the house like mad, clad in white and wearing helmets.

23.08.99

My cameras show nothing, I can't be bothered with them any more. Same with microphones. Nothing to hear anyway, only crackling noises.

4.04.00

I have become an artist! I developed the film I made of the boys, for a joke really, and then I thought why not stick to my word and indeed paint them. After all, a long time ago before I came here I had crash courses in all these things, and besides, I worked as an art teacher for many years. I should manage. I'm half way through at the moment. No idea of the background yet. The photographs show the rocket behind the boys, but it's so close it resembles a kind of wall, and would not be of any interest on a painting. I must simply think of something.



18.06.00

I am already at my third painting! I must say it's awfully fascinating. A new world entirely. I still use the same film I made of the boys. The boys meanwhile keep busy with their rocket. It's rather embarrassing, although it has nothing to do with me, but somehow it does. I don't know... I have a feeling they are turning into some kind of village idiots. People walk by their garden and laugh. A few stop quite openly and stare. The boys, however, do not seem to mind, and that at least is something to their credit.

29.07.00

I saw a former colleague from the local housing council yesterday, and we got talking. I mentioned in passing that I've taken up art. There's no work anyway so what's the point in sitting around all day. He seemed to like the idea. Said I should organise an exhibition. Apparently he knew someone at the city library and I could hang up my pictures in the hall any time. It's a bit unexpected, but I promised to think about it. An interesting challenge. I might go and have a look at the hall.

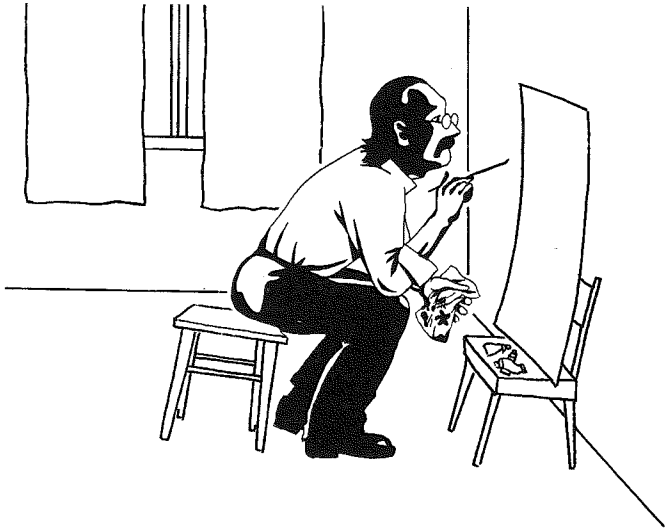
5.06.01

My very first solo exhibition opens tomorrow. In the city library of Rapla. The paintings are already there, fifteen altogether. Eight about the boys, portraits with different backgrounds, but they are not all recognisable, and maybe that's even for the better. The other seven are various views of the city (done from photographs of course). Quite nice in my opinion. Huh, I'm quite nervous actually about tomorrow. But it's so exciting too.

19.09.01

version 1

I got a phone call today, guess from where!? From some Tallinn gallery. They said they had seen my exhibition in summer here in the library and liked it a lot, and now want me to have an exhibition in their gallery in Tallinn. Very good location apparently. They arrange transport - I just had to say when. They also said I could become a member of the Estonian Artists' Association if I so wished. Well, what do you know! Can't think straight. I told them I would give it a thought and ring back. There's really nothing to think, of course I want the exhibition. And why not join the Association too, if so kindly offered. What else have I got to do here anyway!? Nothing! No work. As for Marko and Kaido, I really don't want to be involved any more. So embarrassing, and such a pity... They still carry on. One night their rocket was kicked over and it got broken (probably some youngsters having fun).



After that they really knocked themselves out, trying to fix it, but it's still a bit crooked. People think they are total nutters and tell weird tales about them. I don't even want to think about it. And I am not! Better go and join the Artists' Association and see what Tallinn looks like. I haven't been there since I arrived in Estonia in 1967. Thirty-four years!

19.09.01

version 2

Something utterly incredible has happened! I had been painting all night and was just about to have a nap when I felt the floor trembling. A low grumbling noise and vibration as well. And the light outside was different. I walked to the window, pushed the curtains aside, and it all came from the boys' rocket. Both the grumble and the light. Flames like in welding appeared under the bottom part, and they were huge. The whole yard was full of bright white smoke. Namely white - that was no ordinary stinking engine fume as usual, but oddly clean and light. Like steam. I stood at the window as if turned to stone, watching my garden fill with that strange substance. The grumble meanwhile became louder and more sinister and so did the light under the rocket. Suddenly there was a loud blast and a blinding flash, and the rocket started ascending! I ran like mad out of the door and saw the

rocket take off. The same clumsy chunk of plywood! I couldn't believe my eyes. The overwhelming white fumes that were reaching up to my chin, the bright light and a deafening, incredible roaring! I stood, head thrown back, watching the monster rising higher and higher above the city. Slowly, a bit zigzagging, but steadily going on and on, becoming ever smaller, until all that remained was a tiny blindingly dazzling spot. And then that, too, disappeared...

All of a sudden, everything around me was so quiet. And so empty. Only the white fog-like stuff around the houses...

For ages I staggered around like a lunatic on the spot where the rocket used to stand and where only black scorched earth now was. For some reason I tried the door of the boys' house. It was locked. They are gone! For good...!



## 19.09.01 version 3

(as described by a passer-by)

I was just at the end of the street when I heard a strange noise. Then I saw smoke rising from between the houses. I had this feeling right away that this must be the rocket house. A fire or something. I ran towards it, and indeed it was the same house, although the smoke and the noise were coming from the rocket. I saw quite clearly the boys climbing into it and closing the door or trapdoor or whatever it was behind them. The noise then increased quite a bit and flames burst out from under the rocket. At that moment their neighbour, the former teacher or artist rushed out of his house. This is when it happened. An enormous bang, and the rocket blew up. I mean exploded. Most terrifying flames everywhere and the wave hit the street. I got my eyebrows scorched. The neighbour must have got quite close. And then I saw something I can't believe to this day! The neighbour started to dissolve! Simply melted in



that dreadful heat like ice-cream or chocolate or something like that. Quietly and slowly so that I had plenty of time to observe. It started from his feet. Feet, legs, and so forth. The melted part turned into a black puddle on the ground. Like chocolate on the iron plate of a stove! Exactly! He looked totally bewildered. And continued to melt. The rocket had already become a burning heap of rubble. The man still kept dissolving, until only his head remained, sticking out from that huge black oil-like puddle. Imagine: head, hair, spectacles and - eyes open wide!!! He seemed to be alive until the very last moment, staring from that puddle towards the burning rubble. His mouth was moving too, he was apparently saying something. One and the same word, several times, but the crackling fire was deafening and I could not hear what it was. Anyway, until the head was there, it kept talking. It finally dissolved too. It was horrible!!! You may not believe me, but I swear it was true!