

# **Oleg Marchenko Souvenir**

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**In the early 70ies I followed for a couple of years a Russian language course in Milan.**

**Later in 1973 I spent a month in the Soviet Union (Leningrad, now St. Petersburg) in a summer Russian school.**

**In 1986 I worked 3 months in Algeria as an UNIDO consultant; my United Nations boss was a Russian and I could practice the language.**

**Prof. Pellizzi knew Oleg Marchenko at a conference in the eighties and invited him to attend the 1st Club of Bologna meeting in 1989.**

**In his presentation Marchenko stressed on the Soviet agriculture and its mechanization (1987 figures):**

**- Tractor & agricultural trucks fleet & yearly supply:**

**4,109,000      602,000**

**- Grain combines fleet and yearly supply:**

**724,000      93,000**

**At the same time the total yearly production of tractors in the Western world was about at the Soviet level and that of combine about 20,000. This incredible production was due to the Soviet system, in which spare parts were not manufactured by the agricultural machinery industries, but by the ministry of spare parts, causing delays difficult to arrange.**

**As a result most of the machines were always out of order and waiting for spare parts.**

**Even the agricultural machinery design was a task of a different Ministry, based in Moscow. Often, the relations between the design departments and the industries were almost nihil and design changes practically impossible.**



**Oleg with President Putin**

**An agreement was signed in 1990 among the Marchenko VIM (2,600 employees, but 3 only with an English knowledge) and our Institute of Agricultural Engineering in Milan (ca. 40 people), with an exchange of personnel; Italians in Russia were fully guests; Russians in Italy were given a per diem they could freely spend.**

**Due to my even poor knowledge of Russian, I spent 3 periods, in 1990/91 in the Soviet Union and in 1992 in Russia, and became on Oleg friend.**

**VIM was very big, with an armed guard in every building. They were very proud to manufacture every part of their prototypes, using the mechanical shops (hundreds of tool machines), cast iron and steel foundries, forging shop, etc.**



**Later in 1997 I was part of an OECD two people team to admit Russia in the OECD scheme of tractor testing, visiting 3 testing stations in addition to VIM.**

**As the Club of Bologna President I organized the 1997 Annual Meeting in Moscow, with a total of 3 visits.**

**Finally I participated in the evaluation of new machines in 2008 and 2010 in the Soyuzagromash Agrosalon in Moscow.**

**In all these opportunities Oleg was my official guide and companion, together during his annual visits to Club of Bologna, OECD meetings in Paris, the biennial OECD Test Engineers Conferences in different countries and international agricultural engineering congresses.**



**Joking during the Club of Bologna meeting  
in Moscow**



**Kolkhoz and sovkhoz agricultural enterprises could not decide which agricultural machines to buy or which crops to grow.**

**Everything was decided by the ministries based in Moscow.**

**When I asked “Do you decide which and how many tractors a kolkhoz in Vladivostok (about 10,000 km away) need?” the answer was ”Of course, it is our system”.**



**In a Russian testing station**

**Soviet Union was a curious country. Hotel prices for Russians were 10 times lower and in rubles. As an Italian I had to pay a lot, with a western currency, and VIM could not afford such an expense.**

**As a result I was a guest in Oleg or his friend houses. On the opposite Oleg and his colleagues occupied in Italy only one room, to save western money. For the same reason, Oleg was always carrying from Moscow a lot of bread, food cans and vodka. When not invited for lunch or dinner, they consumed food in their room.**

**When alone he was also a guest in my house in Padua, and so it had been for Antoniotto Cavalchini and Marco Fiala homes.**



**Last year in Bologna**

**Once I took part in a commercial negotiation; Belarusian Poljese managers offered their machinery to an Italian dealer, who was at that time importing IH self-propelled forage harvesters.**

**After looking for more than one hour to drawings, photos, brochures, the Italian boss asked “Which is your price?” “You tell us the import price of your IH equipment and divide it by 3”.**

**The import was not arranged.**



**As I told, I was often a guest of Marchenko house. An amazing view was a 3-line half litre vodka bottles in the corridor, totalling I think about 60-80. Why? Oleg explained me the Russian custom to celebrate a dead colleague, drinking vodka. Oleg was in charge of buying all necessary bottles and he was every time saving some of them.**

**Oleg and his friends were drinking vodka at any hour: 10am, lunch, tea time, dinner, after dinner.**

**At his house Oleg exhibited me his patents. They were many dozens. In the Soviet Union to obtain a patent was not difficult and at no cost. On the contrary the Government was giving a bonus for every patent. Oleg told me that his patent bonuses were higher than his salary.**





**Oleg shaking hand with St. Antony in Padua**

**It is impossible not to remind Oleg, pleasant and always laughing, former Soviet army boxing champion, for his communist nostalgia (he was very proud to always wear on his jacket the Russian Communist Party badge), for his crushing handshake and for the vodka bottles he was always carrying to the Club of Bologna meetings, wishing the Russian cheers За здоровье (za zdarovy).**

**За здравье Oleg!**