



Collage by OVD-Info, based on photos and prison drawings by Lyudmila and Alexander

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ARTICLES

“I couldn’t do otherwise”: An artist couple was imprisoned for anti-war graffiti

Lyudmila Razumova and Alexander Martynov are a couple from the Tver region. On 17 March 2023, the court sentenced them to 7 and 6.5 years in prison for vandalism and spreading «knowingly false information» about the Russian army — for anti-war posts and graffiti. Both were defended by our affiliate lawyers. On 24 May, the Court of Appeal approved the prison terms for Lyudmila and Alexander. OVD-Info in collaboration with [Spektr](#).

ОБ ЭТОМ НИКТО НЕ УЗНАЕТ

Если об этом никто не напишет. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы плохие дела не оставались в тишине.

ПОДПИСАТЬСЯ

Русская версия

«I was scared of the war, of how it might end for all of us. I was brought up to believe that war is the worst thing that people can do. Where is my fault in that? I do not think the video I shared is fake <...> When I see Kharkiv being bombed, it means to me that Kharkiv is being bombed and nothing else. <...> And yes, I am afraid, as a woman and as a human being. A human being! Not as a slave. A free and honest human being».

This is Lyudmila Razumova's **last word** in the trial, in which she retracted her confession and stated that she believes the videos published on her social media to be true.

Alexander Martynov and Lyudmila Razumova are in a civil union. They both live in Novozavidovsky, a small village in the Tver region. Alexander is 64 years old, he is retired and has since worked as a taxi driver in Tver. Lyudmila is 56 years old, she is a housewife, took care of the garden and loved photography. She has three children from her first marriage — a seventeen-year-old daughter, Marusya, and two grown-up sons, Dmitri and Anton. The girl now lives with her father.



Lyudmila and Alexander / Photo: Odnoklassniki

On 17 March 2023, Konakovo City Court Judge Svetlana Kosacheva sentenced Lyudmila to seven years' general imprisonment for spreading “knowingly false information” about the Russian army and vandalism, and Alexander Martynov was sentenced to six years and six months for the same charge — also general imprisonment. During the debate, the prosecutor **demand**ed that both be sentenced to seven years and six months in prison.

“MEET MY CELLMATE”

We know about the artist couple mostly thanks to another victim of the Kremlin's repressions — Andrei Trofimov. He was Alexandre's cellmate in the remand prison. They maintained typewritten communication. Thanks to these letters, much is known about the fate of Lyudmila and Alexander. Trofimov forwarded these letters to volunteer Maria Bovenko: she lives in France and supports Russian political prisoners. When Maria decided to write a letter to one of them, she used “Svobot”, a Telegram bot that sends the name and address of a random prisoner. The bot selected

Andrei Trofimov, a **defendant** in a criminal case for spreading “knowingly false information” about the Russian army, “incitement to extremism” and “preparation for participation in illegal groups”.

“From the first letter, Andrei asked me to contact various people to pass on news and information about him and to teach them how to use the FSIN letter”, says Bovenko. “He wrote to me that his family was being intimidated. When I started communicating with his family, it turned out that his son contacted OVD-Info immediately after the arrest, but then it turned out that the lawyer hired by his wife intimidated them and said terrible things: ‘No publicity, you must not talk to journalists, no one must know about the case, otherwise he will be declared a terrorist and extremist, he must admit his guilt’”.

In one of the very first letters Trofimov spoke about Martynov and Razumova:

“This is amazing: we met when nobody knew about Andrei Nikolaevich, nobody had written to Alex and Lucy!” — Bovenko, the volunteer says. “They are intelligentsia and will never ask for money. Andrei wrote that Alex literally had no money to go to the prison shop — so he made me realise that his cellmate had no money at all”.

Letter from Andrey Trofimov: “Meet my cellmate, Alexander Martynov. He was apprehended while working: he’s a Yandex taxi driver, he was detained at a gas station. Lucy is his wife and codefendant. She’s from Khabarovsk Territory in the Far East of Russia. It was Sergey Furgal’s story that got her interested in politics. In March 2022 Lucy demonstrated a designer’s approach to the antiwar agitation: she complemented the inscription ‘Putler Kaput’ with the stencil illustration combining the portraits of Putin and Hitler. And her last art work of that spring thundered through the entire Konakovskiy district in Tver region not far from Moscow: the

words ‘Ukraine, forgive us!’ on the pedestal of the ‘Katyusha’ monument”.

GRAFFITIS IN A VILLAGE

Scan through Ludmila Razumova’s [page](#) on the Odnoklassniki social media platform. There’s her black and white portrait, colours of the Ukrainian flag, a Ukrainian tractor drags a tank with the letter Z. There’re plenty of photos of Ludmila’s daughter Marusia and their dog Zosia, their home life and nature. Alexander’s page in the same [social network](#) demonstrates his photo with Lyudmila and large white letters on a blue background: “I don’t need the war!” On January 30th, 2022, Alexander posted a video about their [trip](#) to Georgia with Lyudmila: they walk through the streets, look at the sea, hug, pet dogs and cats. The next post was published on February 25: it was a “Stop the war with Ukraine!” petition.

Letter from Andrey Trofimov: “On the day the war broke out, Sasha and Lyusya rushed from Novozavidovsky township near Tver to Moscow: they hoped to take part in a whopping antiwar demonstration. But in Moscow they saw empty Bolotnaya, empty Manezhnaya, Pushkinskaya crowded with policemen. So they returned home and decided to act on their own...”

“Alexander told me that on February 24 they arrived in Moscow and went out to Pushkinskaya square to walk to Manegnaya, but they didn’t meet anyone”, Maria Varaeva, Martynov’s lawyer from OVD-Info, recalls. “He had a feeling, he said, that everyone around him supported [the war], everyone was for it, no one was indignant at it and no one was against it”.

After that, according to the [investigators](#), Lyudmila and Alexander “aimed at creating a negative image of the Russian Federation Armed Forces in the minds of an indefinite range

of persons <...> proceeded in the villages of Mokshino, Varaksino, Teshilovo, the village of Mirny, the township of Novozavidovsky in Konakovsky district of the Tver region, where they committed desecration of buildings...” and left pictures “in the form of a fusion of two people — V. V. Putin and A. Hitler”.

The prosecution also believes that Martynov and Razumova wrote “Putler Kaput” and “Ukraine, forgive us” on the wall of the “Konfetka” store in the Novozavidovsky township. The store is located in a one storey **building** sheathed with the bright yellow profiled sheeting, on a narrow rural street with a row of vegetable stalls and the same small shops “Groceries” and “Flowers-Gifts” located nearby.

The indictment states that Lyudmila and Alexander inflicted no damage to the store owner with the anti-war inscriptions they drew on the “Konfetka” walls. The couple also graffitied “Peace to Ukraine” and “Putin is war” on other buildings. On March 8, Lyudmila **wrote** in Odnoklassniki: “Morning. March 8, 2022. Everything is fine in my village! My husband has just sent me this...” There are three photographs below the text — with the words “Peace to Ukraine” written on different buildings.



Photo: Odnoklassniki



Photo: Odnoklassniki



Photo: Odnoklassniki

Beyond that, according to the information from the website of the [Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation](#), in March 2022, Alexander and Lyudmila “posted on their page in one of the social networks, in open access for other users, videos that contain deliberately false information about the

use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation for destroying cities and the civilian population of Ukraine...”

Alexander is being accused of sharing an Odnoklassniki post about the killed residents of Ukrainian city of Mariupol, in which Russian military personnel were called “scumbags,” sharing a video with a caption stating that Russian soldiers shelled residential buildings in the city of Kherson, and an additional clip referring to General Sergei Surovikin of the Russian army and former commander of the Russian military forces in Ukraine as a war criminal. Ludmila had six posts with videos discussing the shelling of Ukrainian civilians by the Russian army at the time and the destruction of cities. In some of these videos, Russian military personnel were referred to as “Rashists” and “Vata-fascists”.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

On Leningradskoye highway, near the **turn** to Konakovo, there is a “Katyusha” — a combat soviet vehicle on a white pedestal. As mentioned in the letter by their fellow prisoner, Andrei Trofimov, it was there that Lyudmila and Alexander made one of the anti-war graffiti in March of 2022. Shortly thereafter, they were arrested.

“At first, a criminal case was initiated for ‘fake news’, then for ‘vandalism’, so we don’t know if the monument (Katyusha) played a role”, says lawyer Maria Varaeva. “In their personal testimonies, both Alexander and Lyudmila wrote that they were unaware that the information they posted [online] was false”.

"We have all split into two camps in Russia, for war and against it. We are not being bombed, there is no hunger in Russia, we have electricity and heating. We still cannot understand those who are deprived of these things! But that’s for now. Ahead of us lies unemployment, total scarcity, and crime! It’s almost like the 90s... only this time, our

mouths will be filled with clay. Vata, keep praising Putin while eating breadcrumbs”, wrote Lyudmila on Odnoklassniki on March 6, a few weeks before their arrest.

On March 29, the couple was sent to Tver jail No. 1 on charges of vandalism motivated by political, ideological hatred, or enmity (Part 2 of Article 214 of the Russian Criminal Code), and dissemination of “knowingly false” information about the Russian army (Subparagraph “d” of Part 2 of Article 207.3 of the Russian Criminal Code). Lyudmila was immediately placed in solitary confinement because, according to the prison administration, due to her charges, she cannot be housed with other women.

“Pre-trial detention is one of the most problematic aspects of our system”, explains Andrey Donskoy, Lyudmila’s lawyer affiliated with OVD-Info. “It is used as a means of pressure rather than a pre-trial measure to ensure that a person does not run. To choose such a harsh measure of detention, there must be grounds and evidence that they will hide, continue engaging in criminal activity, or influence the investigation. No one proves this; the court simply says, ‘There are no grounds to distrust the investigation,’ and the person is locked up”.

The civil spouses gave confessional testimonies. The verdict was supposed to be announced in early 2023, but in court, Lyudmila unexpectedly withdrew her guilty plea and accused her court-appointed lawyer of incompetence, stating that her defense attorney Natalya Gorozhankina demanded that she “repent, look down and invent nonexistent illnesses,” promising a suspended sentence. Razumova recalled that her lawyer laughed when she spoke about honesty and love for the country. When asked by reporters for comment after the trial, Gorozhankina’s lawyer responded with a smile: “God forbid!”

Gleb Sokolov, a SOTA journalist recalls the hearing: “Lyudmila and Alexander sat in the same aquarium Lyudmila was

agitated, walking around the cage from side to side, but during the last word, she looked confident in her words. She asked, 'Are there any journalists in the room? Hear me out, please'. She talked a lot about the fact that her lawyer by assignment had pressured her to confess. At the same time, [the lawyer] was sitting there smiling”.

In a letter to Maria Bovenko, written after the trial, Lyudmila said:

“Our court hearing has already happened. It lasted only 10 minutes. They listened to my ‘closing statement’, and the rest was postponed for another month. My attorney gave me a sample (a cheat sheet) of the closing statement, containing only what should alleviate my fate <...> the absence of criminal records, not an alcoholic, a daughter, health and repentance, repentance, repentance <...> At the last moment I decided to say everything in my own words. And I did. I said that the one who called our actions ‘hatred for Russia’ does not have a Motherland or the notion of duty to her. I said more and more, everything was from my heart, and everything was true. I couldn’t do otherwise”.

The court considered that in the closing statement the defendant changed her testimony given during the investigation. On this basis, the investigation of the case was reopened.

THE SAME THING KEEPS HAPPENING OVER AND OVER AGAIN

An excerpt from a letter from Andrei Trofimov to Maria Bovenko: “Masha, hello! <...> The prosecutor requested a 7.5-year sentence for Alexander Martynov and Lyudmila Razumova each. They will be sentenced on Dec. 26, at 16.00. This will be the first sentence against anti-war activists in Tver [a small Russian region located between Moscow and Saint Petersburg]. I ask you to pay less

attention to me, and if possible, give more moral support to Lyudmila and Alexander. In prison Martynov is supported by his mother only, while Razumova has a minor daughter outside. Alexander and Lyudmila need more support”.

Bovenko wrote a letter to Lyudmila, and she answered. They began to correspond regularly and became friends. Lyudmila talked about her feelings experienced in solitary confinement and sent her drawings to Maria.

“She is an artist just like me, so we always have something to talk about”, says Bovenko. “It seems to me that the letters from the outside come from her, and not from me. I don’t know where she finds this inner strength. She wrote that her great-grandfather was a political prisoner, and now it is probably her turn. In addition, she immediately got down to work, she read Bulgakov and made illustrations for his “The White Guard”. She wrote that it seems to her that the same thing keeps happening over and over again.

From Lyudmila’s letters to Maria Bovenko: “... it’s chilly in the cell, but my ex-husband brought Alexander and me a lot of warm clothes. By the way, for 8 months now I have been in solitary confinement <...> I’m writing the main thing that right before the trial all my thoughts are about freedom and about meeting my daughter. If not for this hope, I would have gone nuts”.

cramped as this concrete box. Moreover, they have a refrigerator and a TV there. How am I going to live now without a New Year address before the chiming clock, by our Vladimir Putin?"

According to Maria, from the letters she got the impression that the court-appointed attorneys were not actively involved in the case, and she turned to OVD-Info and Mediazona. Instead of state attorneys, Maria Varayeva and Andrey Donskoy got involved in the case.

“Lyudmila wrote me an amazing letter about new attorneys and the court proceedings”, says Bovenko. “With them, for the first time, we felt that we are not alone face-to-face with the system, that we are not surrounded by schizophrenia, Kafka, and monsters, but finally see human faces”, she quotes the letter.

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

The investigation **was reopened** several times due to new affidavits from witnesses, and the court forced the couple to give their closing statement three times. For the third time, Lyudmila completely refused to admit her guilt. After that, defenders from OVD-Info intervened into the case.

“During one of the last court hearings, the judge seemed to have finally realised that Lyudmila is not pleading guilty”, Andrey Donskoy recalls, “In the case there are testimonies in which Lyudmila and Alexander write that they confess to everything but they are only acknowledging the facts that they have shared posts and graffitied rather than saying that they have known the video from Odnoklassniki to be a fake. On the contrary they write that they did not have a chance to verify it and they never did. In order to plead guilty under this article one has to know in advance [about the unreliability] because knowingness is always considered a direct intent. So they had to know exactly that they were spreading ‘fakes’.

This was not the case. In the course of the trial this knowingness was never proven”.

As the attorney explains, the investigators have just retyped the testimonies without understanding that not one of them is truly a confession and “the desire to initiate a case has clouded their vision”, hence the words of Lyudmila and Alexander have been interpreted to be a sincere confession, however “it is not possible to confess to something that was not done intentionally”.

“Besides,” says attorney Donskoy, “one needs to prove that it was hate-motivated. A specialist that was involved by the investigation side decided that phrases “Peace to Ukraine” and “Putler kaput” are in fact hate-motivated. We have researched this specialist and found that his first degree is in history and the second one in theology. His linguistic education is a three-month retraining program. According to the Criminal Code a full linguistics expertise has to be conducted but it never happened.

The specialist involved by the investigation is B.I.Chibisov (OVD-Info has a copy of his interrogation document), he is working in a non-profit organisation “Centre for Forensic expertise”. When asked by the investigator whether the writings on the buildings made by Lyudmila and Alexander are hate-motivated he is repeating word for word his answer to the first question on the hate-motivation in videos from Odnoklassniki: “The material submitted for investigation contains linguistic evidence of public calls for national and political strife and enmity”.

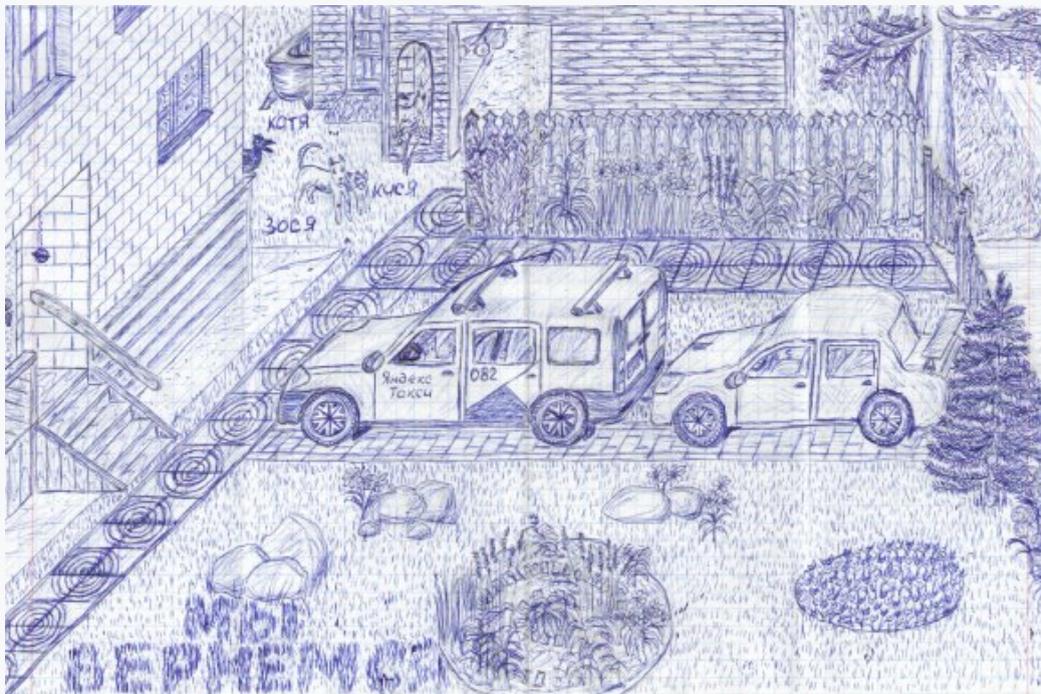
On the investigator’s question of whether the videos that Lyudmila and Alexander have published contain “information that the members of Armed Forces of Russia committing immoral acts condemned by society”, Chibisov says: “The material submitted for investigation contains the following information about the members of Armed Forces of Russia committing immoral acts condemned by society <...> in the

course of special military operation in the territory of the Republic of Ukraine” [verbatim transcript].

During the investigation Lyudmila has always been kept in isolation. She was transferred to a shared four-person cell but was kept alone there too. Later she was taken back to solitary confinement.

Donskoy says: “This is the first time I see such a thing. In pre-trial detention it is common to group the prisoners according to the articles but it is doubtful that they failed to find anyone with a similar article to place in the same cell as her”.

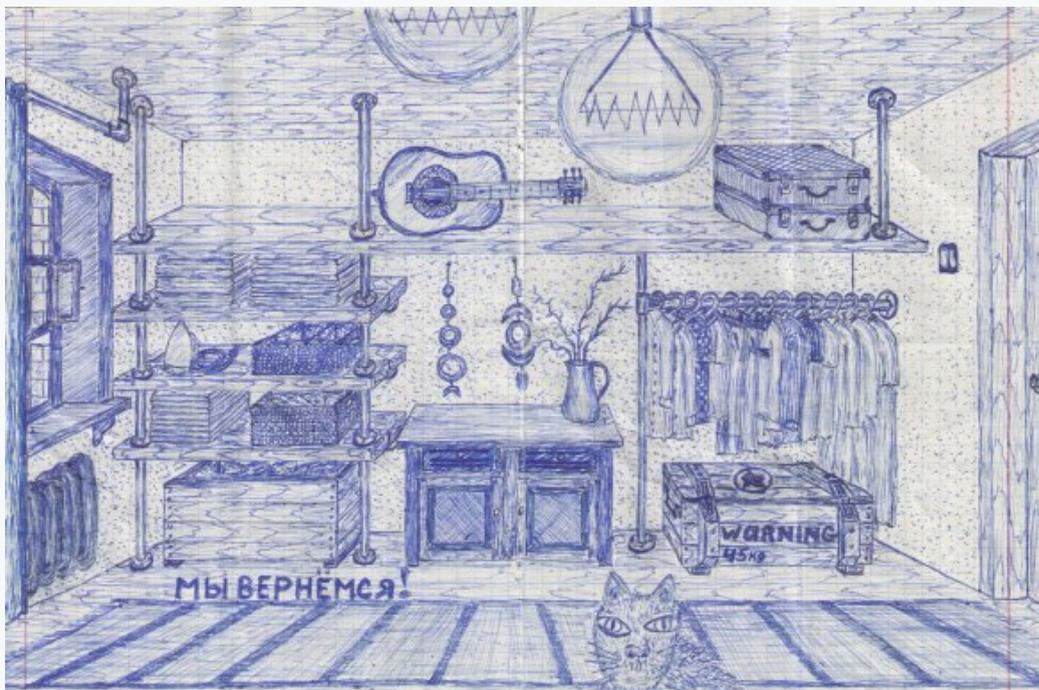
While the investigation was undergoing and Alexander Martynov was in pre-trial detention, his mother was diagnosed with cancer. After he learned this, he asked to let him take care of her but his detention was prolonged each time.



Alexander's prison drawings from correspondence with volunteers



Alexander's prison drawings from correspondence with volunteers



Alexander's prison drawings from correspondence with volunteers

“He could not care for his elderly dying mother because the court kept prolonging the detention and not researching whether they would oppose the investigation [if transferred to house arrest]”, says Varavayeva.

Alexander’s mother died in the beginning of december. A few months after in one of the hearings the prosecutor mentioned

that Alexander has a mitigating circumstance: an ill mother that needs care.

“YOU DON’T LIKE IT IN RUSSIA? LEAVE!”

“Lyudmila has three children, she is very concerned about the eldest ones”, tells attorney Varavayeva, “In her final word she touchingly said that her boys are not soldiers. If they were at war they would not cope, and that’s what she is afraid of”.

“My mother-in-law flatly refuses to hear the whole truth about Putin and this war. ‘I’m scared!’ she exclaims. ‘I’m worried I won’t be able to bear all of the truth and will die.’ That is, she realizes it’s all nonsense and lies to herself about it. I’d rather die enlightened and with a clear conscience”, — Lyudmila wrote in Odnoklassniki.

"I'm here like a fool, making posts, notes... everything so that these poor people, my fellow citizens, my friends, my compatriots... would come to their senses, turn on their awareness, start thinking, reflecting, analyzing..." - Another one of her posts.

According to Masha Bovenko and lawyers, Lyudmila and Alexander had no one to discuss their anti-war views with because the majority of their circle supported the Russian government.

They tried to reach some of their friends via the “Odnoklassniki” website but it was unsuccessful. One of the contacts wrote, “MADAM GOVZMAN, I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT. HAVE A GOOD DAY.”

Another man, who used to leave many positive comments under Lyudmila’s photos, was at first skeptical of questions about her and her husband. The man found out about the couple’s detention from a journalist and exclaimed, “You don’t like it in Russia? Leave!” The Earth is huge! Soon,

everyone and everything will be cleansed, including the courts and their corrupt laws, and your brains also need to be cleansed! The schools will be searched, as will the teachers, and the health care system with the vaccination will not be left behind! Because you work for Russia's enemies, not Russia! And we will destroy the fascism that people like you helped to establish in Ukraine in 2014. The truth is with us, and Russia is with us. Goodbye!"

"There weren't many people at the meetings," lawyer Varaeva recalls. "Only Razumova's ex-husband supports them and brings them parcels; no one else. That is why we ask that you to write them letters so that they feel supported."

The last hearing took place on March 17, 2023. There were no media or family members. The judge sentenced Lyudmila to seven years in prison and Alexander to six years and six months. On May 24, the Court of Appeals confirmed the decision.

"For some reason, the judge only woke up during the debate, when Razumova said: 'I admit guilt, but I don't admit that these are 'fakes'' — in such an article, these are mutually contradictory concepts." — Maria Varayeva explains. — "You must be aware in this scenario that you are posting misinformation. It turns out that one sign of the corpus delicti has disappeared, so the judge postponed the hearing multiple times before getting fixated on one thing: since they do not plead guilty, they get a real term".

Lyudmila and Alexander remain in pre-trial prison; Lyudmila remains in solitary confinement.

"They are both very nice and interesting, knowledgeable about history and got themselves into a terrible situation", Varaeva said. — "These events took place in the first half of March of last year. They tried to express their feelings about what was going on because they were in a bad emotional condition, but things got even worse for them".

Masha Bovenko tells me that Alexander adores Boris Grebenshchikov and requests to be sent the lyrics of his songs, which he rewrites in a notebook. He and Andrei Trofimov also play chess that they made out of paper.

“It seemed to me that Lucy was very lonely,” — she writes, — “And the thought of Alex sitting somewhere very close was especially difficult. — Of course, they are let out for walks there at different times and don’t see each other. I learned from their letters that they both adore Georgia. There was and is something significant for them there, particularly Ushguli. They even fantasize about returning to that place, buying an abandoned house, and living in the mountains”.

You can send letters to Alexander and Lyudmila by reaching out to newsletter@ovdinfo.org

ЧТО Я МОГУ С ЭТИМ СДЕЛАТЬ?

Прочитать, рассказать, поддержать. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы как можно больше людей узнали о политических репрессиях в России сегодня.

ПОДДЕРЖАТЬ

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