

By fax, to Denis Mickiewicz, 26 September 2003

Yale Russian Chorus
50th Anniversary

It's 1953. The Cold War is hot. Countless progressive Americans are being labelled fellow travelers. Blacklisted, Studs Terkel asks: "If the Communists are against cancer must we be FOR cancer?"

In this dismal time there arrives at Yale a gifted graduate student with a charming Russian accent that happily he never loses. He decides the world needs less talk, more singing. So he rounds up top tenors, deep bassos, and voices in between. He teaches them sacred anthems and folk songs that spring straight from the soul of Mother Russia. All over the United States they sing, and in the Soviet Union itself. At last the Berlin Wall comes tumblin' down. Some people believe that the Yale Russian Chorus ended the Cold War.

"Sto let", dear Denis; may you and the Chorus live to be one hundred.

William Sloane Coffin
(Yale University Chaplain, 1958-76)