TEN DAYS IN MOSCOW ...40 YEARS AGO ALREADY!

After a ten year career at *La Presse* where he has provided coverage of the Montreal Canadiens for seven years, **Gilles Terroux** worked for 28 years at the *Journal de Montréal* where he held various positions including director of sports pages and writing manager. Le *Journal de Montréal* entrusted him with the coverage of the 1972 Series. While working for the *Journal de Montréal*, Gilles Terroux, together with photographer Denis Brodeur, published a bestseller entitled, *Le match du siècle*, with Éditions de l'Homme.

Ten days in Moscow in 1972, we can't forget this too easily!

At the time, I collected hotel room keys.

I had one from a Mohamedia hotel in Morocco. Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. The Mijas hotel, a beautiful hotel in Spain.

I thought I'd add the room key from the Rossia Hotel, in Moscow. Just like this very large hotel (as large as four Queen Elizabeth hotels), the Rossia room keys were impressive. And beautiful. The room key was thin and elongated, attached to a four inches long block of black ceramic. A collector's item.

September 30, 1972.

48 hours after Paul Henderson's historic goal, we were on the bus, waiting to depart for Moscow airport.

The Intourist agency guide got up on the first step.

Someone has failed to deliver his room key?

No response from passengers.

She returned three minutes later, accompanied by a soldier.

Tavaritch (comrade) Terroux, your room key, please.

Uh... I think I left it in my room.

Nope. We verified your room...

I think. It is probably in my raincoat...

Farewell, great addition to my collection.

As good a way as any to end this ten day trip behind the Iron Curtain.

Ten days, exciting, intriguing, exhausting, sometimes frustrating.

Nothing happens like it would elsewhere.

It starts with the landing. The aircraft stops far from the terminal and we have to board an old bus that looks nothing like the old buses at Mirabel airport.

Customs formalities are long and painful. And for the delegation of Canadian journalists, it's an unpleasant surprise. Belinographs, accepted by the Soviet authorities a few months ago, are intercepted at customs. Dictation by telephone was the only way to communicate our reports to our newspapers.

Instead of simply censoring us, our guests had found a clever way of monitoring information.

A colleague in Toronto says he has evidence.

Around 3 am, Moscow time, he wrote his impressions, not good ones, of the city of Moscow in his diary. To his surprise, the next morning, he was greeted by the Intourist guide: "But you're not enjoying yourself here...?"

Another colleague had ended one of his first articles by mentioning that in Canada, on occasion (!), it was nice to finish an evening's work by sipping on a cold beer.

The next morning, six beers were waiting for him in the fridge available to customers on every floor of the hotel.

Monitored in the former USSR? Come on…

My roommate, the late Claude Larochelle from *Le Soleil*, in Quebec City, and I had the 'hidden microphone syndrome'. When we arrived at the hotel, we searched everywhere for an hour: under the carpet, under the bed, inside the phone, even in the water tank closet. Nyet! We did not find anything wrong... except for dust.

These ten days in Moscow were not only filled with unpleasant incidents such as the mysterious disappearance of half of the Canadian team' steak supplies or the phone calls to players' rooms at all hours of the night, which disrupted their sleep the night before games.

There were also many amusing anecdotes.

For example, Jean Béliveau, who wanders on Red Square, suddenly surrounded by Muscovites. No, they did not recognize the former Canadiens captain. They are especially attracted by his attire: red jacket, white pants and shoes, attire worn by the CJMS commentators' team of which this hockey great is a part.

Or, restaurant owner Jules Dumouchel who was offered, on the famous Gorky street, the equivalent of $120 for his suit. Not quite the place to undress, although newspapers in Montreal at the time were announcing the suit at $39 and two pairs of pants for $24.94.

There is also the story of Irving Grundman, stepping out of a bus when a young man asks, in English, for a cigarette.

> *I'll give you a good cigar as long as you show me the way to the Intourist hotel.*
>
> *With pleasure, sir, taking the precious cigar in his hand.*
>
> *The Intourist hotel is right in front of you, on the other side of the street...*

No pun intended, I save the dessert for last.

On the eve of the eighth and final game in Moscow, I did not trust the fish dish served to the entire Canadian delegation. But the dozen chocolate éclairs, already on the table, would have made me very happy.

It was obvious I guess, since my table companions agreed to finish their meal without having the dessert...

After ten memorable days, four or five pounds lighter than when I arrived, I returned home, relieved, but happy to have had this memorable experience.

I would definitely return to Moscow.

But as a tourist this time.