

yevgeny
yevtushenko

author of babi yar

don't

die

before

you're

dead

World-famous since the sixties as Russia's most renowned poet and political dissident, Yevgeny Yevtushenko has written an extraordinary epic novel about life, love, and politics in contemporary Russia. Its translation into English has been eagerly anticipated since it was published in Russia and Europe and became an immediate bestseller.

The attempted overthrow of Gorbachev's government in 1991 is the background for this ambitious work, the author's first novel in over a decade. In this stunning amalgam of autobiography, political thriller, love story, and sharp satirical comedy, Yevtushenko chronicles the lives and times of a large cast of characters, some fictional and some real. Among the Russians caught up in the struggle to keep Gorbachev's fragile dream of democracy from being shattered by the hard-line Communists are Lyza, a former soccer star, now lifting himself from drunken isolation; police special investigator Palchikov, whose respect for human dignity finally outweighs his need for job security; Antonina Korzinkina, an émigrée poet returned from Paris after nearly fifty years with the hope of witnessing the birth of a new nation; and Lyza's faithful lover, Boat, a totally endearing sceler of public monuments. Equally vivid are the novel's real-life characters: Yevtushenko himself, all the while composing his "very best bad poem" with which to inspire democracy's defenders from the Parliament balcony; Yeltsin, a man who has landed suddenly, and somewhat to his own surprise, at the center of Russian history; and Gorbachev, a leader who has just as suddenly been cast out.

Upon the novel's recent Canadian publication, *Maclean's* commended "Yevtushenko's portraits of such figures as Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and Yeltsin, written...with an easy mix of anecdote and insight that reflects the intimate access that Yevtushenko had to the top levels of Soviet leadership." It is precisely this insider's knowledge combined with his émigré's point of view that has enabled Yevtushenko to re-create this wrenching period of Russia's history, presaging all too acutely the strife that grips it today. Infused with the passionate lyricism and vision that have earned his writing international prominence, *Don't Die Before You're Dead* is this political activist's testament to his people, a document of his belief in their endurance.

YEVGENY YEVTUSHENKO

Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts
Distinguished Professor of the Queens College, N.Y.

To my dear friends
to this Ellie + PAnes
with my confessionnal novel
deep
gratitude for
their permanent
moral support
and kindness
to the author
of this novel.
Your friend forever
Zhenya Yevtushenko