

GAGARIN RETIRES

Fight for space to breathe

By our own Reporter

There must have been moments yesterday when Major Gagarin could have wished himself back in the solitude of space. Especially last night at a reception at the Hyde Park Hotel arranged by the Great Britain-USSR Association. It was attended unexpectedly by Mr Macmillan—who had earlier found Major Gagarin “charming”—Lord Home, and most of the Cabinet.

The admiring guests, about five hundred of them, unrestrained by police, treated the small body of the guest of honour rather like a ball in a rugby scrum. The crowding enthusiasm was overwhelming and, to say the least, inconsiderate on a hot evening at the end of a long, long day. Major Gagarin had to be man-handled into another room in order to breathe at all, and at 7.30 he left the party, half an hour before it was due to end.

After this he was to have attended a dinner at the Dorchester given in his honour by British business men, but he asked to be excused and returned to the Russian Embassy. A spokesman at the Soviet exhibition said that Major

BIOLOGY CAPS ?

A conference of sixth formers was told at Jesus College, Oxford, yesterday, by Professor W. R. N. Niblett, professor of education at London University: “One of the things which stand out to anybody visiting Russian schools is how hard, by and large, the children are working compared with how hard they are working in the United States or in this country.” In England, a boy or girl gained a reputation with classmates for being good at cricket or hockey. “The comparable thing for many a young Russian boy or girl, incredible as this may seem to us, is mathematics or biology.”

Gagarin no doubt wished to rest before his lunch with the Queen today.

Later in the evening, however he slipped out of the embassy in civilian clothes for an hour and a half's sight-seeing. A man at the embassy said: “Major Gagarin is sleeping new. I suppose he just went round the West End and Central London and saw the lights, but I can't really tell you.”

Lindbergh recalled

It had been a day of triumph. Although London's doubtful weather shut the spaceman up in a closed black car, London's roaring, waving welcome everywhere he went was warm and spontaneous beyond comparison. Some older watchers in the crowds said that it reminded them of when Lindbergh came—another daring, personable young man from overseas.

Whatever protocol reservations there might have been at London Airport on Tuesday, Londoners and foreign visitors in their thousands have taken the matter into their own hands and given this small, smiling man the welcome they consider worthy of a Columbus of the Space age.

Yesterday he visited the Mansion House and the Tower of London, lunched with the Royal Society, called on the Prime Minister, went to the Air Ministry, the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR, and to a reception at the Hyde Park Hotel.

Major Gagarin spent about a quarter of an hour with the Prime Minister at Admiralty House yesterday afternoon. The closed car spoiled the view for many staid civil servants at the upper windows of Government offices opposite Admiralty House, but it drove slowly enough for the thickening crowds, many of them foreign tourists getting their sightseeing with cream on it, to see the major waving and smiling. “Lovely lovely. he's like on the telly,” was the comment of truant tea girls from the offices.

While the crowd waited outside, lining Whitehall from Admiralty House to the Horseguards Arch, Mr Macmillan was welcoming Major Gagarin and presented him with a silver salver which is to be suitably inscribed. Major Gagarin gave the Prime Minister an autographed copy

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Major Gagarin retires

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of a book just published in Moscow describing his flight.

Many people in Whitehall were surprised when, after driving a few yards down from Admiralty House, the cavalcade stopped and Major Gagarin, serious for the first time, laid a wreath of red roses, carnations and heather on the Cenotaph.

At the Air Ministry Mr Amery presented Major Gagarin with a silver cigarette box. Mr Amery is one jump ahead of the Prime Minister, for the inscriptions this time had been completed: "Per ardua ad astra" and "It is a fine thing that the quality courage can still be the passport to international renown."

The major said that he would treasure the box, which would remind him of the days when the RAF fought so gallantly alongside the Red Air Force. But he did not smoke, and neither did any of his colleague space pilots.

Major Gagarin had lunched at Burlington House as the guest of the Royal Society. It was a small lunch party of only about twenty-four, including Russian guests.

Professor Sir Bernard Lovell, who met Major Gagarin briefly in Manchester on Wednesday, said he found him "a very even-tempered man, not easily disturbed or worried by any-

thing, and completely charming." His scientific knowledge and observation had been outstanding for a pilot, Sir Bernard said. "We were very struck by the way he could answer questions." The major had discussed technical matters in technical language.

During the morning Major Gagarin drove to the Mansion House, hoping to get a sight of Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament, Fleet Street, and St Paul's on the way. But it is doubtful whether, in the closed car, he saw much more than happy faces and waving arms. He spent about half an hour in the Mansion House, where he was received by the Lord Mayor, Sir Bernard Waley-Cohen, and the Lady Mayoress.

View of Crown Jewels

In reply Major Gagarin said, "I am deeply moved by the overwhelming welcome which I have received here in Britain and especially here in London. Wherever we appear now there are cheerful, friendly smiles, friendly waving of hands, shouts and cheers, the signs of the people's very warm feelings for us. I like your capital very much indeed."

Between the Mansion House and lunch, Major Gagarin tried to visit the Tower of London, but the crowds made it impossible for him to complete his tour. He did, however, manage to see the Crown Jewels.