KAREN On Tuesday

Everyone at the "Crime and Punishment" cast party at the Channel Inn the other night was buzzing about Soviet Ambassador **Yuri Dubinin**'s absence at the American debut of Soviet director **Yuri Lyubimov** in the very same play that figured in his exile from the Soviet Union three years ago.

Representing the ambassador was his wife, **Liana**, who embraced Mr. Lyubimov and reminded him of their visit at his avant-garde Taganka Theatre in Moscow. When asked if he was offended that the ambassador didn't attend, the director said through his interpreter, "It's not every day that you can see the genius of Dostoevsky on stage, but he won't be so fortunate. It seems he's busy with more important matters." He paused and added, "or perhaps, diplomatic reasons."

When asked the whereabouts of her husband, Mrs. Dubinin abruptly turned away. Her companion, the wife of Soviet Minister Counselor **Oleg Sokolov**, said he had meetings. Neither would say if he was in town. One guest remarked, "Sending Mrs. Dubinin is like putting one toe in the water."

Mr. Lyubimov misses his theater in Moscow. His actors and supporters miss him. They've petitioned Soviet leader **Mikhail Gorbachev** to invite him back. But Mr. Lyubimov says he must "display self-control." (The actors at Arena, on the other hand, are said to be in firm control of their own longing for him since Mr. Lyubimov left town, as directors do, after the opening.)

"I'm tired of manipulations that involve me as a pawn," he said. "I want intelligent negotiations rather than stand with a hat in my hand."

The Democrats opted to use their cash to win elections rather than pay their D.C. property taxes last year. "We received the tax bill during the campaign," says Democratic National Committee spokesman **Terry Michael**. Democratic Properties Corporation, which houses the Democratic National Committee and the Congressional and Senatorial Campaign Committees on Capitol Hill, was delinquent in paying close to $60,000 in D.C. taxes the second half of last year. Following a year-end notice that the property would be sold to meet the tax obligation, they paid the tax bill plus $20,000 in penalties and interest. A DNC spokesman claims everybody benefited, except maybe the Republicans. After all, the Democrats picked up Senate and House seats, and the D.C. government made 20,000 extra bucks.

Young collectors at the Antique Ball at the Shoreham Hotel Saturday evening couldn't take their eyes off **Mark LaMura**, better known as crack addict Mark Dalton on "All My Children." "He looks far more wholesome in person as a Giants addict," said one. Mark says there's no way he'd ever become a drug user after doing firsthand research for his soap role in New York's Central Park. The ABC-TV show hopes to recruit first lady **Nancy Reagan** for a bit part on her pet project when they rehab Mark on screen later in the season.

After a two-year wait to adopt, **Grace** and **Morty Bender** were vacationing in Jamaica when they received a call to fly to Phoenix to pick up their New Year's bundle of joy. They named the 5-day-old infant **Jack** after Morty's dad, the founder of Blake Construction Company, the company that built the FBI building and the New Executive Office Building.

It's the time for midwinter make-overs. **Barbara Bush** was among ladies shaping up at one of the nation's fitness centers last week.

Jose Eber, the "in" Los Angeles hairdresser, was at the Ritz-Carlton last weekend. Everybody was on the lookout to see who had flown him in for a make-over. Jose insists even he doesn't work all the time. "Washington was just a stopover between Paris and L.A.," he explained. How chic we're becoming.

— Karen Feld



Barbara Bush