

SOVIET GOLD

MY LIFE AS A SLAVE LABORER
IN THE SIBERIAN MINES

By

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FOREWORD

According to my initial plan, this book was to tell about life behind the bars of Soviet prisons and the barbed wire fences of Soviet concentration camps. At the same time, by a truthful exposition of facts, I had hoped to help the reader to realize that the fate of a prisoner in the Soviet Union is by no means something exceptional, that the camps are an inseparable part of the Soviet regime, and, consequently, a part of the life of the people.

My countrymen are well schooled in the four commandments of Stalin, although no newspaper has ever published them:

The first commandment: DO NOT THINK!

The second commandment: IF YOU THINK, DO NOT SPEAK!

The third commandment: IF YOU SPEAK, DO NOT WRITE!

The fourth commandment: IF YOU DISOBEYED THE FIRST THREE, ASK YOUR FRIENDS TO PREPARE TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU IN PRISON.

To a certain extent, this is true, but I met many persons who carefully observed these commandments, including even the first, yet these precautions did not save them from prison. And not everyone regretted his imprisonment, so little freedom is there outside the camps, so small is the difference between prison and liberty.

And yet, the life of the people who find themselves in camp changed considerably. Until his arrest, a man is constantly afraid of being arrested. But after the arrest, when the worst has already happened, he gradually recovers from the perpetual fear and, if he is lucky enough to survive his term, he comes to see Soviet life through different eyes.

Prisons and camps have an enormous educational value for the Russian people. They destroy all the illusions of the few remaining Soviet citizens who still retain the naïve faith that all the hardships of Soviet

life are necessary for the sake of the ultimate—great and noble—goal: the creation of a happy Communist society. It is not for nothing that the camps are spoken of as the highest academy in the USSR, where the most intelligent and educated people can still learn much they do not know.

Contemporary Russia cannot be understood without an understanding of life in a camp. Not a camp as a place where innocent people are tortured or criminals are punished, but as a place in which millions of the most ordinary citizens live in accordance with the basic laws of the Soviet state.

This book has also turned out to be a book of personal reminiscences. Its connecting thread is my own history, the uniqueness of which reduces itself essentially to the fact that I was fortunate enough to come to America and thus find an opportunity to write this book.

I am not a hero. The reader will find many inconsistencies in my actions. At times I may seem ridiculous; at times I may be criticized for certain actions and behavior. This is inevitable and I accept it beforehand, since I would surely have been unfaithful to the truth had I tried to present myself in a heroic light.

The prospect of making a good impression on the reader has occasionally tempted me: it is so pleasant to be liked! I had the opportunity to paint a self-portrait that would be much handsomer and finer than the original. But the resemblance would have been lost and truth would have been offended. And so I tried, from beginning to end, rejecting all temptations, to tell the facts and only the facts, both about myself and about everything else.

I should be grateful, therefore, if the reader found some value in this truthfulness and accompanied me through those six years of my life, seeing again what I saw, and realizing what is today, thank God, already being realized by millions of people both inside faraway Russia and outside her boundaries.

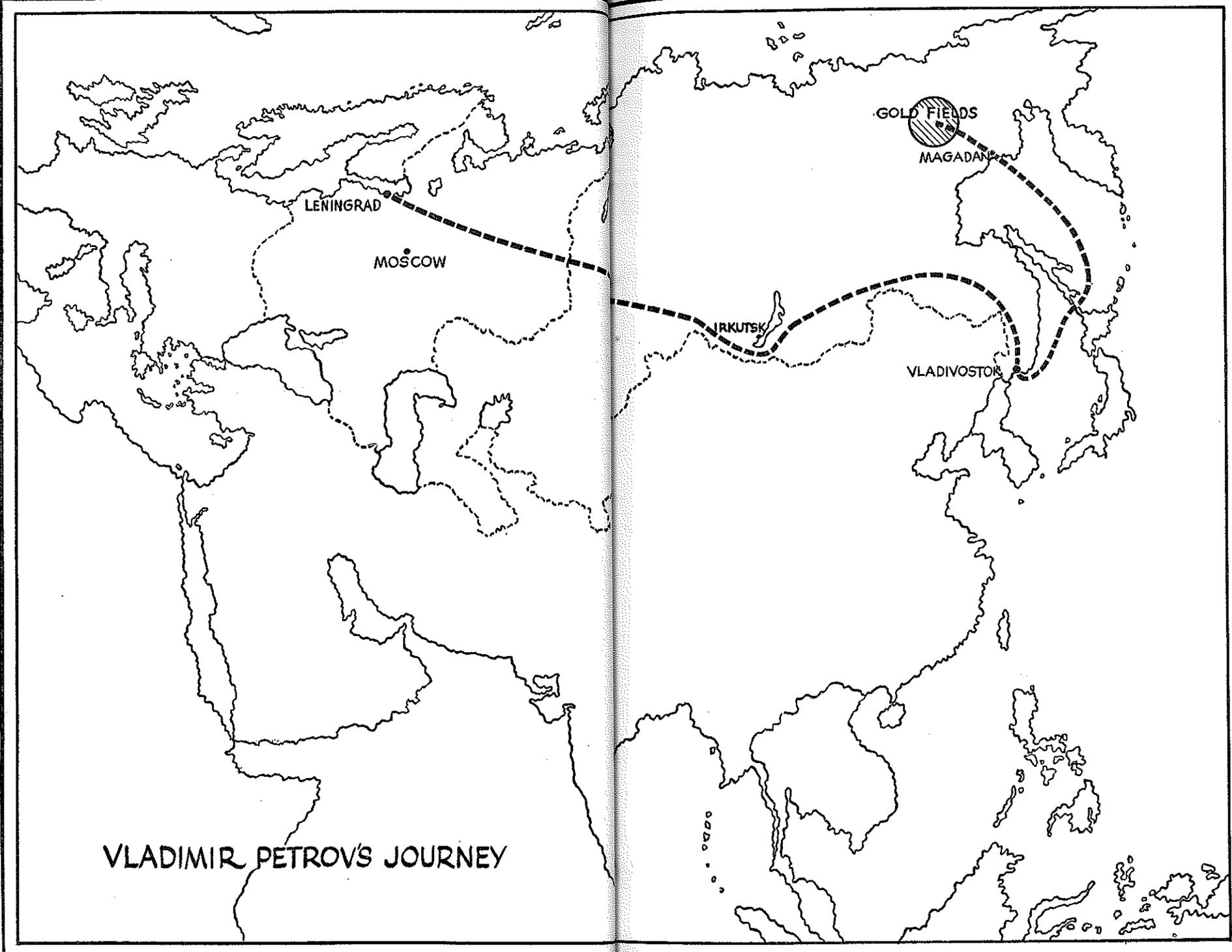
True freedom and humanity must triumph over force and cruelty, right over injustice, truth over hypocrisy and falsehood.

Only then will my people be free. Only then will the hard and bitter years sink into the past forever.



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VLADIMIR PETROV'S JOURNEY



1. THE BIG HOUSE

For many years there had been a tense feeling in the air, but the winter of 1934-35 found the residents of Leningrad under more than ordinary strain. On December 1, 1934, Sergei Kirov, the all-powerful head of the Leningrad province, and personal appointee of Stalin, was murdered. The assassin was a young man named Nikolayev.

The political purpose behind this assassination is still a mystery. But there was nothing mysterious about the wave of government-prompted terror which followed Kirov's death. It rolled over all of Russia, and crashed with well-aimed force upon the inhabitants of the City of Lenin.

During the feverish days immediately following the assassination, Soviet citizens picked up their local and Moscow newspapers with trembling hands to read appeals for bloody vengeance. Daily reports of mass executions and resolutions passed at countless meetings demanded that all anti-Communist opposition be stamped out. "For every drop of Kirov's blood," screamed the official Communist propagandists, "thousands of enemies of the people will be exterminated."

Forewarned by tragic experience in the past, citizens of the country with the "greatest freedom in the world" held their breath at the sound of an automobile driving through the streets after dark, felt their flesh creep at the muffled noise of an ascending footstep on the stairs, and poured cold sweat when a knock came on the door of their communal apartments.

There was true reason for their fears. Agranov, deputy head of the NKVD, the Political Police, was sent from Moscow to Leningrad to take charge of crushing "the enemies of the people." One of the first victims of Agranov's campaign was Medved, head of the Leningrad NKVD, arrested on a charge of failing to prevent Kirov's death. A sim-

ilar fate befell his higher assistants. Then the floodgates opened, and indiscriminate, wholesale arrests became the order of the day.

The great city of many millions dwindled in population as if struck by pestilence. Agents of the NKVD increased alarmingly in number and exerted themselves to the limit in performing their duties. The so-called *seksois*, secret informants of the NKVD, rushed innumerable reports in answer to instructions from Leningrad headquarters.

These headquarters, known as the Big House, were at the corner of Liteyny Avenue and Shpalerny Street. Hundreds, then thousands of people began to vanish. A factory worker might be called to the director's office in the middle of the day, and would not return to his lathe. A government employee would leave his office after work, and never reach his home.

In vain, wives, mothers, and sisters, almost insane with fear and worry, besieged the information bureau of the Big House. In vain they made the rounds of numerous city prisons. It was only on the rarest occasion that some lucky one would have her fears confirmed—her husband, brother, son, or father was indeed held securely behind prison bars.

There is a saying in Soviet Russia: "Thieves, prostitutes, and the NKVD work mostly at night." The saying is true. As night fell over the city, passers-by hugged the dark entrances of the houses when they saw the peculiarly shaped ghostlike automobiles known as Black Ravens. Such a car would stop outside a chosen house. Several men wearing the dreaded blue peaked caps with red bands would jump off and step quickly into the darkened house where the residents pretended to be asleep. The men of the family would be roused from their beds, taken out of the house and shoved into the already packed windowless automobile. The Black Raven would speed off leaving behind a sobbing mother, wife, and children, and a home turned topsy-turvy.

Or, the deft agents of the NKVD would set a mousetrap in a suspect apartment. Anybody could go in, but nobody could come out. The agents would wait patiently for two or three days, if need be, until the apartment or room was filled with friends and acquaintances of the oc-

cupant. Then up would roll the Black Raven and drive away with those captured in the trap.

It is difficult to determine how the victims were chosen. Apparently it did not make much difference what one's social or political standing might be. Among those arrested in the Kirov roundups were old workers (many of them participants in the three Russian revolutions), young students whose lives began with the Bolshevik revolution, remnants of the old Russian aristocracy who had miraculously survived all previous outbursts of terror, peasants who came to the city in search of work, aged university and college professors, industrial engineers, chief accountants and junior bookkeepers, old members of the Communist party and fledglings of the Young Communist League, and Soviet citizens and foreigners. In short, they were all who did not, or could not like the Soviet regime—who talked too much, who were or could become actual or potential enemies of the Communist rule.

I was arrested on the night of February 17, 1935. Like all the others caught in that wave of reprisals, during my entire stay in NKVD prisons and concentration camps I was given the honorary title of a "Kirov man." Actually, I had absolutely no connection in any conceivable way with Kirov's murder.

Just nineteen at the time of my arrest, I was a student in one of the technical institutes in Leningrad. I was diligent and quite proficient in my studies, and as for politics, my interest was strictly confined within the limits graciously set down from on high for us Soviet citizens. I did not regard the Soviet regime as the best in the world, but neither did I think of it as exceptionally bad.

All I knew of political terror in the country was based upon vague rumors, and it never seemed as widespread and terrible as it was. What appeared at that time to be the errors of the Soviet government, such as forcible collectivization of peasant holdings and the famine of the early thirties, I blamed partly on the wrecking activities of counter-revolutionary elements in the ruling circles and partly on forgivable slips in Soviet domestic policies. As a matter of fact, I viewed the Soviet government in an optimistic light and felt sure that in due time every-

thing would be straightened out. There was no justifiable legal reason for my arrest that February night.

This most important event in my life was the final link in a long chain of circumstances which had seemed too insignificant to me to deserve much attention. Looking back now, I can confidently say that except for the several gross mistakes I made then, my life would have taken a totally different course.

It all began with a conversation which in itself was an unavoidable part of a student's existence. Soon after I had joined one of the technical institutes in Leningrad, I was summoned to the so-called *Spetsotdel* (Special Section) of the institute, an office of odious reputation which exists in every Soviet institution. Everyone knew that in addition to its official function which was the registration of students for universal military training, the Special Section also performed unofficial duties in the line of reporting on political attitudes of students, and of gathering information about them in ways both open and secret. I was conscious of my complete loyalty to the Soviet regime, but aware of the extreme suspiciousness of the functionaries who acted as local representatives of the all-powerful NKVD, I went to that office with no particular feeling of joy.

When I entered the small room of the Special Section which was lined with filing cases containing students' records, I was somewhat disappointed to find, sitting at the table, a cheerful round-faced girl of about twenty-six. She invited me to take a seat, and with a broad smile began to ask routine questions, entering my answers in a bulky questionnaire. This work over, we talked for awhile about various things, then parted, both obviously pleased with each other. Before I left, the girl told me her name was Nadya and that she would be glad to see me as often as I might wish to call.

This acquaintanceship was not followed up for some time. Not that I felt any antipathy for Nadya—as a matter of fact I did not—but rather the knowledge that she was an agent of the NKVD acted as a deterrent, keeping me away from calling at the Special Section unless obliged to do so. Moreover, although I was already nineteen, I did not believe

as other students did in carrying on indiscriminately with various girls; for another girl, of whom no one in the institute knew anything, already held a firm place in my heart. Besides, I was extremely busy both with my studies and with earning a living. Very often, after a whole day at the institute, I worked until late at night either with my artist-friends who did extra work on odd jobs, or, when there was nothing better at hand, unloaded bags and cases from freight cars at a railway station. The most profitable work was drawing enlarged portraits from photographs. There were two kinds of portraits: leaders and Stakhanovites, record-setters in industrial work. Portraits of leaders brought better prices, 25 rubles each; those of Stakhanovites were worth only 15 rubles. But I preferred Stakhanovites because customers were more critical about the likeness of leaders: the slightest misplacement of a nose, or an eye that looked too narrow, and the portrait was rejected without payment. Stakhanovites were much simpler. As long as the man looked like a human being, the portrait was accepted, since nobody knew their faces, and the expressions represented in the portraits were utterly unimportant. I did not take great liberties, though, and always tried to make Stakhanovites look more handsome than they actually were.

The next link in the chain of circumstances which ended in my arrest I forged myself at one of the dancing parties regularly held at my institute. That evening I was in a happy mood, and although I could not dance, kept joining in the dances. It so happened that on several occasions Nadya, who wore a lownecked dress, was my partner. I was in fine fettle, regaled her with talk which made her laugh incessantly, trod on her toes while waltzing, and showered her with compliments until her eyes sparkled. When the party was over she demanded that I see her home. I fell in readily, but when we reached her house, I declined her invitation to go in, excusing myself by the lateness of the hour.

A few days later I was summoned to the Special Section. Nadya was amiable but serious. We talked about one thing and another, and I spoke on the subject which interested me most at that time—my studies in history. Nadya expressed a desire to extend her education and asked

me to bring her books I would recommend for her reading. I responded promptly, and the next day brought her a couple of books of a historico-philosophical nature.

Then an event took place which, little as it had to do with the life in my institute, nevertheless supplied a new link in my progress toward jail. It was the assassination of Kirov. At that time I was not particularly interested in who killed him or why. To be sure, there was a meeting in the great hall of the institute at which we unanimously passed a resolution, submitted by the secretary of our Communist party unit, which demanded stern punishment for the murderers. But with this, it seemed, the whole matter was over. There were rumors soon after that a number of students and one or two professors were put under arrest, but nobody paid much attention to that, since arrests were a pretty common thing in Soviet life, and besides we believed that if people were arrested they were certainly implicated in anti-Soviet or criminal activities. Then, rumors spread that arrests on a mass scale were being made all over the city. When anyone mentioned this to me I answered only with a shrug of my shoulders, refraining from any discussion of what was unquestionably a delicate subject. And when I was asked point blank what I thought of the matter I answered, aware as I was of great numbers of informers among the students, that if people were arrested it was probably for good reason.

One day I stopped in at Nadya's office to give her one more book and a couple of illustrated foreign magazines I had received from a friend who had permission to subscribe for them. Nadya was very busy, but was pleased to see me and said she had made a resolution to teach me how to dance. She made me promise her that I would come to her room especially for that purpose a few days later.

It so happened the evening I agreed to meet Nadya I had nothing else to do, and so arrived early, at about eight o'clock. She occupied a little room in a large house. She lived modestly, but was able to treat me to an excellent supper with an accompaniment of foreign dance music, of which she had records in considerable number. After supper Nadya spoke to me about her life; how badly it had turned out, how she had to break up with her husband, how lonely she was, and how she detested

the secret work she had to do. I was a sympathetic listener, although something in her manner, in the significance of her glances, made me feel somewhat ill at ease. This feeling became still more intense when Nadya locked her door, and putting her arm on my shoulder said, "Now, let's dance."

The dancing lesson was a failure. Either because the room with its large bed was too small, or because Nadya clung to me much too tightly, but I proved to be an utter dullard in picking up the steps of fox trot and tango. Finally Nadya's eyes began to glow with such fire that I abruptly broke off our dance and stated categorically that I had to go home.

"What's the hurry?" Nadya asked in a tone of reproach.

"It's late. I have to be at the institute at eight in the morning, and it's a long way to my home," I answered.

"Nonsense. It's only twelve o'clock. If worst comes to worst, you can stay here—we'll manage some way. And the institute is only a short distance from here."

Nadya's suggestion that I spend the night with her enhanced my desire to leave. By now I regretted I had come at all. Adamantly I bade her goodnight.

"You're making a mistake, Vladimir," she said, underscoring the word 'mistake.' "It would be better in every way if you stayed."

I left. On the way to my hostelry I could not shake off the unpleasant sensation that I had done something I should not have done.

After that the links of the unfortunate chain went on joining one another in rapid succession.

A week passed, and Nadya again called me to the Special Section. She looked worn out, and was blue under the eyes. Locking the door and continuing to stand, she asked, "Well, how did you like the dancing lesson?"

I muttered something inarticulate.

"Shall we repeat it tonight?"

"No, Nadya. I'm busy tonight. I have to go to work."

"I don't believe you. Come, we'll have a fine time. Please, Vladimir."

"No, Nadya. It would be better if I don't come."

"Why? Am I so distasteful to you?"

"Not at all. But this may lead us too far—these dancing lessons, I mean."

"Are you afraid of that?" Nadya asked in a low voice, fixing me with her eyes. "What's disturbing you? Is it the fact that I'm six years older than you?"

"How ridiculous!" I exclaimed. "I've never given that a moment's thought. But I give you my word of honor that for the present I'm interested in nothing except my studies. Some time later, perhaps . . ."

Nadya took my hands into her own, and looking at me with almost tragic eyes, said, "This cannot be. I'll be frank with you. I want us to live together. I earn a good living, and you will have everything you need, so you'll be able to go on with your studies without any worries. But you must move over to my place. If you think my room is too small, I'll find another one. Think it over."

I shook my head. For various reasons I could not possibly accept Nadya's offer. I got up.

"Thank you, Nadya. I'm sure your intentions are of the best. I like you very much, but not enough to make me venture on such a step." I paused. "At least, not now," I added hastily noticing the frown across Nadya's eyebrows.

She sat down, and without looking at me asked:

"You have another girl? I've made inquiries, and as far as I know you have no friends outside the institute, except for two artists."

"Oho!" I thought. "Things must have gone pretty far if Nadya is conducting inquiries among my friends." Aloud I told a lie:

"You're quite right. I have no friends in Leningrad outside the institute—I haven't been here long. But this doesn't change the situation, Nadya dear, and I can give no other answer to your suggestion than the one I've already given."

"All right, you can go," she said, opening the door. "Go and think it over. I give you three days, then I'll expect your answer. Consider all the circumstances and bear in mind everything I can do."

Her last words sounded as if they carried special significance, and I thought I detected a threatening note in them. But unpleasant as my

impression of the conversation was, I failed to see its true significance. I was too naïve at that time. I regarded myself as an impeccable Soviet citizen who could have no fears of the NKVD for which Nadya worked. That's why, when three days later she spotted me in a hall and leading me aside asked:

"Well, what's your answer?"

I replied with a single word: "No."

Her face turned dark as she looked at me and forebodingly said: "You may be sorry for this one day."

And so we parted.

Events rapidly fulfilled her prophecy. In fact, they did that same day. At that time, after lecture hours, except when I went to my job of unloading freight cars which I did to earn enough money for food, I slept in a students' hostelry. When I returned to the hostelry in the evening after breaking off with Nadya, I found a package of books lying on my bed. My roommates told me the package had been brought by a young man who said Nadya was returning some books I had loaned her. I looked at the titles and was surprised to discover that, with the exception of a couple of volumes that were actually mine, the rest were unfamiliar works that I did not own and had never read. What's more, they were all by authors with politically damaging reputations such as Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev and others—all leaders of the anti-Stalin opposition in the Communist party.

I concluded that there had been a misunderstanding, tossed the bundle on a shelf, and went to bed, deciding to clear up the matter next day. I was awakened in the middle of the night by a loud knocking on the door. A drunken student trying to get into the wrong room, I thought—and told the late visitor to go to hell. Then came a loud rattling, the door hook gave way, the light was switched on, and there stood three armed men in the familiar blue peaked caps, accompanied by the manager of the hostelry.

"Hands up!" The leader of the group had a quiet but authoritative voice. "Which one here is Petrov?"

Obediently I drew my hands from under the blanket, and raised them.

"Get up!" came the sharp command. With my hands still raised I got out of bed and stood against the wall, shivering with fear and cold. From the other beds three pairs of eyes gazed in horror and sympathy. Their owners lay with absurdly lifted arms.

The senior member of the police group who had two bars on the collar of his uniform, barked, "Which are your things?" His gun pointed in my direction.

Silently I indicated with my foot a couple of suitcases under the bed. My belongings, the entire worldly possessions of a poor Soviet student, were instantly emptied on the floor, and the armed men began sorting them. Letters and photographs were put aside in one heap. A volume of Shakespeare in English, which my visitors were evidently unable to identify, was added to the heap; also a folder with a collection of stamps, the fruit of many years loving effort, and, after some hesitation, a Waterman fountain pen, a gift from my father which I never saw again.

Then the chief looked in his notebook and asked where I kept my books. I nodded toward the bookshelf, and confirming my suspicions, he unhesitatingly picked the bundle which had been sent by Nadya a few hours before. The search was ended.

"Get dressed!"

I obeyed with dispatch.

"Walk down the stairs!"

The commiserating glances of my roommates followed through the doorway. Behind me walked the chief with a gun in his hand and two NKVD soldiers with rifles on their shoulders, carrying what they had selected of my belongings.

A windowless automobile—instantly recognizable as a Black Raven—was waiting at the curb. I was ordered into the back seat along with two soldiers. The head man sat beside the driver, and the car started to move.

We stopped some twenty minutes later. The front door slammed, and apparently the head man got out—he was blocked from my view. But he was back shortly for I heard his voice. "It's full up," he said, adding a

few choice swear words. "Drive to the Nizhegorodsky and be quick about it!"

We were off again, and when we stopped the next time, the driver tooted his horn. I heard the creak of an opening gate, and we drove in. The door of my prison on wheels was opened. I was told to get out.

We crossed the eerie prison courtyard and entered a building. After walking down a hall we came to a well-lighted barren room with a single occupant—an official with eyes inflamed from lack of sleep, who sat behind a table in one corner. My blue-capped escort walked over to him and presented a slip of paper. The man signed the paper, Blue-cap picked it up and walked out. The official and I were left alone.

He looked at me sullenly, rummaged through the table drawer and tore out a sheet of paper. My first cross-examination in prison began. Soviet citizens are accustomed to filling in questionnaires, and the one I had to answer now was very much like those I had filled in on innumerable past occasions. As I began, I took the risk of seating myself on a chair. My interrogator was on the point of stopping me, but for some reason changed his mind.

The questions which followed one after another were so familiar that I soon recovered my composure. I signed the questionnaire.

"Take your clothes off," he commanded.

I looked at him in surprise.

"You heard me. Do as you're told!"

I began pulling off my clothes as quickly as I could, until I was totally naked.

The man picked up my things, put them on his table, and examined them with professional thoroughness. He felt every seam, ripped the lining of both jacket and overcoat, searched every pocket, and carefully raked out the contents. With an expression of contempt he counted my money, found only forty-six kopecks, wrote out a receipt for the sum and shoved it into a pocket of my jacket, and tossed the clothes into my arms. Blue with cold, I hastened to put them on. My belt was not returned, and the laces were removed from my boots. My pockets were empty.

The official opened the door opposite the one through which I had come in, and signaled me to walk ahead. He followed, and we entered a long hall with numerous doors on both sides. He stopped outside one, opened it, motioned me to step inside, and as I did so, he slammed the door behind me. I was now completely alone.

The room in which I found myself measured three feet by five, had no window, no furniture, and only one dim electric bulb in the ceiling. I threw myself on the floor and immediately fell asleep.

I don't know how long I slept. When I awoke it took me awhile to figure out where I was and what had happened. Then I knew. My stomach reminded me that it was at least time for dinner. I heard steps in the hall, and somewhat diffidently I knocked a couple of times on the door. The whispered answer came with such hissing fierceness that I immediately became more patient.

Three, perhaps more hours went by before the door was opened and a guard beckoned for me to come out. We walked down several long corridors without meeting a soul. Only once, as we were passing a door, I heard a blood-chilling scream and involuntarily slowed down my steps. A forceful push in the back was enough to make me move faster. We came to an iron-latticed door, where another guard, who was sitting on a stool, unlocked it and we entered a spacious T-shaped hall of the Nizhegorodsky prison. Right and left, rising in three tiers, there stretched even rows of doors which obviously led to small cells. Narrow iron balconies ran in front of them and down the length of the hall. From the top of the first floor a huge rope net was suspended over the hall. I afterward learned its purpose was to frustrate attempts at suicide by prisoners jumping from the balconies.

I was stopped at the door numbered 81. The warder opened it with a large key, let me in, and slammed the door behind me. The lock caught with a loud jangle.

The first thing that struck me inside the cell was the heavy, suffocating smell which came from the thin straw mattress covering a wall bed. For a few seconds I could hardly breathe.

I looked around. The cell was six feet by twelve, had a vaulted ceiling, and after the dog-hole I had just left, seemed very roomy. A lighted

bulb, covered by a wire net, was fastened to the ceiling. On my left was a folding iron table anchored to the wall, and a stool. In the corner, a sink with running water—to complete the comforts, a primitive toilet arrangement. The window was high on the wall and had iron bars inside and an awning outside so I could see only a small bit of the dark, starlit winter sky.

Without undressing, I stretched out on the loathsome, stinking bed, devoid of any linen, laid my head on the prickly straw pillow, drew over myself an incredibly dirty and tattered blanket, and, exhausted by the new impressions, fell asleep.

I was awakened by a knock on the door and the call, "Rising time!" uttered in the sepulchral tones of a prison warder. I got up and washed myself although the lining of my overcoat was the only thing usable as a towel. I examined the door. It was heavy, lined with steel, and had a peephole at the top, covered from the outside by a hinged iron plate, and lower down a rectangular opening, locked from the outside, for handing in food. Even more than the barred window, this door was the symbol of prison.

Suddenly there was a noise in the hall. The small rectangle in the door opened, something crashed to the floor, and the rectangle closed with a bang. Picking up what was thrown in, I recognized two dirty brushes. While wondering what to do with them, a command came from the hall: "Polish the floor!" and simultaneously I saw a bulging eye at the peephole. I got down on my knees and now with one brush, then the other, began to scrub the cement floor.

Later on, the rectangle opened once more, the invisible person demanded the return of the brushes, and in exchange shoved in a mug of hot water and a chunk of bread weighing about a pound.

The pleasant task of crawling over dirty prison floors to make them shine like parquet became my daily occupation for the next five months. After a short time I learned a trick: I gave a mirror-like shine to only the spot on the floor which, according to my precise calculations, would show a reflection of light when seen through the opening. The rest of the floor I merely dusted.

After receiving the hot water and bread I hungrily consumed both

since I had eaten no food for a day and a half. I didn't realize that that portion of bread was my whole day's ration. Nobody disturbed me again, and I took time to study the walls on which were still left a few inscriptions made by my predecessors. One message penciled on the wall appealed to me a great deal. It read:

Here dwelt seven courageous tourists who are, for the sins of their fathers, being sent to develop the natural resources of Karaganda. Thou who wilt come after us, do not lose heart! Remember, thy fate was pre-ordained before thy birth, but it is not given to man to know his future. Believe in thy stars and look boldly ahead!

After pacing up and down the cell for a couple of hours, I lay down on the cot, but was immediately roused by a rattling of the door and the admonition: "No lying on the cot in the daytime!" I had to resume my walking until the little window in the door opened again and I was handed my dinner: a bowl of questionable-looking soup which I emptied into the toilet. A little later my bowl was filled with the second course—an oatmeal porridge made with water and without salt, which I swallowed with difficulty. Afterward I often recalled that emptied soup with much regret. Only a few days later my appetite far exceeded anything the prison had to offer. About seven in the evening I was given supper—a bowl of the same porridge. About two hours later I heard the command: "Go to bed," which I was only too glad to obey.

Six days passed in this wearisome monotony. It is difficult to convey to those who have never experienced it the true idea of how painful a solitary confinement in a Soviet prison can be. The only human being a prisoner can see is the investigator with whom one has to be extremely cautious lest some chance word be interpreted in the investigator's own way and lead to a few extra years of imprisonment. Interrogations are kept up for hours, and as a rule they are held at nighttime when the resistance of the tired human brain is at its lowest point. For the remaining hours of the day—from 6 A.M. to 10 P.M.—during which time sleeping is forbidden, the prisoner is left to himself. He is allowed neither books, newspapers, nor walks out of doors. His only right is to

move from one end of the cell to the other. Weeks, sometimes months, are passed in this way. My solitary confinement was to last five months.

On the seventh day of my stay in the Nizhegorodsky prison, just before supertime two uniformed men entered my cell. One of them, holding a paper in his hand, asked my name. I gave it to him.

"Get your things together," he said. I looked around. Beside a mug and a bowl there were no other portable articles in the cell. The man understood me, said "Let's go," and we walked through familiar passageways to the yard where a Black Raven was waiting. I got in, the door slammed, and we drove off.

A quarter of an hour later I was ordered to get out. It was easy to guess by certain signs that I was in the central investigation section of the prison on Shpalerny Street.

Again came the inevitable filling in of a questionnaire, again I was searched as thoroughly and with no more results than before, except this time my spectacles were taken away from me, and I found myself in cell No. 169 on the third floor of the second building. The cell was an exact replica of the one I had come from, but a little cleaner. The corridors, too, looked cleaner with their soft small rugs which deadened the sound of footsteps.

At the usual prison time I heard the command to go to bed. I fell asleep in spite of the bright glare of an electric light bulb, but was awakened in the middle of the night by a guard who had entered the cell without my hearing him.

"Get dressed. You're to be questioned!"

"At last," I thought. "Now everything will be cleared up and I'll go home a free man." At that time I was seriously worried about the studying which had to be done for the spring term examinations at my institute.

I got dressed quickly. In the austere quiet of the night we walked down the prison corridors, crossed a small enclosed bridge with a barred gate at each end, entered the Big House, ascended a carpeted staircase, continued down a few more hallways and finally stopped outside a heavy polished oak door. My escort ordered me to sit in one of the chairs in the hall, and entered a door facing me.