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Life is sometimes compared to a journey. If I may accept this comparison, I am now, in the last week of December 1981, on the final stage of my journey. From the preceding narration, the conclusion can be drawn that my life has been rather turbulent and frequently even dangerous. The Boxer revolt in my early childhood, the Russo-Japanese War in my boyhood, the First World War when I was a teenager, the subsequent Civil War, the atrocities of the Stalinist regime and, especially the purges and mass executions under Stalin, World War II and the danger of being discovered by the Soviet occupation forces in postwar Germany, all this is a little too eventful for one man's life. However, I am not complaining and indulging in self pity because this has been the fate of all the people in the Soviet Union and in many other countries as well. On the contrary, I must frankly say that, in spite of the prevailing conditions during my life, I have been very fortunate and rather successful. I have never experienced the horrors of a Soviet jail or concentration camp, did not have to fight in World War I, the Civil War, or World War II. Therefore I was not wounded or crippled for life and I did not die on the battlefield. Moreover, I got my first academic position in 1919 when I was not yet 22 years old and since then have never been jobless. I became a full professor at Leningrad University in 1925 at the age of 28, and in 1932 I became the second youngest corresponding member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

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I do not mention all this in order to show off. I only want to acknowledge how fortunate I was. I am sure the kind of person who always suspects everybody else of wrongdoing must wonder about me, since I had done so well in the Soviet Union. They must suspect this might have come as a reward for being an informer of some kind. After all, one should not forget that the people of the Soviet Union divided all non-informers into three categories: those who were in jail, those who are in jail, and those who will be in jail. I had not been in jail, consequently it is not surprising that one of the dissidents living in the Soviet Union, a certain Voznesenskii, when discussing in an article the purges and the arrests of persons working in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences mentions, *inter alia*, Grum-Grzhimailo's ordeal, described in Chapter 5, and depicts me as Grum's "evil genius," implying that I was a Communist who reported to the party committee.¹ This is simply untrue. My scholarly disagreement with Grum's historical views, which did no political harm to him at all, does not make me an evil genius, otherwise anyone disagreeing with somebody else's theories would be also an evil genius. This shows that Voznesenskii, like so many otherwise admirable Soviet scholars, has no concept of academic freedom and the right of a scholar to form his own ideas. As for my membership in the Communist party, it is also untrue, and to prove it, I reproduce here my military card which clearly states that I was not a party member (Illus. 27). This is another example of how easy it is to become a victim of slander. In this connection, one can imagine what will happen in the Soviet Union after the fall of the communist regime. Everybody will report on everybody else, taking revenge on those suspected of some evil actions against fellow citizens.

To conclude this section, I can say that my emigration from the Soviet Union was by no means motivated by lack of success and bleak prospects for ever achieving anything. The reason I left was my fear that a new wave of political terror might ultimately plunge me into a concentration camp and destroy my family. This is my answer to those who sometimes ask me why I left the Soviet Union where I had already achieved so much. I must add that I could not

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I. Учетные признаки	II. Общие сведения
1. Состав <u>Военно-административный</u>	1. Родился в <u>1897</u> году
2. <u>ВУС № 25</u> (род войск)	2. На учете по 31 декабря 1957 г.
3. <u>запаса 1 очер.</u> (военное звание)	3. Партийность <u>Беспартийный</u> Партбилет № <u> </u>
Билет выдан <u>26 декабря 1980 г.</u> <u>Октябрьский РВК, Ленинград</u> (подпись войсковой части)	4. Соц. полож. <u>С.Р.М.М.М.</u>
<u>Октябрьский Райвоенком</u> (подпись и печать)	5. Соц. происх. <u>Е.В. Мещеряков</u>
<u>Байтисовский Райвоенком</u> (подпись и печать)	6. Военное образование <u>Не имеет</u>
	7. Гражданское образование <u>Министерство в 1918 г. в Ленинграде в Государственной Университет, по специальности - Инженерное Науч. в 1921 г. в Ленинграде</u>
	8. Боевые награды <u>Не имеет</u>

Illus. 27. The Author's Military Card

III. Основные обязанности начсостава запаса

- 1) По увольнении из РККА явиться лично в районный военкомат по месту избранного жительства для приема на учет.
- 2) При выезде на постоянное жительство в район другого военкомата сняться с учета в прежнем военкомате и сообщить, куда убыл, а по прибытии стать на учет в новом военкомате и сообщить ему свой адрес, место службы и номера телефонов (служебный и домашний).
- 3) В случае временного выезда на срок от 1 до 2 месяцев, только сообщить военкомату, куда и на какой срок убыл. О временном выезде до 1-го месяца сообщать не нужно.
- 4) При перемене адреса и места службы сообщить военкомату в 10-дневный срок.
- 5) В случае изменения партийности и получения специального или партийного образования сообщить военкомату.
- 6) Если считает себя по состоянию здоровья негодным к военной службе, заявить военкомату, не ожидая призыва.

7) В случае выезда военкомата или конспиративной группы (в которой принята или принята в члены, состав которой состоит из) имущественной помощи или другим образом обеспечивать в назначенный срок и везти с собой военный билет, мобилизационный или трудовой список.

8) Если в районе не имеется своего районного военкомата, то во всех случаях обращаться в районный исполком.

ПОЯСНЕНИЯ:

а) При сообщении о переездах (п. 3, 4 и 5) и заявлениях о болезни (п. 6) смысла военного билета не требуется.

б) Во всех случаях переписки с военкоматом указывать фамилию и инициалы, а также 1, 2 и 3 учетных признака (см. 2 стр.).

в) При наличии на предприятии, учреждении военно-учетного стола прием в счете с учета при переездах оформлять через свой военно-учетный стол.

Настоящие правила прочесть и обязуюсь выполнять.

Подпись *Шинин*

have remained there even if I had had ironclad guarantees that nothing would ever happen to me and my family, because I am a very international person, if I may use favorably a term of opprobrium of the Soviet era. I have friends in many countries. I like reading foreign newspapers and magazines and listening to foreign radio stations. I like to travel and I demand the right to have my own opinions and exchange them with equally free people from other countries. All this would have been impossible for me in the Soviet Union. Therefore, I had only one option, namely, to emigrate. The unexpected opportunity came when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union and occupied the town of Mikoyan Shakh in the Caucasus on August 13, 1942 where I happened to be living. I was offered an

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escape. Of course, Germany was not my final destination but only a stopover on my way to freedom. The way was long, with many delays and disappointments.

I have described in Chapter 10 my life in the United States, a life full of success. No one, however, is spared from grief. The recent unhappy period of my life began in 1977. On July 15, three weeks before my eightieth birthday, a colleague of mine and his wife visited us at home. My wife was in good spirits, and everything seemed fine. After our friends had left, my wife suddenly was unable to speak at all. The next morning I took her to the hospital, where the physicians diagnosed a mild stroke with subsequent aphasia. She remained in the hospital for almost a week and underwent thorough treatment. A specialist in speech disorders treated her, and her speech slowly returned. She soon learned to speak quickly, but was never again to achieve perfection in speech. She often confused words or could not remember a word she was looking for. It was frustrating for her because she had always been active and independent. Such was fate's first warning to us that worse was yet to come.

On August 8, however, I celebrated my eightieth birthday. My colleagues at the School of International Studies, University of Washington held an official lunch in my honor, which took place in the hall of the Faculty Club. In the evening, a party organized by our Turkish students was celebrated in my honor. Those Turkish students were actually young Turkish scholars who had come from Turkey to do postdoctoral research under Professor Ilse Cirtautas's guidance. They had also invited Turkish friends to the party.

I still remember one particular detail. On that day a certain Solomon Ioffe had come to Seattle. He had left the Soviet Union and had only recently come to the United States. I knew him by name because we had been writing to each other for almost ten years. Now he had finally arrived, but his luggage had not come with the same plane. Consequently, I had to lend him one of my suits so he could attend the party. Subsequently, Ioffe enrolled as a graduate student at the University of Washington.

Later that year, on December 13, Solomon Ioffe came to see

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me. When I answered the doorbell and let him in, he was holding in his hand something looking like a letter. It was a telegram and it had been hanging on the doorknob when he rang the bell. I opened the telegram. It was unsigned and came from Leningrad. The text was brief: "Elizaveta Nikolaevna died suddenly on December 12." A few days later, a letter came from my sister's colleague, a scholar at the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad. It gave some details, stating that the cause of my sister's death was heart failure and that she had been buried "according to the rites of the Christian Church" in a certain cemetery, and that later a tombstone would be erected, paid for by my sister's savings which, for this purpose, had been released by the pertinent government agency.

My sister's death was, of course, a very grievous shock to me and to Edith, who had known Elisabeth as a young girl. Elisabeth's death saddened us, but what was even more tragic was that I had not even seen her for thirty-six years, i.e., since the summer of 1941. Edith and I had invited her several times to Seattle and formally promised to pay her fare from the Soviet Union and back, pay all her expenses while in the United States, and be responsible for medical care in the event of an illness. She applied for an exit visa but never got an answer, even though there is a law saying the government is obliged to answer any application or inquiry made by a Soviet citizen within one month. An empty declaration on paper! The Soviet constitution and its laws, its treaties and agreements are just paper. We never knew why they had not let her out and she herself was afraid to apply for a visa again. They must have been afraid she would talk—talk about the lack of towels, coffee, lemons, eau de cologne in shops, lack of nylons and bras for ladies, shorts for men, and many other basic goods. The Soviets lack everything except a cornucopia of police measures limiting the already meager and appallingly curtailed individual rights. Elisabeth's death brought an end to hopes that my wife and I would ever see her again. My elder son who often went to the Soviet Union as a member of groups of Canadian scholars doing research on an exchange basis was luckier. He met her at least six times after I had settled down in the United States.

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Before proceeding to other events, I would like to say a few more words about my sister. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, she was born in 1903. Later she graduated from the School of St. Peter and Paul from which both our parents and our maternal grandfather had also graduated. Before the revolution the school was organized into two divisions, each housed in its own building, one for boys and the other for girls. After the revolution the school became coeducational.

Elisabeth studied history and art history at Leningrad University and graduated around 1925. She also graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory and was an excellent pianist. In 1927 she married my first wife's, Nataliya's, childhood friend Konstantin I. Gindus, a talented architect. He was shot in 1930 because a house he had designed was built in the wrong location. One would certainly think that the blame should have been placed on the contractor but not on the architect. Later Elisabeth remarried. Her second husband was the engineer Nenarokov, but they divorced rather soon. She became a historian of painting specializing in engravings at the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad and published a book on Italian colored wood engravings of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.²

Thus ended 1977. The next year was to be the most disastrous year of my life, the accursed year 1978. It began peacefully and pleasantly enough. In March, on Easter, my elder son Valerian and his wife Barbara, née Schneider, who is a doctor of mathematical chemistry, came from Ottawa to visit us. Their arrival was always a happy event for Edith and me. He was, as always, friendly and happy. As usual he brought lavish gifts—this time it was an expensive camera—and told many interesting stories about his recent trip. Valerian and Barbara spent several happy days with us and the time passed all too quickly. One day Valerian suggested that I go with them on a vacation. He knew that in autumn I had to participate in a conference at Bonn University. After that, he suggested that I should join them on their vacation in Austria. Of course, everything sounded fine, but for some reason I felt reluctant to have a joint vacation. Something just seemed amiss. Since I could not explain my misgivings, I called myself an old fool and

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promised to join them. After the conference was over on September 30, I would go straight to Graz to meet them.

In the summer I had a pleasant surprise. I was elected a corresponding fellow of the British Academy. This was the most prestigious membership I had ever held with any learned body and I felt highly honored. I wrote to Valerian and he was greatly impressed with the honor bestowed on me. So, after all, things seemed to be moving along nicely, bringing me only satisfaction and joy.

Valerian was having a very busy summer, working in Alberta with a group of Canadian and Soviet exchange scholars. In August Valerian returned home from his expedition utterly exhausted and felt nauseous. He attributed this to a dinner party organized by the Indians in Northern Canada in honor of his expedition. On August 12, he felt chills, pains in the upper right part of the abdomen, and began to vomit. He entered Riverside Hospital in Ottawa. The x-rays showed nothing and the doctors suspected duodenitis. Valerian was afraid his illness might frustrate the plan of our joint vacation and explained this to the physician, who agreed with him that since no malignancy had been discovered he might take the vacation and even try to get a good rest. Valerian and Barbara did not go to Austria directly but first to Munich, where Barbara's mother lived. I was to leave for Germany on September 15, but a few days before that Valerian telephoned from Munich to say that the German physician suspected gall stones and had sent him to the hospital. When I arrived in Frankfurt on Saturday, September 16, I took a rest in a local hotel, and on the next day I went to Munich where, that afternoon, I visited the hospital. Valerian did not feel any discomfort but was very tired. The initial tests in the Munich hospital, undertaken on September 13, showed only the presence of duodenitis. No malignant growth anywhere was discovered on the following day either, but on Monday, September 18, a sonogram of his upper abdomen showed a malignant growth. A computergram taken on September 19 revealed a multiple metastasis of the liver, and finally, test surgery exposed numerous large and small tumors covering most of the liver. Valerian was doomed. He did not feel any pain as he was being treated with pain-killing drugs, but he

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was drowsy and mostly slept. At the times when he was awake, I talked to him and tried to minimize the seriousness of his condition, assuring him that recovery would soon begin. Lying to him made me terribly unhappy. Suddenly I understood the poor harlequin who had to amuse idle onlookers while his child was dying. Did Valerian suspect anything? I think he did. Leaving him at the end of visiting hour I said, "Get well fast, my dear!" He looked at me and said, "I think I am no longer *your* dear."

On the other hand, Valerian paid attention to what people were doing, and obviously tried to find out the truth. Thus when I did not leave on September 25 for the conference on the day of its opening, Valerian grew worried: "Why don't you go?" he asked. I answered that the first day was of no importance and I wanted to stay with him, but that I would leave the next day. "So you will go tomorrow," he said, obviously relieved. I left and was away for two days. He seemed very pleased.

We also had the problem of letting my younger son Nicholas come and be with his brother. One difficulty was that Nicholas visited his brother very rarely even in good times. How could we explain Nicholas's presence in Munich at the beginning of a new academic year, when Valerian would know he should be missing his classes at the University of British Columbia where Nicholas was professor of Slavic languages. It would be quite out of the ordinary, and Valerian would certainly recognize the terrible truth.

Soon after a laparotomy on September 20, Valerian lapsed into a coma. Now there was no problem about Nicholas. We telephoned to Vancouver and Nicholas came. He was the only one of us who was present in the sickroom on October 8, 1978 when Valerian died.

Thus ended the short but very active and fruitful life of my elder son. His death was a terrible blow to me and I was utterly devastated. I am so much older than he was, and even as I write now, a little more than three years after this tragedy, the pain caused by his loss has not lessened. On the contrary, the more time passes, the greater my longing for him becomes.

Edith had known Valerian since he was a teenager, and his death made a devastating impression on her as well. Her health

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worsened from day to day. Two weeks after Valerian's death, we rushed her to the hospital with a severe kidney malfunction. Soon she returned home but in November she was again hospitalized because of water in her lungs. I remember it was November 18, the fortieth day after Valerian's death, when I visited her at the hospital after Nicholas and I had attended memorial services in the Russian Orthodox Church in Seattle. It was a cold and snowy day, and traffic in the city was greatly impeded. She came home in December. We had a modest Christmas celebration at home with a small tree and some gifts, and Nicholas came from Vancouver. Edith wanted all of us to go to a nearby Chinese restaurant, but it was closed for the holiday. She was very disappointed, but still did not feel like trying another Chinese restaurant which was farther away. I was sorry that I was unable to fulfill this wish, which may have been the last in her life.

On January 8, 1979, we celebrated her eighty-first birthday. A few of her friends came, and we had a quiet celebration with coffee and cake. It was a far cry from previous birthday celebrations.

On January 18 Edith and a lady from the neighborhood drove to a beauty salon. When the two of them came back, I was helping my wife up to the porch when she suddenly fell against me and slowly sagged down. As far as I could judge she was unconscious. We called an ambulance which arrived in less than two minutes. The physician pronounced her clinically dead and started resuscitating her. After a while, her heart began to beat and she started to breathe again but remained unconscious. She was taken to the intensive care unit of the Group Health Hospital. She remained in a coma for three days and suddenly came to. The doctors warned me, however, that her heart might fail again. Edith was surprised to be in the hospital. She did not remember anything and started crying when she had heard what had happened—"I died without pain and suddenly. Why did you bring me back to life? I am a sick person and I shall die anyway, possibly in great pain and suffering." She returned home on February 8. She was very weak and spent most of her time lying or sitting and sleeping. The night of February 12 to February 13 was very stormy. The wind lashed the trees and bushes

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in our backyard, and the branches beat against the walls and windows. Edith had always been sensitive to wind and storms and always had difficulties with breathing at such times, for she had chronic emphysema. I got up several times during the night in order to help her if she needed anything, but she was peacefully sleeping. The next morning I made breakfast for her and brought it to her bed, but she was dead and had probably died an hour or so before morning.

Funeral services were performed on February 24, eleven days after her death, because my daughter-in-law, Valerian's widow, had to come with her mother, Mrs. Schneider, from Ottawa. Edith was cremated and her remains were placed into our common grave in Washelli cemetery. Thus, four months after Valerian's burial, Edith left this world. And a year before my sister had died. All went exactly according to an old Russian superstition that great grief comes by threes. With Edith's death a third person had left me after a long time of togetherness. We had been friends from my ninth year of age until 1920 when she left Russia, walking across the frozen Gulf of Finland from the Russian shore. We were later to meet again, in Berlin in 1943. Our marriage had lasted just over twenty-six years.

I remained alone, living in our house at 3220 N.E. 80th Street. It was strange to be alone and see no one the whole day, but there was much work to do. The house needed cleaning, the garden needed care, and I had my books and was in the middle of translating a volume of Buryat epics. In September 1979 I went to Germany to attend the annual conference on Mongolian epics at Bonn University. Thus the year 1979 also came to an end.

Living alone in a large house and all the work connected with it were too much for me. In February 1980 I moved into an apartment. It was a quiet and convenient place. I gave away all books I did not urgently need to Western Washington University in Bellingham, which has a fine Center for East Asian Studies of which my friend, Professor Henry G. Schwarz, is an active member. I took the rest of my books along to the apartment. In summer 1980 the seventh volume of my translations of Buryat epics appeared. I

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dedicated it to the memory of Valerian, for he had always pursued my research with great interest.

I resumed my studies in my new apartment. First I wrote an article on cities in Mongolian epics. I was to present it as a paper to the annual Permanent International Altaistic Conference in Vienna. I was also invited to attend a conference on the origin of the Japanese language, organized by my friend, Professor Shichirō Murayama, which was to convene in Kyoto. The third conference to be attended was on Mongolian epics, which was again to convene at Bonn University. The University of Washington had asked me to conduct regular courses of Mongolian and Turkic languages during the spring and autumn quarters of 1980. Thus, suddenly I had more work than I could possibly do. I cancelled my attendance at all three conferences and accepted only the teaching position at the university.

That teaching assignment came up because Professor Ilse Cirtautas was given a leave of absence, and a substitute was needed to take over her students during her absence. I agreed for several reasons. I had not taught since 1970, the year I spent as a visiting professor at Bonn University, and I liked the idea of doing it again for a while. Besides, I wanted to make sure that my friend's students would not lose time in their studies. There were no other professors of Turkic languages spoken in the Soviet Union in the United States who would agree to teach for one or two semesters on a ridiculously low salary. For me, however, it was a welcome supplement to my rather less than munificent pension. In spring quarter of 1981 I taught Professor Cirtautas's students again, this time a course in Old Uighur, using a Buddhist text, probably of the tenth century, Kazakh grammar and reading of a chrestomathy for Kazakh schools.

In July 1981 I took my vacation with the Aaltos at their summer cottage in beautiful Vestanfjärd in Southern Finland. I also had the opportunity to visit the home of Jean Sibelius, the great composer, which is not very far from Helsinki, and do some other sightseeing.

At present I am translating the Kalmuck epic cycle Jangar,

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starting with the second volume of the Moscow edition of 1978.³ I have already translated nine epics, totaling 252 pages. The reason I did not start with the first volume is because most of the epics in that volume have already been transcribed by Baatar Basangov and excellently translated into Russian by Semen Lipkin.⁴

My other research is of a linguistic nature. There are still many unsolved problems concerning relationships among Altaic languages. I am collecting material from G. Doerfer's and Semih Tezcan's Khalaj dictionary.⁵ It contains, *inter alia*, a long list of words with initial *h* (<*p*-), such as *här* 'man' and *hat* 'horse' which can be reconstructed only as **per* and **pat*, respectively. This finding invalidates previous reconstructions and comparisons. It is quite obvious that Altaic comparative linguistics would have developed quite differently if we had had Khalaj materials long ago. This is another example of science's dynamic nature. A scholar's work is only done when he dies or is incapacitated for the rest of his life.

These lines are being written at the beginning of January 1982. It has been announced that this year's meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference will be held at Uppsala in June. If nothing unexpected happens, I plan to attend it. Being in good health, I assume that the "unexpected" could be either lack of travel funds or some international political trouble. The latter has frustrated many of my plans, but I hope that I will be able to go to Sweden.

I conclude my reminiscences with the Sanskrit benediction *svasti* which is traditionally put at the end of Mongolian Buddhist writings.