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The 1930s were a time of shortages of every kind and years of political terror such as were never witnessed before. In 1930 the sixteenth congress of the Communist Party called for an intensive program of industrialization and the socialist revamping of the economy which was to include the total collectivization of farms. Hearing rumors about the impending loss of their farms, thousands of farmers slaughtered their cattle and destroyed their grain so that when collectivization actually did begin, there were many empty cattle sheds and empty grain bins. Starvation soon swept the country. In 1930 the streets of Leningrad and of many other cities were swamped with beggars. Old men and women, and young women with infants in their arms stood or sat at street corners, imploring all passers-by, "For Jesus' sake, give us some alms." Most beggars had come from the Ukraine where some four million people died of starvation in 1930-31.

Ration cards were issued, even though all stores in Leningrad were empty. It was virtually impossible to obtain meat, butter, milk, and many other essentials, and only bread was given on coupons. At that time Anastas Mikoyan was appointed the commissar of food supplies, and people joked, "Since Mikoyan has become the food commissar, all foods beginning with the letter M have disappeared."¹ Soon special stores were opened for high officials, members of the secret police, scholars and important specialists.

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Special passes were issued to those who were eligible to buy there, and I received such a pass, too. In these "closed stores," (*zakrytyi raspredelitel'*) that is, closed to everyone except a relative handful, we could buy such things as shoes, clothes, food, and cigarettes at fairly low prices, but even in these stores some items were not always available. Black markets flourished. When I needed a suit I went to my former tailor, who was working in a government-owned tailor shop, to ask him if I could buy some cloth. He told me to come to his home because he could not discuss the matter there in the store. I went to his home and he showed me some excellent woolen material. He told me that he was working as a cutter in a men's suit factory. He had to cut twenty suits out of one bolt of material, but he managed to cut in such a way that twenty-one suits came out. "And this," he said, "is the twenty-first suit." My new suit certainly turned out to be expensive, but if I had not bought it from my old tailor I would never have been able to get any suit at all.

In this connection I should like to say that the black market at that time was full of stolen goods. In fact, it turned out at the very beginning of the 1930s that one could buy only stolen goods. It was impossible to buy fire logs, the only heating material available for homes. The janitor of our apartment house often came to us and asked if we needed some fire logs. He could get them because a barge with fire logs had moored at the end of our street. Its cargo was destined for some government offices. "At night," the janitor said, "my boys can bring you any number of cubic meters you wish. It will cost you only fifty rubles a cubic meter, and I can saw the logs for you for twenty rubles per meter."

Not only thievery but also graft flourished, but first I should mention that in 1931 we moved from the house which had belonged to my grandparents to a smaller apartment at 37 Lermontovskii Prospekt. New regulations permitted only nine square meters per person, plus another nine square meters for a living room, and one additional room of twenty square meters for scholars and writers working at home. There were four of us in our family and we had a maid, thus we were allowed a total of seventy-four square meters. As extra space in our old apartment was to be given to persons

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without accommodations, we decided to move to a smaller apartment. My mother who had been living with us moved in with my sister whose apartment was in the district of Petrogradskaya Storona near the zoo.

To continue the discussion of graft, I must mention that the manager of our apartment house, whom I knew only by his first name and who, incidentally, was later killed in the war against Finland, came every month to collect the rent. Once he came and asked us to pay for several months in advance because he needed the money for remodeling. I gave him the money, but then he also asked me to lend him some money because he had to buy something for his family and he was short of cash. I gave him fifty rubles which he never returned. He thanked me and added, "I've always said that you are a good citizen and a nice person. The other day I was summoned to the "Big House" (the popular name for the GPU headquarters) where they told me that your father had been with the Oriental Parliament and that I should keep an eye on you and report everything concerning you. But I said that you are absolutely all right and that I can vouch for you." He was obviously telling the truth about the GPU who must have told him about my father's work in the Oriental Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He only confused "Department" with "Parliament." We soon had additional evidence that the secret police was interested in us. One day when my wife and I returned home from work, we found our maid crying and no dinner prepared. In the evening of that same day she announced that she was going to quit. When my wife asked her whether she quit because her wages were too low, she answered that it was not that but that she had been summoned to the secret police and told to report on what we talked about and who visited us. My wife told her to stay and to tell them everything because we had nothing to hide. She stayed, and we never asked her how often she had to report to the secret police.

These two incidents were disturbing because I had already made my acquaintance with the secret police. Early one morning in 1927 the bell rang, and our maid answered the door, then knocked on our bedroom door and said in an agitated voice, "They've come for

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you!" I dressed perfunctorily and went out. There were two men who told me politely, "Please don't worry. You will come back. You need not take any belongings with you. We only want to talk to you." Still, I was frightened. We went by car to the secret police building and there I was led into a room where a senior official sat. He, too, was very polite and said, "You were consul-general in China, weren't you?" I answered, "No, I was not. I was born in 1897 and at that time my father was consular secretary. When he died in 1913 I was a teenager. I could not possibly have been a consul-general because I was too young." I saw that I had frustrated their scheme. They whispered to each other and then the one behind the desk asked, "But are you a loyal citizen of the Soviet Union?" I said, "I certainly am. I'm doing my best. I have published some important scholarly works, so I think that I am also a useful citizen." "Well," he said, "you know all kinds of languages. Suppose we intercept a letter in a language we don't know. Would you translate it for us?" I said, "In the case of letters in languages I know I certainly would." "Good, that's all. Please sign this paper with your promise not to talk to anyone about this, and here is your pass. You may go home." I went home to my wife who had been terrified all the time I was gone, and she was greatly relieved to see me back.

Thievery and corruption were everywhere in the 1930s. Once I badly needed some iron sheets to have the leaky roof above our apartment repaired. I went to the buildings department of the Academy of Sciences and talked to a roofer who promised to do the job and even offered to bring along some iron sheets. The Academy of Sciences had recently been reroofed, and some of the discarded sheets were still usable. He cut out the good parts and repaired the entire roof of our apartment house. As a precautionary measure, I had also asked for and received from the buildings department a certificate declaring the iron sheets reusable surplus and permitting me to remove them from the academy grounds. About three months later I was suddenly summoned to the crime division of the police precinct station. I wondered what this was all about and found out very soon. They asked me politely where I had obtained the iron sheets, and I told them. I also gave them the name of the manager

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of the buildings department. The police telephoned him and, satisfied with his answer, let me return home. I had been summoned because no iron sheets could be purchased legally so they assumed that mine must have been stolen.

Corruption was also rampant. In order to buy tickets on a train to Moscow or other destinations, one had to line up by six o'clock the evening before departure. By morning thousands of people would have gathered in front of the ticket office to vie for the twenty-five tickets which were to be sold each day. Where did the other tickets go? Some were reserved for intermediate stations between Leningrad and the final destination of each train, but most of them were sold illegally at exorbitant prices. Some friends of mine told me of an elderly woman whose son was a redcap at the Moscow train station in Leningrad. He knew the clerk in the ticket office and for a bribe of 50% of the ticket price, which he shared with the clerk, he could obtain tickets. When my family and I went on our vacation to the Caucasus, I always bought our tickets through that redcap. Another experience involved painters. Paint could be obtained either in a state-owned store or, more easily, on the black market. If one also needed a painter, one could readily find several of them loitering around stores selling paint and wallpaper. I hired a man to paint for us who was employed by a state-owned construction firm. He agreed to come around ten in the evening and paint all night long. When I asked him whether this moonlighting was not too strenuous for him since he had to return to his regular job the next morning, he laughed and said, "You see, citizen, right now we are supposed to be painting some of the new government offices, but I don't get tired because we just pretend to work. After all, they pay us only 300 rubles a month, so why should we knock ourselves out? You can't live on lousy wages like that. But I'm charging you 300 rubles for a single night's work, and I'll do a first-rate job for you." The same attitude could be encountered among furniture movers and workers in many other trades. They derived social status from employment in state-owned enterprises for which they actually did little or no work at all, but most of their income came from private citizens for whom they did excellent work.

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One had to stand in line to buy anything, and people soon fell into the habit of joining as many lines as possible. One first joined up at the end of a line and then asked the person in front of him, "By the way, what are they selling today?" One waited to buy regardless of what was being sold, for if a particular item was not needed at one time, it would surely come in handy later. "Later" meant the item would, in all probability, no longer be available in stores. What preciously little was on sale in stores was invariably of poor quality and often mismatched. For example, it was quite common to find boxes with two left shoes or two right shoes. There were also lines in restaurants and what we would call in the United States cafeterias. It often happened that while you would still be eating your meal, several people would be lined up behind your chair waiting for you to leave. Many of them did not have enough money to buy their food, and they would whisper into your ear, "Citizen, would you please leave something on your plate for me?"

Because of severe shortages, real tragedies occurred. For example, it was almost impossible to get medicine. Once a woman's small son became ill with diphtheria, and a physician prescribed vaccine but warned that it was hard to get. He said he would return in two hours and she should have the ampules by then. She went immediately to a pharmacy but they did not have the vaccine. She went to other pharmacies, but none of them had the vaccine either. Finally, the woman found a pharmacy which had the vaccine. With great relief, she asked how much it would cost. The price was sixty kopecks, but when she tried to pay the pharmacist said, "This is a Torgsin pharmacy. We accept only foreign currency." Torgsin was an abbreviation of *Torgovlya s inostrantsami* (Trade with foreigners), and stores with this designation sold goods for dollars and other foreign currencies as well as gold and diamonds. When the woman heard this, she became hysterical. Fortunately for her, there was another customer, a foreigner who very kindly paid for the woman's vaccine with a few American cents. The woman kissed his hands and feet; she was deliriously happy because her child would now be saved.

The miserable living conditions gave rise to a kind of gallow's humor among the people. All kinds of jokes made the rounds, and

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one of them indicated just how little faith people had in official propaganda. The Soviets had often prophesied the coming of world revolution. Two American businessmen visiting Moscow saw a man perched on a high tower and asked him, "What are you doing up there?" "I am looking for the coming of the world revolution," he said. "As soon as it appears on the horizon I have to report to the authorities." The businessmen went to their hotel, held a consultation, and decided to hire the man to look for the end of the Great Depression which was then plaguing much of the world. Perhaps, they felt, this man could see the end coming and bring hope to the despairing Americans. The next day they asked the man, "Would you like to come to the United States and stand on top of the Empire State Building and look for the coming of the end of the depression?" "I'll have to think it over," he replied, "I'll give you an answer tomorrow." The next day the man answered, "I am not going. Your depression will be over in a couple of years, but my work here is a lifetime job."

The year 1936 brought sadness to my family because in February Nataliya became ill with a disease that much later would be diagnosed as multiple sclerosis. That summer she did not take the children to Kislovodsk in the Caucasus as usual. Instead, they spent the summer with our faithful former maid Anis'ya who had married and was now living in Ligovo on the outskirts of Leningrad. Nataliya went to a sanatorium to recover from her illness, while I had to go to Buryatia to attend the linguistic conference I described in Chapter 4. In December 1936 my younger son Nicholas became ill with scarlet fever, and my wife soon contracted this disease, as well. They were both sent to the hospital. No sooner did Nicholas return home then he became ill with the measles which he had evidently caught in the hospital. This time he almost died. After Nicholas had finally recovered, it was my turn to get scarlet fever, and the last of all to get it was my elder son Valerian.

In 1933 the United States became the first country in the world to recognize the Soviet regime. This act certainly encouraged Stalin to prepare for his "Great Purge," but first he needed a plausible pretext. He soon found it. The very next year S. M. Kirov, the

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popular first secretary of the Communist party committee for the Leningrad region, was murdered, allegedly on Stalin's orders, by a certain Nikolaev because, as rumors had it, Stalin had become increasingly jealous of Kirov's popularity. Nikolaev's trial was held in secret. It lasted only one day, and in the evening of the same day he was shot. This procedure was most peculiar because all other political trials were long drawn-out affairs, with the defendants eventually confessing their real or alleged crimes. Still more peculiar was the fact that a short time later the chief of the Leningrad regional NKVD, the same man who had presided over Nikolaev's trial, was also executed. This chief of the Leningrad NKVD bore the name of Medved' ("Bear") and his accuser was the head of the national NKVD in Moscow, called Yagoda ("Berry"). This episode gave rise to the following joke. Question: "What is the difference between a forest and the NKVD?" Answer: "In a forest the bear eats berries, but in the NKVD the berry eats the bear."

Soon after Kirov's murder, identification cards were issued to most of the urban population of the Soviet Union. Those who had in advance been sentenced to expulsion from the cities (priests, unemployed old women, many pensioners, and those who had held important positions under the Tsar) were denied a card and were forced to move to the countryside, sometimes to remote locations. One such unlucky person was my father-in-law's old friend and godfather of my sister-in-law, the former Senator D. F. Ognev, at whose apartment my new bride and I had celebrated our wedding in 1924. He had to leave Leningrad and died two or three years later.

Kirov's murder was the justification of the Great Purge which began in 1936. In early 1937, while I was still in the hospital with scarlet fever, the Great Purge was under way and quickly spread to my corner of the world of scholarship. The learned Buryat lamas and physicians Tomirgonov and Tserenov, both living in Leningrad, were arrested. The next victim was the well-known Khambo Lama, i.e., the head of the Lamaist clergy in Buryatia, Agvan Dorzhiev, who was arrested in spite of the fact that he was the diplomatic representative of the Dalai Lama and over eighty years old. I knew Agvan Dorzhiev well. He was a very learned and amiable man, a

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great scholar and a very influential person in the Buddhist world. My family and I used to visit him during our summer vacations in Kislovodsk where he, too, used to spend his holidays. He was sent to the Aleksandrovskaya jail near Ulan-Ude, the capital of Buryatia, where he died in 1940.

At the same time, arrests also began in the Academy of Sciences. My junior colleague A. I. Vostrikov, a Tibetanist and Sanskritist, and a student of Shcherbatskoi, was arrested. He was the son of a priest, and in order to remove any suspicion that he himself was a believer, he had joined the League of Militant Atheists. However, he committed a grave mistake for when he invited some members of that league to his home he had forgotten to remove his icons from the wall. His visitors saw the icons and made quite an issue of them. At a general meeting, attended by both members and non-members of the league, Vostrikov was accused of duplicity, attempting to mislead the league, and of being a hidden enemy. The absurdity of these accusations disgusted A. G. Shprintsin, a Sinologist, to the point where, with tongue in cheek, he confessed to having a Buddha statuette sit on the mantelpiece at his apartment. With mock contrition he admitted how wrong he had been in harboring such dangerous opiate of the masses and with a final flourish he offered the statuette as a gift for the Anti-Religious Propaganda Museum.

Vostrikov and I had been co-authors of a publication on the annals of the Barguzin Buryats, and I felt very uneasy about his fate. For a while he was left alone, but soon he was arrested and disappeared forever. Solzhenitsyn mentions him in his *Gulag Archipelago* as one of its inmates.²

One day in spring 1937 my aide Kazakevich and I received an order to prepare ourselves for a journey to Mongolia from the president of the Academy of Sciences, V. L. Komarov, a famous botanist and head of the Mongolian Commission. The Mongolian government, through the Foreign Service, had asked the academy to send scholars to conduct field work. Neither of us was enthusiastic about the journey, foreseeing nothing but trouble, but after an interview with Komarov we accepted this assignment with great

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reluctance. Several weeks later we were summoned to Komarov who told us that exit permits had been denied to both of us, and then he added, "We thought both of you to be loyal citizens of the Soviet Union and chose you as prospective members of the expedition." This was certainly a remark unworthy of the president of the academy. He had no right to talk to us in that manner, completely disregarding the fact that Kazakevich was a senior research scholar and I had been a corresponding member of the academy since 1932. Did he not know that the Soviet Union was experiencing political terror of a kind never before seen in the world? Both Kazakevich and I were greatly worried, expecting momentarily to be arrested and exiled to a concentration camp.

Luckily, nothing untoward happened to us, and when summer came my family and I went to Anapa, a small town on the shores of the Black Sea, because the physicians had recommended that all of us spend some time there to recuperate from the diseases that had plagued us during the previous winter (Illus. 17). While I was in Anapa I received a letter from my secretary, T. A. Burdukova. She wrote that both Kazakevich and Zhamtsarano had been arrested. Zhamtsarano had been exiled from Mongolia to Leningrad in 1932, soon after the anti-Communist revolt in that country. Some members of the Mongolian government had already been arrested in 1932, but Zhamtsarano had merely been sent to Leningrad where he went to work in my Mongolian department of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences. I created ideal conditions for him. He could choose his own research topics and come and go as he pleased. While in Leningrad he wrote several important works, including *Mongol'skie letopisi XVII veka* (The Mongolian Chronicles of the Seventeenth Century) which many years later was translated into English by Rudolf Loewenthal.³ So Zhamtsarano was finished. He died in jail in his native Buryatia some time between 1940 and 1945. Very soon his friend, Bazar Baradiin, the director of the Institute of Language, Literature and History in Ulan-Udë, who had also left his native country and had been teaching Mongolian at Leningrad University, was also arrested.

As for Kazakevich, he had always feared arrest, and being

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Illus. 17. The Author and his Family at Anapa in 1937.

particularly cautious, he thought to protect himself from suspicion by becoming very active in the trade union of "Workers of People's Education" to which all scholars had to belong. He served the interests of the community by finding scarce publications, theater tickets and the like, and by editing the weekly wall newspaper. His tragic fate was the result of a mistake he made. In 1932 he applied for a travel grant for research in Germany and France. He arrived in Berlin a few days before Hitler's seizure of power on January 30, 1933 and worked at the Völkermuseum (Ethnographic Museum) where he often met with Professor F. D. Lessing, later professor at the University of California at Berkeley. In Paris he worked with Paul

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Pelliot but also visited his former schoolmate, the physician Bohnstedt who had emigrated from Russia soon after the revolution. When Kazakevich was preparing for his trip to Germany, I asked Sergei Ol'denburg, at that time the director of our institute, why a junior researcher was given a travel grant and I, a senior researcher, was not, Ol'denburg replied, "If you knew what kind of task Kazakevich has been given you would have refused to accept that grant." I never learned what kind of work Kazakevich had to do besides research. It might have been of a political nature. Of course, I would have never accepted any suggestions to do something other than scholarly work. Now, several years later, it became clear that I had been lucky not to have received that grant because Kazakevich, as it became known through the jail grapevine, was accused of having been instrumental in Hitler's rise to power (!) and of visiting emigrants in Paris. Kazakevich died in a concentration camp around 1943. His books and papers, like those of Zhamtsarano, were taken by the NKVD, and his wife, Zoya Vasil'evna, was exiled to Kazakhstan.

After my return to Leningrad from Anapa to resume my activities at the academy the purges continued. Besides Kazakevich and Zhamtsarano, my department also lost the Buryat aspirants Bolodon and Gomboin to the NKVD. Other departments of the Institute of Oriental Studies, universities, and other learned bodies were in the same position.

A meeting was convened at the institute to condemn the arrested "enemies of the people" and to formulate a new research plan. After the arrested had been condemned by a unanimous demand for "death to the traitors," the plan was discussed. One item in question was whether the text of the old Indian treatise on economics, *Arthasāstra* should be published. M. I. Tubyanskii, a student of Shcherbatskoi, rose to remark that it was unnecessary to do this work because a good translation had already been published in Rome by the well-known scholar Giuseppe Tucci. Tubyanskii was immediately attacked for trying to prevent Soviet scholars from doing work that a Fascist had already done. After all, his detractors maintained, a Fascist cannot do a good translation. Tubyanskii

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objected saying, "Fascism has nothing to do with translations. A Fascist still can make an excellent translation." This statement was, of course, very foolhardy on his part and proved to be his undoing. As a Buddhologist he was already regarded as a person engaged in hostile activities. The study of Buddhism was regarded as incompatible with Marxist-Leninist ideology. This attitude toward Buddhism has never changed, and even in the 1970s the well-known Buryat Buddhologist Dandaron was arrested and subsequently perished in a concentration camp.

During the remainder of 1937 and early 1938 more members of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences were arrested, never to be seen again. These included the secretaries of the institute, D. P. Zhukov, G. V. Shitov, N. G. Talanov, and the director of the library, P. E. Skachkov; the Sinologists Shprintsin, Shchutskii,⁴ B. A. Vasil'ev, Papayan and Kokin, the latter two being the authors of a book on the history of ancient China.⁵ The fate of most of these victims is unknown. We do know, however, that Papayan was tortured to death. A so-called Spanish helmet was placed on his head and his head was slowly crushed until his brain was squeezed out.

Other victims of the Great Purge included my friend A. N. Genko, a specialist in Caucasian languages, and the well-known Japanologist N. A. Nevskii. Nevskii had returned from Japan in the 1930s. He had lived there since the beginning of World War I, as the war and the ensuing revolution and civil war had prevented him from returning home earlier. When in the early 1930s Shchutskii went to Japan and told Nevskii how good working conditions were in the Soviet Union, Nevskii decided to return with his Japanese wife and their little daughter Nelli. They moved into an apartment in the same house where another Japanologist, N. I. Konrad, lived. It was at 17 Tserkovnaya on the Petrogradskaya Storona. One night in early 1937 Nevskii and his wife were arrested, and the next morning Konrad's wife, N. I. Fel'dman, passing by Nevskii's apartment, noticed that the door was ajar and heard whimpering inside. She entered the Nevskiis' apartment and found little Nelli all by herself. The Konrads took her in and later adopted her. Konrad

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himself was also arrested but later released. In all, about forty out of a total of ninety members, or almost half, of the Institute of Oriental Studies were arrested. About the same percentage was also arrested in the other institutes. Even full members of the Academy of Sciences, including V. M. Perets, E. F. Karskii, and A. N. Samoilovich were arrested. Karskii had already been arrested when the Finnish scholars J. J. Mikkola and V. J. Mansikka came to Leningrad to visit him. As I spoke Finnish I was ordered to take care of these visitors although they were Slavists and spoke perfect Russian, but I could not tell them the truth about Karskii. Instead I had to lie to them saying Karskii was on a trip and was not expected back in the near future.⁶

Police terror sometimes took grotesque forms. In the Buryat republic the brother of the commissar of education, Khabaev, was arrested and questioned every night about who had recruited him into an alleged spy organization. In order to terminate these interrogations which deprived him of his sleep, he "confessed" that his recruiters had been Artos, Portos and Aramis, the three musketeers in Alexandre Dumas's famous novel. The secret police discovered the true identity of these characters a couple of years later, during a period of relative calm, and released Khabaev's brother.

Another case was that of a Buryat teacher who feared arrest on political grounds and being sent to a concentration camp. He discussed this matter with his wife, and they persuaded her sister, who was underage, to accuse him of raping her. She did, and he was sentenced to three years in an ordinary jail and thus saved from slave labor. Before Stalin rose to power, rape had been punished severely, especially if it affected minors. Thus when six or seven rowdies raped a fourteen-year old girl in Chubarov Pereulok Street in Leningrad, all of them were shot. Now in the 1930s, rape, like theft of private property (but not of state property!) was punished with only a few years in jail.

I heard another story about a group of engineers. Once in Siberia I shared a train compartment with a man who had been one of several engineers who had been arrested and ordered to confess their "crimes." After having been grilled every night for more than

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a month, they decided to confess that they had blown up a railroad bridge across a certain river. Two years later they were summoned to the commandant of the concentration camp who rebuked them for having lied. "We did not lie!" they retorted. "Yes, you did," the commandant insisted. "There is no such river in the entire Soviet Union and there is no such bridge." They had invented the entire story simply to put an end to interminable interrogations.

Finally, I would like to tell the following story that one of my colleagues in the Academy of Sciences told me when both of us were already in Germany during the war. He had been arrested and accused of having become a member of a German spy ring. He denied this charge, of course, but finally, after weeks of seemingly endless questioning, he announced that he would make a confession. His interrogator turned friendly at once, offered him pen and paper, and my colleague "confessed" that he had joined a British spy ring headed by a certain Mr. Lockhart. "You should have seen his face fall when he read this!" my colleague told me. "He had been utterly frustrated." "But why?" I asked. "Because," came the reply, "as the interrogator told me, 'Everything went so well. We were talking about German espionage, and then you come up with this nonsense about British spies. We don't have such a case in our files.'" My friend was released after a few months.

Times were so terrible that Nataliya could not sleep at night. She would sit up by the window and watch the traffic in the street, and whenever a car stopped by our house she became terrified. The cars of the secret police, nicknamed "black ravens," usually came around five in the morning. Many years later I saw Zuckmayer's stage play, "The Devil's General," in which the general remarked about Nazi Germany that "in other countries when the bell rings at five, people know it's the milkman." In the Soviet Union it was certainly not the milkman because milkmen no longer existed.

Speaking of arrests and deportations, I should point out that sometimes it was good to be out of town when a wave of arrests was rising. Valerian's godfather, the engineer P. P. Mokievskii, was surveying the line of a future railroad somewhere in the Far North when the police came after him in Leningrad. They searched his

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apartment and left empty-handed. They did nothing to his wife nor to his father, P. G. Mokievskii. The latter, however, was so worried that he died of a heart attack. When several months later Engineer Mokievskii returned to Leningrad, the arrest wave had run its course and he was safe. However, he found his job with the railroads much too dangerous because he could easily be accused of sabotage and subversion, so he quit and became an engineer with the electric streetcar construction office. Mokievskii died of starvation in besieged Leningrad in 1942.

In 1937 I had my second brush with the secret police. I had to appear along with the Estonian scholar Kurre, a Communist but a very decent and pleasant man, as a witness in the case of the Finno-Ugricist D. V. Bubrikh. Bubrikh had been arrested about a year earlier after having been denounced as a Finnish nationalist. At that time, the communist government of the Karelian autonomous republic had been accused of subversive activities and many of its members were executed. Among those who perished were E. Gylling, K. Manner, and many other leaders of the Finnish Communist Party. At the NKVD headquarters we were received by Comrades Strogii and Serdityi. As was the case with all NKVD officials, their names, which mean "Severe" and "Angry," were cover names. They questioned us about Bubrikh. The charges against him were utter nonsense because Bubrikh was not a Finnish nationalist; on the contrary, in all his works Bubrikh always toed the official party line. For instance, when there was a move to introduce Finnish as the literary language of Karelia, Bubrikh stoutly championed the Karelian language instead. Kurre and I explained this to the NKVD and to our great surprise Bubrikh was freed soon thereafter. It should be added, however, that they did not free Bubrikh because of our testimony. They had already decided to free him, but being overly cautious, they needed some justification. If their superiors should later accuse them of having freed an "enemy of the people" they could say that they had acted on the basis of Kurre's and my expert testimony. My friend A. N. Genko was also freed at that time.

In 1938 the Institute of Living Oriental Languages (not to be

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confused with the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences) was closed, perhaps because all its directors had been arrested and disappeared. After Kotwicz had returned to Poland, P. I. Vorob'ev became the director. Although Vorob'ev had been a very cautious man and had been in the Soviets' favor for a long time, he too, was later arrested. His story is very interesting. In 1929 Stalin wanted to become the leader of the party, but the Leningrad organization was headed by the very influential Grigorii Zinov'ev. Vorob'ev happened to be in Moscow at the time where he met a friend, an old party member by the name of Bolotnikov, who told him, "Things are not as simple as you think. The Leningrad organization may be in favor of Zinov'ev, but Stalin who is already an important person in the Communist party and the de facto ruler of the Soviet Union will certainly win out over him. Be careful when you return to Leningrad and don't vote for Zinov'ev." Vorob'ev returned to Leningrad and during the election at the regional party committee, he voted against Zinov'ev. He was immediately expelled from the party, but the very next day it became known that Stalin had become the secretary general. Of course Vorob'ev was instantly reinstated, and all those who had expelled him were severely punished. Now, however, Vorob'ev had fallen in disfavor and was arrested. He was succeeded as the director of the Institute of Living Oriental Languages by the Buryat M. I. Amagaev. Amagaev had been a member of the Comintern who in the late 1920s was sent to Mongolia to carry out the Comintern's leftist policies. These turned out to be disastrous. Mongolia was not yet ready for collectivization and the closure of all Buddhist monasteries, yet these "improvements" were enforced through sheer police terror. When in 1932 an uprising broke out, a new political course was adopted for Mongolia and Amagaev was made the scapegoat. Accused of being a leftist, he was demoted and exiled to Leningrad where he became the director of the institute. After his arrest, his position was given to a certain Frantsevich, then to another former Comintern member by the name of Shami, and finally to a certain Denisov who was director when the institute was closed altogether in 1938.

Of these various directors I knew Amagaev the best because,

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being a Buryat, he often talked to me in Mongolian and obviously liked and trusted me. He once made the very interesting comment that in Mongolia there was actually no socialism or even any system which could be considered preparatory to socialism. "What Mongolia has is state capitalism," he said, adding, "actually the same that we have here in the Soviet Union." That was, of course, a very strong admission from a party member and a former Comintern member. Amagaev had been well trained by the party, but his general education was rather poor. I remember him once discussing certain program changes he wanted to make when he lamented, "Unfortunately my proposals did not meet with renaissance among the professors." He mistakenly used "renaissance" instead of "resonance."

In 1938 I became ill with colitis and had to be hospitalized. This was the result of several bouts of the dysentery which I had initially contracted in Mongolia and Buryatia. That year also marked the end of the Great Purge. Ezhov, the chief of the NKVD, was arrested and executed, and he was replaced by Beria. The mass arrests were replaced by a permanent, creeping form of police terror, like an acute illness which gradually becomes a chronic condition.

The 1930s were years of almost total isolation for scholars working in the Soviet Union. We were afraid of having any contact with other countries. In the 1920s I could publish my articles in *Asia Major*, *Ungarische Jahrbücher*, *Kőrösi Csoma Archivum* and other foreign journals, and I corresponded with G. J. Ramstedt, Willi Bang-Kaup, Kai Donner and other scholars. Late in 1933 I received a letter from Bang who asked me to send him my curriculum vitae and list of publications because he intended to propose me for corresponding membership in the Berlin Academy of Sciences. This was a flattering proposal but also dangerous for me. I remembered that V. N. Beneshevich, a well-known Byzantine scholar, had been elected as a corresponding member of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, and that this produced a storm in the academy in Leningrad. A meeting was convened in which Beneshevich was accused of having contacts with a Nazi Academy of Sciences which had obviously elected him as a reward for services rendered to Nazism.

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Beneshevich was arrested and never seen again. I also remembered the case of the academician S. A. Zhebelev, a great scholar in ancient Greek history. In 1928 he contributed to an article to the *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, the organ of Russian emigré scholars living in Prague.⁷ Accusations were hurled at Zhebelev and the book was branded as "Scandalium Kondakovianum." Somehow Zhebelev survived that stormy meeting.

Returning to Bang's suggestion, I must say that I was afraid to send him my curriculum vitae and simply procrastinated. The case was soon solved, for in 1934 Bang died of acute appendicitis. I was very sorry because we had become good friends, but his death released me from my dilemma. Is it not macabre to owe the solution of a difficult problem to the death of a dear friend?

Meanwhile the nation lived in a state of political frenzy. Trotskii had been expelled from the country. Zinov'ev, Bukharin, Pyatakov and other old Bolsheviks had been executed. The secret police, the NKDV, was suspicious of everybody and sometimes its actions were simply grotesque. One day my sons returned from school and told us that their copybooks had been taken away because the picture on their covers was counterrevolutionary. As a matter of fact, the picture merely illustrated the text of Pushkin's introduction to his poem "Ruslan and Lyudmila," specifically the following lines which are given here in Walter Arndt's translation:

An oak tree greening by the ocean,
A golden chain about it wound,
Whereon a learned cat in motion
Both day and night will walk around.
On walking right, he sings a ditty,
On walking left, he tells a lay.
A magic place; there winds his way
The woodsprite; there's a mermaid sitting
In branches....⁸

The picture showed the oak tree, the cat, the mermaid, and when one turned the picture around, one could see, with a certain

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amount of imagination, a face in the roots of the oak tree. The NKVD or the school board had decided that the face was that of Trotskii! Consequently, all copybooks had to be collected and, in spite of an acute shortage of school supplies, sent to the papermills. There was, of course, no face in the roots, and only the unhealthy fantasy of paranoiacs in their fear of their own people could see what was not there.

The above mentioned picture and the verses it illustrates evoked a parody which was then circulating in the schools. I give my own translation of that parody:

The oak was felled and is no more,
They took the chain to Torgsin store,
They minced the cat; meatballs were made,
They gave no passport to the maid,
And woodsprite is in Solovki.

Torgsin, as noted earlier, was the name of stores selling goods for gold or foreign currency, and Solovki is the name of a thirteenth-century monastery on an island in the White Sea that had been turned into a notorious concentration camp.

Such was the political climate in the thirties. As for food supplies and other commodities, the situation was usually rather difficult, although some improvement became noticeable toward the end of the decade. As mentioned earlier, I had access to a closed store since 1932 when I became a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences (Illus. 18). I also had the privilege of eating in the dining room reserved for members of the Academy. It was very elegant having individual tables covered with impeccable white tablecloths, pretty Tatar girls as waitresses, and excellent food. The service was very good. At the same time, the dining hall for lower ranking scholars and employees was filthy, food was poor, and service was atrocious. Orwell had not yet written his *Animal Farm*, but my colleagues and I already knew that some animals were more equal than others.



Illus. 18. The Author's Academy Pass

One noticeable improvement in the food supply was a sudden and continued supply of oranges in 1936 whereas before there had been none at all. A school teacher once asked her students whether they had ever eaten an orange. None had. This became known to the authorities who dismissed her for asking useless and provocative questions, and she was deported to Siberia. But in 1936 oranges became plentiful because in the Spanish civil war the Soviet Union supported the Popular Front with weapons, food, instructors and regular army troops posing as volunteers. The ships carrying men and supplies to Spain took on oranges as ballast for their return trips.

Nineteen thirty-nine was an eventful year. In March or April I had the opportunity to prove the usefulness of Mongolian Studies to the Soviet government. One day I was asked to come to the office of the secretary of the Institute of Oriental Studies where I was introduced to a major-general named Bogdanov. He was the chief of the Soviet border commission whose task it was to delineate the

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frontier between Mongolia and Manchukuo. The two countries and their patrons, the Soviet Union and Japan, had been involved in a border dispute which gradually escalated to armed clashes, the battle at Khalkhiin Gol being the most serious of them. In order to stop hostilities and prevent further incidents, the frontiers were to be delineated with the greatest precision. General Bogdanov had come to ask for old Mongolian and Chinese maps on which the border was marked clearly. We showed him several Mongolian maps of Eastern Mongolia which he studied intently. Although he could not read Mongolian, he had expert knowledge of the topography. Time after time he pointed to rivers, lakes, and monasteries marked on the map and called out their names, and each time I confirmed that he was correct. When he left, General Bogdanov took several maps along to use in meetings with Japanese and Manchukuo officials. I also lent him the atlas of China which the Jesuits had compiled in the seventeenth century. The general thanked us profusely, told us that the Japanese and Manchukuo claims were absolutely baseless, and promised to return the maps as soon as possible.

General Bogdanov was the second high-ranking military officer who made a good impression on me. In 1936 fortifications were being built along the border between Siberia and Manchuria. This prompted Kazakevich and me to write to Marshal K. Blyukher, the commander-in-chief of the Far Eastern military district, asking that all stone statues and other relics often found in the steppe be mapped. He promised us that he would do so, but unfortunately he could not keep his promise because a short time later he was arrested and shot. His wife, Zoya Aleksandrovna, and a lady friend of hers, Zoya Sergeevna, the divorced wife of the Japanologist G. O. Monzeler, who lived with her and who was a Sinologist, were arrested and sent to concentration camps where they probably perished.

In the summer of 1939 I went to a sanatorium in Essentuki in the northern Caucasus which had mineral water said to cure all kinds of diseases of the digestive organs. My family stayed in Kislovodsk that summer, which was only about thirty kilometers away, and I visited them frequently. One day in August we heard the news that

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a pact had been concluded between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. This was followed by the German invasion of Poland on September 1, and a short time later the Soviet Union attacked the Poles from the rear. The second world war had begun. Poland was defeated, and history repeated itself. Just as at the end of the eighteenth century, during the time of Catherine the Great, Poland was divided between Germany and Russia. When we returned to Leningrad, I contracted a very severe case of angina and was treated with antibiotics. September had already arrived, but there was absolutely no heating fuel to be found anywhere in the city. As soon as I had recovered, I went to a lumber yard and bought two hundred logs, from four to five meters long and about twenty centimeters in diameter. I had them cut into firewood and used them as fuel all winter. It was actually a pity to use such good timber as firewood but nothing else was available.

The winter of 1939 came early and it was very cold. One day I was summoned to the Leningrad military district headquarters where I was shown a book written in Finnish which I recognized immediately as being a triangulation of Finland. The officers asked me if I could translate it for them. Of course I could translate it because I spoke Finnish fluently, but I did not want to have anything to do with it, so I told them that I did not know Finnish. It turned out that I had made a wise decision because shortly thereafter we heard rumors of Soviet troops massing along the Finnish border, and we read in the newspapers that the Soviet Union was negotiating with Finland. The Soviets wanted to obtain the Karelian isthmus and some other parts of Finland in exchange for a territory twice as large, but the Finnish government adamantly refused the offer because they were being asked to give up a densely populated and industrialized area in exchange for virgin forest and swamps.

At the end of November 1939 I went to Moscow to deliver a paper on the Mongolian epics at a meeting of the Division of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences. In the evening after the meeting everybody saw in *Pravda* the headline, "A Clown as Prime Minister of a Nation." It was an article about Finland and its prime minister Cajander. All participants in the meeting at the

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Academy looked at each other silently. That same evening I took the express, the Red Arrow, back to Leningrad. It was December 1, and the temperature was minus fifty degrees Centigrade. The newspapers carried the news that Finland had attacked the Soviet Union, and the following day it was announced that a revolution had broken out in Finland and a new government friendly to the Soviet Union had been formed, headed by the Finnish member of the Comintern, Otto Kuusinen. The official announcement added that a Finnish revolutionary army had been formed to fight alongside the Soviet army against the fascist-bourgeois Finnish government. Of course, all this was utterly untrue, because it was absolutely incredible that a small country like Finland could attack the Soviet Union.

A couple of days later, we learned by word of mouth that a unit of the Red Army had fired several grenades in the direction of another Soviet military unit while simultaneously a Soviet border patrol invaded Finnish territory and killed several Finnish soldiers at a border post. At the same time, I came upon direct evidence that the official announcement was untrue. When I boarded a streetcar, I saw a soldier in an unusual uniform. Everybody looked at him with great astonishment and I asked him, "Who are you?" He said, "I am a soldier of the Finnish Liberation Army allied with the Soviet army." Then I asked him in Finnish, "Where is your home town?" and he answered in Russian that he did not understand. I repeated my question in Russian and he replied, "I am from Ryazan'." Ryazan' is near Moscow, far from the Finnish border, with a wholly Russian population. Two women were riding in the same streetcar, and one of them said to the other, "I remember those uniforms; we were sewing them in our factory last year." It was clear, then, that preparations for an attack on Finland had been in the works for at least one year.

The Russians fared poorly on the Finnish front, suffering tremendous losses. Both Professor M. V. Shtein and the research scholar Solodukho of the Institute of Oriental Studies each had a son who was killed in action. V. I. Belyaev, an Arabicist and former student of I. Yu. Krachkovskii, was severely wounded in one of his legs and limped for the rest of his life. One of my students worked

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in a field hospital in Leningrad that was set up in a school. I asked him what the name of his hospital was and he told me that it was the 240th Field Hospital. Then I asked him how many wounded they had at any given time. He said about 250. Assuming that there were 240 military hospitals and that each hospital averaged 250 wounded soldiers, the total would have been about 60,000. This is an unbelievably high number, if one takes into consideration that the total Finnish army had no more than 40,000 men during peacetime. Besides, 240 was certainly not the total number of field hospitals. In summer 1940 there were no sanatoria or rest homes open to civilians. All of them had been converted to military use. The entire Caucasus and Crimea were full of soldiers who were wounded or whose arms and legs had frozen and required amputation.

The Soviets had 600,000 men on the Finnish front, of whom 150,000 were said to have been killed and another 300,000 severely wounded and crippled for life. In other words, the Soviets suffered altogether 450,000 casualties fighting against a country with a population of only about four million people. In the end the Soviet Union won but it was a Pyrrhic victory; never had such a small piece of land as the Karelian Isthmus been conquered at such high cost in human lives. Many years later some Finnish friends told me what it was like on the front. The so-called Mannerheim Line consisted of bunkers, about 200 to 300 meters apart, with six or seven soldiers in each of them. Each bunker's field of fire overlapped with those of the two neighboring bunkers, so that wherever the Russians attacked, they would be caught in a crossfire. Thus pinned down against the frozen ground, tens of thousands of Soviet soldiers froze to death, and those few who dared get up were killed by Finnish gunfire.

Although the Soviet press and radio confined themselves to laconic reports that stubborn fighting was going on or no significant changes had occurred, I was well informed about the true situation at the front. The library of the Institute of Oriental Studies subscribed, *inter alia*, to the French-language *Journal de Téhéran* which every day brought the latest news from Swiss sources. The Soviet censors minutely examined all European and American papers but

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evidently never thought that a paper published in Iran would publish full details of the war against Finland.

The Finns had to cede several parts of their country to the Soviet Union and pay large reparations, but they managed to preserve their freedom and independence. I very much pitied the Red Army soldiers who were killed and wounded, because they had nothing to do with starting the war against Finland; but I must confess that I also admired the Finns' successful resistance and their quality of *sisu* which roughly means "guts." Their victories at Salla and Alakurtti filled me with joy.

We spent the summer of 1940 in Berngardovka near Leningrad where friends of ours had a cottage. The summer was passing uneventfully when the "phony war" or, as the French called it, "*la drôle de la guerre*," suddenly and unexpectedly became a real war. The Germans landed in Norway and then defeated France. After the British army had been chased off the continent, Great Britain was supposed to become Germany's next victim. With Germany's attention thus diverted away from its eastern frontiers, the Soviet Union seized this opportunity to pressure the governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into letting the Red Army enter their countries, ostensibly to protect them against Nazi Germany. As soon as the Soviet army entered the Baltic states, however, Soviet soldiers in civilian disguise and local fellow travelers appeared on the streets with red banners and posters proclaiming, "We demand that our country become part of the Soviet Union!" In response to this "popular" demand, the Soviet Union then swallowed up all three countries. During the same summer while I was traveling across Siberia to Buryatia, long trains of so-called Stolypin (i.e. prison) cars were hauling the first groups of an estimated total of 20,000 Estonians, 30,000 Latvians, and 30,000 Lithuanians to concentrations camps in Siberia. I obtained these figures from Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian refugee organizations in Germany in 1945-46. Judging by the number of trains, crammed full of deportees, which I had seen on my way through Siberia, these figures appear credible.

These events formed the background of my life at that time and greatly influenced my scholarly work which, despite all kinds of

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ideological obstructions, proceeded satisfactorily. There was, however, some danger that scholarly work might become impossible altogether.

What could save us scholars? And what could liberate everyone, scholar, worker and peasant, from police terror? Many Soviet citizens thought a war might preserve them from annihilation. In war, to be sure, a total of perhaps three to four million soldiers would die, but this was the number of people who died in our concentration camps every year. These were the thoughts of many people in the Soviet Union at that time. Were they correct? Yes and no. On the one hand, my family and I were saved by the war, for we managed to leave the Soviet Union only because the territory where we happened to be in 1942 was occupied by the Germans. From a wider perspective, however, the war brought the world only losses and no gains at all. I should add, though, that such thoughts at this time were shared by many people, including myself. On my travels in Siberia I often had contact with Russian peasants who would say to me, "If only war came! We would then know how to act!" Later, when war broke out, hundreds of thousands of soldiers surrendered and offered to collaborate with the enemy. The Germans, however, with incredible stupidity spurned this offer of cooperation and treated the Soviet prisoners of war with cruelty, often letting them starve to death.

The second half of 1940 and the first three months of 1941 brought changes for the better. Quite unexpectedly one could now buy many things which had previously been unavailable. This included not only foodstuffs but also clothes. At the end of May 1941 I returned from Buryatia to Leningrad. People there were ill at ease and were talking secretly of an imminent war. Suddenly at the beginning of June TASS announced that the capitalist press was disseminating rumors about German troop concentrations along the Soviet frontier. It went on to denounce these rumors as utterly false and as another attempt by the capitalist press to undermine Soviet-German amity which was, of course, stronger than ever. This TASS announcement fooled everyone. Instead of preparing for the worst, we decided that my wife and children would again try to spend their

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summer vacation in Kislovodsk in the Caucasus. I obtained train tickets for them through the redcap I mentioned earlier, and on June 16 my family left for the Caucasus.

I had to stay behind in Leningrad for another two weeks because some students were to defend their candidate dissertations, and I planned to join my family around July 1. One of my own students, a certain Korol', who wrote on the Mongolian historical work *Bolor Toli* (Crystal Mirror) was to defend his work. Among the other persons to pass their candidate examinations was Vera Tsintsius, now a well-known scholar. She had returned from jail shortly before so that she was still in a terribly poor mental condition. She could not say two words without crying. Her dissertation, however, was so brilliant that Professor L. V. Shcherba, the general linguist, and I decided to tell her that she should present it for her doctoral degree and submit something else for the candidate examination. She agreed and submitted a description of a Tungus dialect, defending it brilliantly.

When Nataliya left with our children for the Caucasus, she gave me tickets for a guest performance of the Moscow Theater in Leningrad. At the time she bought the tickets, she had not yet known exactly when we would leave for the Caucasus. Since I would otherwise be alone she suggested that I invite one of her lady friends to go along to the theater. As it turned out, her friend could not make it and so I took my secretary Taisiya Alekseevna Burdukova instead. On June 21 the two of us went to the theater and returned to our respective homes rather late. During the night I heard airplanes flying above our apartment house and I was annoyed, thinking that it was another one of those air force holidays. The next morning, Sunday, June 22, when I got up everything was quiet, but I heard on the radio, "Comrade Molotov will make a very important announcement." Shortly thereafter, the announcement came, "War has begun. The Germans have crossed the border and Kiev, Sevastopol and Minsk have been bombarded by the German air force."

The war took Stalin and his government by surprise. They obviously had believed a totalitarian country would not attack another totalitarian country just because they shared many features.

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When Stalin first learned about the German attack, he closeted himself in his study and remained incommunicado for three full days, all the while pacing across the room like a wounded tiger. The generals, not daring to undertake anything without his orders, waited.

After the partitioning of Poland in 1939, Stalin had ordered the defense line along the old border dismantled and moved westward to the new border. When the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, the transfer of guns, steel bunkers and other equipment from the old to the new defense line had still not been completed.

In addition, many Soviet soldiers were unwilling to fight, and a large portion of the civilian population even welcomed the Germans. All of these facts allowed the Germans to sweep into the Soviet Union virtually unopposed. Stalin had once boasted on the occasion of a military parade in Moscow before the war that "we shall answer the enemy's blow with a threefold blow and beat him, with little bloodshed on our side, on his own territory." As is well known, before the Germans were ultimately crushed, they managed to reach the Caucasus and the Volga River, almost 2,000 miles from the German frontier.