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In Post-War Germany

By May 1945 the Americans had penetrated deep into Germany and were expected to reach the Sudeten any day. Hitler had committed suicide on April 30, and Germany's collapse was completed with its unconditional surrender on May 9. Sunday, May 6, was the Russian Orthodox Easter, and Nataliya wanted us to go to church. When we were halfway between the hotel and the church, we saw several American tanks and infantrymen approaching. They ordered everyone to return home, and the next day they evicted all of us from the Hotel Westend. With nowhere else to go, we went into the forest where we found a deserted cabin and spent the night there. On Tuesday I managed to get a room for Nataliya, Nicholas and myself in the Waldmühle (Forest Mill) inn where we went, along with the few meager belongings we had been permitted to take out of the hotel. Soon, however, it was rumored that the Americans were going to hand Marienbad and the entire Sudeten over to the Soviets. For this reason, those of us who were refugees from the Soviet Union immediately decided to flee farther west into Germany which was only about twenty-five kilometers from Marienbad.

Nataliya was by this time unable to walk, so there was nothing I could do but to leave her in the care of some Czech friends who, as victims of German aggression, were not afraid of the Russians. With knapsacks on our backs, Nicholas and I hiked in the direction of Bavaria. We crossed the frontier late at night near the

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village of Mähring, and from there we walked through Tirschenreuth and Bayreuth all the way to Staffelstein near Bamberg. I knew that my former schoolmate, Professor A. G. Sorgenfrey, whom I had last seen in the Caucasus and who in the meantime had worked in a German library in Ratibor, Silesia, was now living with his family in Staffelstein. We found a room in a private home there and had a much needed rest. Our rest did not last long, however, because after a few days all the former employees of the library in Ratibor were arrested. This was because the library had been part of the *Ostministerium* (Ministry for Eastern Affairs) which had been responsible for the civilian administration of occupied areas in Poland, the Soviet Union, and the former Baltic republics. The day after these arrests I was summoned by the American Army CIC (Counter-Intelligence Corps). An officer, who spoke Russian rather poorly but could make himself understood, wanted to know whether I had any connection with those arrested. I denied it, saying I was simply trying to escape from an area which would soon be occupied by the Soviets. He let me go but made me promise not to leave Staffelstein. As soon as I returned to our room, however, Nicholas and I packed our few belongings in our knapsacks and fled. We could not use the streets because they were being patrolled by American soldiers who were checking identity cards against a list of people who were not allowed to leave the city. We went to the backyard and climbed over the fence into the garden of the neighboring house which was near the edge of the forest. Having reached the forest, we walked parallel to the highway for about four kilometers, and then we left the forest and emerged onto the open road where we continued our walk. I did not have any compunctions about deceiving the CIC officer. I regarded him as a potential enemy since he might actually have arrested me later and even extradited me to the Soviets. In my opinion, an enemy, even a potential one, should be deceived, if necessary.

We arrived in Bamberg, a city which, at least in those parts which we walked through, seemed to have escaped any damage from air raids. From there we traveled in an empty boxcar through Aschaffenburg and Hanau to Frankfurt where we switched to a

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passenger train almost up to Kassel. In Kassel I found a truck driver whom I bribed with about fifty precious grams of coffee to drive us to Herford in Westphalia.

Our destination was the large Böckel estate near Herford (Illus. 20). My maternal great aunt, Mathilde Boetz, lived there.



Illus. 20. The Manor in Böckel

She was the only person we knew in West Germany and whose address we had. If she had not lived there, we probably would not have gone to Böckel. Nicholas and I and some other people stayed in a detached building on the estate. The estate belonged to another, more remote relative, Hertha Koenig, the great-granddaughter of my maternal ancestor Johann Georg Koenig and niece of the zoologist Alexander Koenig. She was a very talented woman and an

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excellent writer and poetess who personally knew many other German poets, including Rainer Maria Rilke, who used to come to Böckel.¹ She was, however, a bit strange, being extremely shy and tending to avoid human contact whenever possible. I remember her passing through one of the rooms at her estate, a huge mansion of about twenty rooms where only a handful of people lived, and muttering to no one in particular, "This is terrible, all these people!" I wonder what Hertha Koenig would have said about a Soviet communal apartment of eight rooms, housing twice that number of families! At least, she should have seen the film "Ninotchka" starring Greta Garbo.

Nicholas and I stayed in Böckel for a month before we made a long trip back to the Sudeten to find Nataliya. This time we went by train via Marktredwitz to Tirschenreuth. From there we walked to Mähring, where Nicholas found a man who was willing to take him across the border in exchange for some real coffee. Nicholas went with him and returned after two days, bringing some of our belongings, including our family album which we had been unable to take with us when we first left Czechoslovakia. He had seen his mother, given her my letter and address, and told her about our life in Böckel. He informed me that, along with all other sick persons who were not Czechs, she would soon be taken to Berlin. As a matter of fact, she was no longer living in the Waldmühle, as she had been placed in one of the hospitals in Marienbad which was later moved to Berlin.

Nicholas and I returned to Böckel. Summer passed, and when fall came Nicholas entered the boys' high school in Bünde, six kilometers from Böckel. On October 28, 1945, while both of us were sitting in our room—I remember I was helping Nicholas with his Latin homework—Hertha Koenig suddenly came rushing into our room shouting, "Come quickly! Something wonderful has happened!" We followed her into the kitchen, and whom did we see but Valerian, standing there in his shabby uniform, looking haggard and hungry but otherwise in good health. How often I had thought about him, and how many terrible thoughts had come into my head. But, there he was—alive!

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Soon after that more good news came in the form of a letter from Nataliya. She was now in a Lutheran home for sick and handicapped persons in Wuhlheide, a suburb of Berlin. I immediately wrote back to her and also to Willi Diederichs in Berlin, asking him to visit her to help her in any way he could. At the same time Hertha Koenig swung into action. She knew Pastor Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, the son of the founder of well-known Bethel Nursing Home near Bielefeld. It was common knowledge that under Hitler when all handicapped people were to be killed, Bodelschwingh declared that the Nazis would have to kill him first before they carried off any of his patients. The Nazis left him alone because of his worldwide reputation. Since Hertha Koenig had donated large sums of money to his nursing home, she sent me to Bethel with a letter of introduction. I went there and talked to one of Pastor Bodelschwingh's aides who promised to try to bring my wife from Wuhlheide. That was not an easy task because Wuhlheide was in the eastern zone of Germany. Even so, in those days and as late as 1947 communications with the eastern zone of Germany were less difficult than they have been in recent years. The following summer one of Bodelschwingh's nurses escorted my wife from Wuhlheide to Bethel and from there to Böckel.

On December 31, 1945 I received more good news from my friend, Professor K. H. Menges, who was teaching at Columbia University. I had previously written to him through his parents who lived in Frankfurt. At that time one could not send letters outside Germany, but Menges' parents had connections with Americans and they were in a position to mail my letter. In that letter I had asked Professor Menges to find out if it would be possible for me to get a job at one of the American universities. He answered that he had talked to somebody about this, and yes, something could be done for me.

Menges, an ardent Socialist, had come to Leningrad in 1927, before Stalin had taken power, and liked many aspects of life in the Soviet Union. By contrast, conditions in Germany under the Weimar Republic were rather bad, and the Nazi movement was rapidly gaining strength. Menges believed in ideal socialism which was the

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opposite of the Nazi system. With such convictions, Menges could not remain in Germany, so he left and finally went to the United States where he became a professor at Columbia University. By that time, the Stalin era with all its atrocities had descended on the Soviet Union, and Menges became an outspoken anti-communist. He was especially hostile to Stalin's brand of communism which he considered quite different from that of Marx and Engels.

In early 1946 I decided that waiting for an invitation took too long, and that a faster way to emigrate might be by going through an UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency) refugee camp. In March Valerian went to Munich to enroll in an UNRRA university, Nicholas went to Stuttgart to attend the senior year in high school, and I went to an UNRRA camp in Hamburg where there were many Estonian refugees, some of whom I knew. After Estonia had been annexed by the Soviets, many thousands of Estonians had fled to Sweden and later to Germany. I told my Estonian friends everything that had happened to me and my family and asked them whether I could get admitted into a camp for Estonian refugees. The president of the Estonian committee, a well-known astronomer, Professor Õpik, who later taught at Dublin University, signed a certificate which admitted me to another camp for Estonians and Latvians located in Melle, not far from Böckel. After Nataliya had been brought from Berlin to West Germany, I was able to place her in that camp as well. I did not have any language difficulty there because Estonian is close to Finnish, which I spoke well. The Estonians even told me that I spoke like a native of the Viru district in Estonia.

While living in that camp, I became a teacher of English for Estonian children. Everything was quite normal and satisfactory for us until one day a relative of mine, Georg Schlieps, who lived with his family in Böckel came to visit us. He was accompanied by a British woman in military uniform who suggested that I leave the camp because the Soviets were looking for me and it was unsafe for me to remain there. I told her that I had no place to go, so she promised to try to find a solution. When she returned a few days later, she took me to Böckel where I found a British officer waiting for us.

I always had a premonition that the Soviets would someday come looking for me. Once when I visited an Estonian organization in Lübeck I was shown an Estonian newspaper published in Sweden in which there was an article about me. It said that, according to the Soviet press, I had participated in the Kalmuck revolt in the fall of 1942 and in fact had been responsible for the Kalmucks changing over to the German side. Because of this article, I tried to live as inconspicuously as possible and I saw to it that I received no letters directly. My letters to America were mailed by Professor Menges' father in Frankfurt, and those to England were sent by Pastor Hans Haenisch, Professor Erich Haenisch's brother, who lived in Lemgo, near Böckel. Every six to seven weeks I would pick up my mail at these two locations.

The British officer introduced himself as Captain Smith. Of course this was not his real name; all members of the British CIC were either Smith or Jackson. He told me that it was impossible for me to remain in Böckel because the Soviet commandant of Berlin, General Tyul'panov, had applied to his British counterpart for my extradition. Smith asked me what my plans might be. I told him that not long ago I had received a letter from Professor Gustav Haloun, the Sinologist who had escaped from Nazi Germany and was now teaching at Cambridge University, telling me that the university intended to invite me there to teach. I had not actually asked Haloun for the job, but the invitation was the result of a memorandum drawn up by him and signed by Sir Gibb and several other prominent British scholars. Haloun learned about me through the well-known writer on Mongolia, Owen Lattimore of Johns Hopkins University, whom I had asked to help me to find a job in the United States. Lattimore wrote me a rather unpleasant letter saying that because of my activities in wartime Germany I had no chance of ever going to the United States.

A short time later I also received a letter from Dr. Ethel John Lindgren, an anthropologist at Cambridge University. I think that somehow she had learned from Lattimore of my interest in a job in America and then told Haloun about me. Dr. Lindgren also warned me not to write to certain people in Great Britain and the

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United States because she knew them to be sympathizers of the Soviet Union. Nothing ever came of that invitation to Cambridge because, as I learned later from the British CIC officers, the Attlee Labor government refused to grant me a visa. Of course I should have considered this before, because it was well known that even under Churchill's government, at the initiative of Anthony Eden, all refugees, Cossacks and soldiers associated with the Vlasov army, had been extradited to the Soviets. At that time the Allies were still ignorant about the true situation in the Soviet Union and believed that the Soviets were their allies, and that, therefore, everyone who was anti-Soviet must have been a Nazi or, at least, a Nazi collaborator. It took some time—much too long—before they realized that there had been not only Nazis and their sympathizers in Germany, but also refugees who had merely managed to escape from Soviet domination and were not the least bit sympathetic to the Nazis. At the time of my talk with Captain Smith, however, the invitation to Cambridge still seemed almost certain.

Captain Smith took Nataliya and me to his house in Lage, some twenty or thirty kilometers from Böckel, where we spent several months together. We were very well treated for we were given our own room and excellent food and I soon recovered from my worries. Of course all this time I was still hoping for the invitation to Cambridge to come through. A few weeks after we moved, Nataliya was transferred to a nursing home where they again confirmed the diagnosis of her illness as multiple sclerosis. I remained alone in Captain Smith's home in Lage. From time to time my boys visited me, having been warned, however, that they must not reveal my whereabouts to anyone. When Captain Smith went on furlough to his farm in Northern Ireland, I was transferred to a center for German specialists in Alswede near Lübbecke as, obviously, I could not stay alone at his house. Most of the other specialists had been smuggled out from the Eastern zone. I remember one man and his wife who were Baltic Germans and who had been smuggled out of Leipzig disguised as members of the British occupation force. There were also some very famous scholars, including the atomic physicist Otto Hahn, who were later sent to Wimbledon near London. The

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Americans had a similar center, with Wernher von Braun being one of its stars.

At the beginning of 1947 I was informed by a British officer that his government would not issue an immigration visa to me. Instead he would take me to Frankfurt where the Americans were interested in seeing me. There I met a Mr. Carmel Offie who was political adviser to General Lucius Clay. I also met an American congressman whose name was never given to me. He asked me what I thought about Chiang Kai-shek's chances for success, and I told him that the Chinese Communists would certainly take all of mainland China. At the end of our interview the congressman and Offie both told me that I would be transferred to the United States. When I was taken to Offie's office a second time in 1948 that same congressman was there again, and he remarked that the situation in China had indeed deteriorated, just as I had predicted. At that time Chiang Kai-shek was about to leave mainland China and transfer his government to Taiwan. Later I learned that Offie had worked at the American embassy in Moscow before and during the war when William C. Bullitt was ambassador and my friend, Professor William Ballis, was naval attaché. Menges told Ballis, who at that time was a professor at the University of Washington in Seattle, that I was looking for a job at an American university. Ballis, in turn, relayed the information to Professor George E. Taylor, chairman of the Far Eastern and Russian Institute. Since neither Taylor nor Ballis knew me personally, they could only go by what Menges had told them. During all this time—the years 1947, 1948, and parts of 1949—Nataliya remained in nursing homes, first in Windelsbleiche near Senne and later in Lippstadt.

The summer of 1947 was extremely hot and dry. I was very miserable in Lage where the heat in my room gave me frequent and violent headaches. One day a British officer visited me and introduced himself as Mr. Morris. I later learned his true name, but I will refer to him only as Mr. Morris. He was of Polish origin and we gradually became friends. In fact, we still corresponded even after I left Germany, and I visited him in London in 1956. He told me he had come to take me away. When I asked exactly where he was

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taking me, he only said, "Wait and see." That was typical of British secretiveness and of their proclivity to act in a Sherlock Holmesian manner. Very soon I noticed that we were heading east and I began to get very uncomfortable. I remembered that only a short time earlier the British had extradited many people to the Soviets, and at that moment I did not know what to expect. We went through Braunschweig and finally arrived at Wolfenbüttel which was about thirty kilometers from the Soviet zone. There I spent all of July and part of August in the house of the local CIC. Since the city had not suffered severely from the bombings it was still a very interesting place. Wolfenbüttel is the town where Wilhelm Busch, the famous author and illustrator of humorous tales about Max and Moritz, had lived. In August I was taken to another CIC house in Brake near Lemgo where I was informed that my sons would soon be able to go to England. First the British CIC asked its American counterparts to bring my sons to Lemgo. Valerian came from Munich and Nicholas arrived from Stuttgart-Zuffenhausen to where his school had been evacuated. We lived together for one month until September 1947 when they were taken by car to Hoek van Holland, and from there they sailed to England. They finally ended up in a hostel in Wellington in Shropshire where they lived and worked for quite a while. I was happy that the boys had made it safely to England.

It was very interesting, living in the British CIC house in Brake. Various people were brought there for interrogation in a room which was located directly under mine. Although I could not distinguish words, I was always able to tell by the intonation whether Russian, Estonian, Polish, or some other language was being spoken. Once an officer of the Soviet occupation force was brought in. He was Jewish and had a young German woman with him whom he wanted to marry. Since the Soviets did not permit their officers to fraternize with Germans, he had sought asylum with the British. I had been told not to reveal my identity to the Soviet officer and his girl friend—I had been introduced to them as Mr. Winter—and to converse with them only in German. One day, however, one of the British officers returned from a party rather tipsy and asked me in

Russian, "How goes it?" The next morning when I saw the Soviet officer, he asked me in Russian exactly the same question, "How goes it?" and he added, "You are probably Mr. Winter just as I am Mr. Summer." After that we spoke only in Russian, but we still did not introduce ourselves to each other.

In November or early December 1947 I decided to pay a visit to my relatives in Böckel. I went by train from Lemgo to Bieren and from there I walked about one and a half kilometers to Böckel. When I arrived, my relatives received me with great alarm. "Go back immediately," they advised me, "the Russians were just here and wanted to take you away." As a matter of fact, four men had come a few days before. They included a Soviet officer, a Soviet soldier, the mayor of Muckum (a village near Böckel) and a German policeman. The Soviet officer behaved very politely and said he wanted to see me in order to convey greetings from my sister back in Leningrad. He also wanted to persuade me to return to the Soviet Union where I could work much more successfully at the Academy of Sciences than anywhere abroad. He was very surprised to learn that I was not there. Fortunately, no one in Böckel knew where I was staying at that time. My relatives living there only told him—probably in order to misinform—that some American officers had taken me to an unknown destination. The Soviet officer had to go back empty-handed. Many years later, when Valerian made several business trips to the Soviet Union and met my sister, he learned that she had absolutely no knowledge about the officer's visit to Böckel and that she had never tried to send greetings to me. In other words, what the Soviet officer said was nothing but a clumsy lie.

In 1948 West Germany started its first post-war government and carried out a monetary reform. A new currency was introduced overnight, and stores soon offered all kinds of food and merchandise. The political situation in Germany also changed drastically. The Berlin blockade began on June 28 and was to last until May 12, 1949, forcing the allies to finally recognize the true face of the Soviets. All the concessions to the Soviets, like the extradition of the Vlasov army and even of old emigrants such as Generals Semenov and Krasnov, had been of no avail. Soon Senator Vandenberg and

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Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt began calling for a halt in the extraditions and forcible repatriations to the Soviet Union, and the United States Congress passed a law to this effect.

One day a British officer told me that I would be transferred to Herford to teach Russian at a school for British officers. The CIC certified that I was a released German prisoner of war and that my home was in East Prussia. I was given yet another cover name, Kazakevich, and my profession was listed as high school teacher. With this certificate I received a room from the city housing office and a card from the employment agency which said that I was employed by the British. My landlady was very proud of my teaching at the intelligence school, and when she introduced me to her visitors she always added that I was working at a "school for intelligent gentlemen." I did not say anything but reflected that some of my students were certainly not very intelligent.

In this connection I would like to say that I had never expected to see such a great difference between two peoples as between the British and Americans. The British were, and this may sound improbable, more democratic than the Americans. The British had only one mess hall for officers and men alike, but the Americans had separate facilities for high-ranking officers, low-ranking officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates. This separation reminded me of conditions in the Soviet Union and may have been justified by the fact that British soldiers behaved much better than and were culturally superior to their American counterparts who showed rather poor table manners and would put their feet up on the table. The British were also more taciturn and understood how to keep secrets much better than the Americans who liked to show off by telling what they had seen or heard of classified matters. This is especially the case with the American press. It is relentlessly hunting for sensational news, and often makes secret matters known to everybody, including foreign governments. For example, a headline would proclaim that a certain company received an order for sophisticated aircraft for so many billions of dollars and that each plane would cost over 25 million dollars. Even a child can figure out how many top secret planes will be produced.

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At that time, the British knew much more about the world than the Americans, who often had only the haziest notion of basic geographic facts. My friend Menges told me that an American official bound for Iraq had visited him to learn something about the country. After having been given a long lecture about Iraq, the official asked, "But, professor, aren't Iraq and Iran about the same?" It was also typical of the Americans that they wanted to make other countries happy in the American way even though they knew nothing about those countries. In this respect, the Americans are no different from the Soviets. The Soviets want all nations to have the Russian style of communism, while the Americans want everyone to enjoy life in the American way: Coca Cola, chewing gum, television, and football.

One day I received a letter from Professor Serge Elisseyeff (Sergei Eliseev) who, as I described in Chapter 3, had fled Leningrad in a motorboat and was now at Harvard University. He notified me that I would soon be hired by Harvard, half my salary coming from the Far Eastern department and the other half from the Center for Russian Studies. A short time later, however, the director of the Russian center, Professor Clyde Kluckhohn, informed me that for various reasons, which he did not specify, I could not get that appointment. I could not understand the reasons for this reversal, but they may have had something to do with the same objections Owen Lattimore had already raised to my having stayed in war-time Germany as a refugee from the Soviet Union and worked for the German government.

At the end of January 1949 I received an invitation from the University of Washington in Seattle, and the British CIC in Herford informed me that I would soon be sent to the American zone for transfer to the United States. I was to pack my belongings and be ready on short notice. I was to say nothing to my landlady except that I would return in about a month. I was driven to Lippstadt where we picked up Nataliya and then continued via Frankfurt to a camp surrounded by barbed wire. This was Camp King near Oberursel in the Taunus. We were given excellent food and lived there very well for quite a while. I was interviewed several times

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and told that Nataliya's general condition made her travel to the United States impractical.

At the beginning of March 1949 I had to go to an UNRRA center in Fulda to register Nataliya and myself as prospective immigrants to the United States. I left my wife at the camp because her multiple sclerosis had reached a stage where she could no longer get up. A few days later her condition took a sudden turn for the worse. When I served her breakfast on March 9 she tried to sit up, but always fell to the side. I called an American woman who was taking care of us and she brought a military surgeon. Nataliya was instantly taken to the American hospital in Wiesbaden, and on March 17 she was transferred to the German hospital Hohe Mark which was near Camp King. From then on she lay quietly in her bed, not uttering a word and showing few signs of being alive. On March 23 Nataliya sank into a coma and on March 26 at 10:10 a.m. she died in my presence. I buried her on March 29 in the Oberursel cemetery, with the funeral services being conducted by a Russian Orthodox priest whom I fortunately managed to find in nearby Bad Homburg. Although Nataliya's sad end did not come unexpectedly, my sorrow was very great. Now I felt utterly alone in Germany, and soon I was about to emigrate to the United States where everyone would be a stranger to me.

Soon after Nataliya's death I was taken from Camp King to the emigration camp in Hanau where I had to wait for an entry visa to the United States. After about three weeks I was summoned to the American consulate in Offenbach for an interview. The vice-consul who conducted the interview was a very nice young man who was more interested in conditions in the Soviet Union than in my background. Our chat was rather pleasant and it was a foregone conclusion that a visa would be issued without further ado.