

CPYRGHT

# My Trial in Russia

## An American Tourist Is Accused of Spying

My Trial in Russia

On Monday, Sept. 19, an American college teacher traveling through the Soviet Ukraine was convicted of espionage and condemned to seven years in prison. There was no fellow American at the trial. He was not permitted contact with U. S. officials. He was called by his accusers a "land U2." The terrified young man, out of jail only since Oct. 14, is now back with his family and his friends. The Russians—with the same arbitrariness with which they convicted him—suspended his sentence and expelled him from their country. This is his story. He tells it in five articles, of which this is the first.

By MARK KAMINSKY

As Told to Peter Hahn

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LITTLE MORE THAN TWO WEEKS AGO, I WAS sitting in cell No. 35, KGB Headquarters, in Kiev. I was a prisoner of the Soviet secret police, convicted of spying against Russia. I thought I would never see my hometown, my parents or my girl again. How and why I was arrested, tried and convicted is still as inexplicable to me today as it was then. Here is how it started.

I am 28 years old, single and an instructor in the Russian language at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind. A year ago I worked as a guide at the U. S. exhibition in Moscow. I learned Russian as a child, from my parents, who had come to this country long before I was born. Later I studied it in school.

An Air Force buddy of mine, Harvey Bennett, married, and from Bath, Me., shared my interest in the Russian language.

Early this year, when I received a \$2,000 scholarship from the Northcraft Educational Foundation in Philadelphia, I asked him to come along on a motor trip to the Soviet Union. He liked the idea, and agreed.

On July 26 we arrived in Helsinki, Finland. We contacted the car rental agency, which had made the arrangements for our transportation. The car we picked up was a small Russian-made Volga with plenty of space for our luggage. We piled our bags into it and headed for Viborg, the Soviet border town.

After passing Finnish customs and driving through a short stretch of no-man's land, we were stopped by two Russian border guards in civilian clothes. One of them wore a military hat. They stamped our documents and asked us whether we had brought any gifts or "American propaganda."

### Thorough Search

We carried no printed matter in our luggage, but I told the border guard with the military hat that I had brought some nylon stockings, ball point pens and similar items for friends I made during the Moscow exhibition. He confiscated them immediately.

What's more, he demanded that I give him the names and addresses of the friends I planned to see. I gave him names and addresses, but fictitious ones, because I didn't want to make trouble for the people who had been nice to me during my previous visit.

A thorough search of the car ended the border formalities, and we drove on to Viborg proper, some 25 miles away.

Viborg is a small, dusty town. It was formerly part of Finland, but was annexed by Russia after World War II. Signs in Finnish are still visible everywhere, even though the original population has been resettled in other parts of Russia.

We stopped at the office of Intourist, the official Soviet travel agency, for our ration coupons and instructions, but were ordered to continue straight on to Leningrad, a six-hour drive.

(A point of interest to other motorists in the Soviet Union: The Russian tourist officials told us—since it was getting dark—that we would have to drive with our parking lights only, because the high beam of headlights is considered "impolite" to other motorists.)

When we finally made it to Leningrad, tired of straining our eyes through the darkness, we checked into the Europa Hotel, which caters to foreign tourists. We spent two days there. I didn't contact my family because I thought we might be followed. Harvey and I met some young people of the neighborhood, made drinks with them, and asked them to our hotel for a drink. After they had discovered they had pilfered our belongings, we gave them a few shirts and other items. But we didn't tell them, and wrote off the losses to better understanding between nations.

Our stay in Leningrad more or less established the pattern for the rest of our motor trip through Rus-

sia. In other words, it was mostly uneventful. We visited Novgorod, Moscow, Smolensk and Minsk. Then we doubled back briefly to Moscow and continued on to the Ukraine, where we stopped in Kharkov, Kiev, Vinnitsa and Lvov. Finally, we headed for Uzhgorod, where we planned to drive across into Czechoslovakia.

On the road we acted just as any other tourists would. We had come to see as much of Russia as possible. We took lots of pictures, and I kept a diary in which I would jot down anything of interest. I had the vague idea of writing a book upon my return. I thought I might compare road travel in Russia with road travel in the U. S. Perhaps it might have some scholarly interest.

Many things caught my eye—the movement of heavy trucks, historical monuments, farmers who were being helped in their work by soldiers. I took snapshots of all of them and entered the captions in my photo log, which I kept in the back pages of my diary.

We found that Soviet roads carry much more military traffic than you would ordinarily see in the



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States. I said so in my diary. When I think back, the only "military object" I ever took a picture of was a solitary radar installation, lost in the haze of the plains about a mile away.

On Aug. 25, we hit Uzhgorod, tired of swallowing the dust of western Russia and thirsting for the first glass of Pilsner beer in Czechoslovakia. We stayed at the Summit Hotel.

Uzhgorod, taken from Hungary in 1946 by the Russians, is now the capital of the local *uyest*, comparable to an American county seat.

It is located just inside the restricted frontier zone which surrounds all Russia. In this buffer zone, there are checkpoints at distances of every three miles or so along the road, where each traveler's documents are thoroughly inspected.

Uzhgorod proper has no border-crossing station, but two such stations are located only a few miles out of town. One is near the village of Chop, and the other one—on the other side of Uzhgorod—is set in the middle of a field.

Since our Russian itinerary specified simply "Uzhgorod" as the point of our leaving Soviet territory, we didn't know which one of the two stations we should head for. We therefore told the local Intourist office that we planned to go via Chop, and we were informed that this was all right.

We approached the first checkpoint without misgivings of any kind. Two uniformed border guards stepped from their shelter and demanded our travel documents. From their expressions, as they studied our passports, we could see they had not dealt with many tourists before. They seemed undecided as to what to do with us. Finally one of them went to make a phone call.

In what seemed to be two minutes flat, another car pulled up and a man in civilian clothes got out. One of the guards told us he was from the KGB, the secret police.

The civilian told us that the checkpoint we had chosen was not for tourists, and that we shouldn't be where we were. We explained that we had been given permission by the official travel agency. But in spite of all our protestations, he instructed one of the soldiers to get into our car and take us to the border guard headquarters at Chop.

### 'Violation of Restricted Area'

The guard climbed into our Volga and instructed Harvey, who was at the wheel, to drive into town. We pulled up in front of the headquarters building.

Once inside, we were taken to a drab room full of the typical musty smell of Soviet provincial offices, but empty except for a row of tables. We were received by an officer of the border troops, who said he would have to prepare a statement explaining our violation of a restricted area. He drew up the papers and we signed them. Then we were escorted back to Uzhgorod by a young, taciturn private. The soldier told us to wait. While we were waiting for his return, I went to the Intourist office and fetched the manager, a scraggly individual with a Simon Legree smile.

I explained our difficulty and asked him to help us straighten out the matter. But instead of doing so, the Intourist man brought in yet another policeman—this time, a civilian cop—who made us sign a second document, again to the effect that we had violated restricted territory.

Much to our surprise, the policeman was very friendly. He offered to guide us to the correct border station. Until this moment, about two hours had elapsed while Soviet bureaucrats passed the ball back and forth among themselves.

The policeman jumped onto his motorcycle and escorted us to within sight of the other border checkpoint. He handed us our passports, which had been taken from us by the KGB man, waved a friendly goodbye, and started driving back to town. We continued on, and pulled up in front of the barrier which separates Russia from Czechoslovakia.

A burly soldier told us to drive to the examination pit for cars. He also demanded our passports, and indicated we should carry our luggage into the building. Our bags were opened, and a crippled customs man dug through our belongings.

He demanded all our film. Apparently he had been informed of our previous encounter with the border police and the KGB man, because he explained that since we had violated restricted territory all our film would have to be developed. He also asked for all addresses I had in my possession—of persons I knew in Russia or the U. S. I told him I carried no address book, so I couldn't give him any. I had forgotten that I had scribbled down a few addresses in my diary.

### 'Captured Secret Weapon'

We placed all the film on a table, and a photo technician chose three rolls to be developed in a primitive darkroom. Harvey Bennett went with him to watch the development. Meantime, other border officers went over the car as if it were a captured secret weapon.

When the photo man found nothing of an incriminating nature in the first three rolls of pictures, he took the rest of the film to the darkroom for processing. As he continued developing them, he found several things which he termed "objectionable" or "tendentious," such as a picture of a peasant's cart being drawn by an emaciated nag and photos of flagless flagpoles in Moscow's Sokolniki Park—which he insisted were radio antenna masts.

He threw the empty cassettes on the table with the undeveloped rolls of film, taking new rolls into the darkroom. Finally, after five hours of processing and cutting film from our rolls, he said we could get ready to leave and told us to pack our belongings again. I stuffed some of the rolls he had thrown back on the table into my pockets, and noticed that one or two had escaped his attention.

We were told to wait another few minutes until we could get final clearance. The customs man and five of his colleagues went next door.

After a few minutes they all returned, stood in front of us in a semicircle and glared at us silently for an instant. Then the customs man said: "Because of the material we have found in your possession, we have decided to give you a personal search. Kaminsky, you follow us."

Continued Tomorrow

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