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MY TRIAL IN RUSSIA

Tourist Accused as U. S. Spy
Tells of His Eerie Adventure

By MARK KAMINSKY

(As Told to Peter Hahn)

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LANSING, Mich., Oct. 29.—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

On September 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 United States officials. Out of jail since October 14, he is now back with his family and friends. The Russians suspended his sentence and expelled him from their country. This is his story. He tells it in a series of articles, of which this is the first.

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. 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, 26, 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."

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 did not want to make trouble for the people who had been nice to me during my previous visit.

Car Searched Thoroughly

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 re-settled 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, another six-hour drive.

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.

Pilfered Hotel Room

We spent two days there. I didn't contact my friends, because I thought we might be followed. Instead, Harvey and I met some young people of



MARK KAMINSKY

—AP Wirephoto

Uzhgorod, where we planned to drive 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 United States. 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.

More Military Traffic

We found that Soviet roads carry more military traffic than you would ordinarily see in the States. I said so in my diary. When I think back, though, the only "military object" I ever took a picture of was a solitary radar installation, in the haze of the Russian plains about a mile away.

On August 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 the night at the "Summit" hotel.

Uzhgorod, taken from Hungary in 1946 by the Russians, is now the capital of the local Ukraine, where we stopped in Kharkov, Kiev, Vinnitsa and Lvov. Finally we headed for

It is located just inside the

restricted frontier zone which surrounds all Russia. In this buffer zone, there are check-points at distances of every 3 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 located 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 this was all right.

Examined by Guards

We approached the first check-point 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 2 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 check-point we had chosen was not for tourists, and that we shouldn't be where we are. 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.

The guard then 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 filled with 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.

Signed Second Document

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 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 border check-point. He handed us our passports which had been taken from us by the KGB man, waved a friendly good-bye, and started driving back to town. We continued on, and pulled up in front of the barrier which separates Soviet 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 hunchbacked

customs man dug through our belongings.

He demanded all our films. Apparently he had been informed of our previous encounter with the border police and the KGB man, because he explained that — as we had violated restricted territory — all our film would have to be developed.

Later, after the films were developed, we were told to wait a few minutes until we could get final clearance. The hunchman 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 hunchback said: "Because of the material we have found in your possession, we have decided to give you a personal search. Kaminsky—you follow us."

(Next: Detention and interrogation in Uzhgorod.)

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