



By Charles Del Vecchio—The Washington Post

Alexander M. Dolgun, former prisoner in Russia.

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whose arrest and torture is described by Solzhenitsyn.

Dolgun had been released from imprisonment in 1956, but did not manage to leave the Soviet Union until 1972 after efforts were made for his release by the State Department.

Few of his fellow employees at the National Institutes of Health where he works as a program analyst know of Dolgun's nightmare past. It is not something he finds it easy to talk about.

But Dolgun did talk at length with Solzhenitsyn during the 1960s when the famed Soviet author was secretly preparing his historical account of the Soviet prison system with the aid of interviews with 227 fellow victims and survivors.

Dolgun recalled yesterday how Solzhenitsyn told him, "I'm the only one he knows who came out alive from Sukhanovka," a former monastery where political prisoners were held in solitary confinement, interrogated for months without end and tortured till they confessed or died.

Dolgun, his parents and sister were American citizens who went to the Soviet Union in 1934 from New York when he was 8 years old because his father got a job there as an engineer at a time when a number of Americans were working in Russia. Dolgun said his parents were not Communists.

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American Tells of Soviet Prison Life

By Douglas Watson
Washington Post Staff Writer

Alexander M Dolgun, a quiet, 47-year-old Rockville resident, has forgotten nothing, though it has been 25 years since his arrest in the Soviet Union.

"It was 1:10 p.m. I was walking on Gorky Street in Moscow and this guy came up and started talking loudly. I asked him, 'Who are you?' He pulled out his identification: Major Kharitonov of the secret police," Dolgun recalled in an interview yesterday.

"When I showed him my ID card, he took it and didn't return it. He said, 'Here comes a friend with a car.' It pulled up to the curb with both back doors open. I started to run, but two other men grabbed me and threw me into the car," Dolgun said.

"Nobody was notified. I just disappeared," Dolgun said.

Dolgun's arrest and torture during his eight years' imprisonment in the Soviet Union is described in "The Gulag Archipelago," Alexander Solzhenitsyn's just published book about the terror

of Soviet prisons from 1918 to 1956.

Solzhenitsyn's politically explosive book recounts how Dolgun was called into the office of a Soviet secret police general, Ryumin, with its imitation walnut paneling, silk portieres and large Persian rug.

"So as not to spoil this beauty, there was rolled out on top of the carpet for a prisoner being beaten, a dirty runner all splattered with blood," Solzhenitsyn's book says.

Ryumin, stroking a thick, rubber truncheon, is recalled telling Dolgun, "And so you have survived trial by sleeplessness with honor. So now we will try the club. Prisoners don't last more than two or three sessions of this. Let down your trousers and lie down on the runner."

Dolgun, an American citizen who returned to this country two years ago after spending most of his life in the Soviet Union, acknowledged in an interview yesterday that he is the "A.D."

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Dolgun said that he was accused of recruiting spies against the Soviet Union from among Russians who come to the American Embassy's consular section, which he denied then and now.

Dolgun said that shortly before his arrest, American Embassy personnel had been warned about harassment at a time when thousands of Russians were political prisoners. During that period of the beginning of the Cold War, Americans in Russia were routinely "shadowed" by Soviet agents, Dolgun said.

Dolgun asserted that he was innocent and refused to sign a confession. He was transferred to Lefortovo, a military prison in Moscow, and held there for a full year in solitary confinement in a "psychic cell" with walls painted black.

Still refusing to confess to anything, Dolgun was transferred to Sukhanovka, "where the beatings went on every day except Sunday." Dolgun never saw another prisoner there because he was kept in solitary confine-

ment. World War II prevented the family from returning to this country. Dolgun was hired in 1942 by the American Embassy in Moscow, where he worked as a messenger and later as head of the files division of the consular section until his arrest in 1948, when he was going to lunch a block from the embassy.

The American Embassy, suspecting that Dolgun had been arrested by the Soviet secret police, protested and pleaded for information on Dolgun, but he was not heard of again until long after his prison release in 1956 at the time of a general amnesty.

After being grabbed off a Moscow street, Dolgun said yesterday, he was taken to the headquarters of the KGB, the Soviet secret police. "They accused me of espionage and questioned me for two days and two nights without interruption," Dolgun said.

ment when not being interrogated. But he said he often heard the moans of fellow prisoners.

Dolgun said that he believes Sukhanovka was the worst prison of Stalin's era. It had cells so narrow that prisoners could not sit down. It was here, Dolgun said, that he learned how to sleep while standing up.

Dolgun was beaten repeatedly and his malaria recurred. Though he had a temperature of 105 degrees, he continued to be questioned without mercy. Finally, he was transferred to a prison hospital.

Dolgun said that he never had even the pretense of a trial. One day he was brought into a room. "They read me a paper saying a decision had been reached to deprive me of my freedom for 25 years," Dolgun recalled yesterday.

Dolgun was sent to a labor camp in Dzhezkazgan in Central Asia, which was next to the labor camp where Solzhenitsyn was being held. However, the two men didn't meet until years after their imprisonment.

Dolgun said that he and Solzhenitsyn met through a mutual friend and former prisoner who had been in prisons with both of them. He said that he was interviewed in extreme detail during sessions at his home, the friend's, and elsewhere. Dolgun recalled that Solzhenitsyn took copious notes.

Dolgun said he eventually "confessed" to being "a socially dangerous element" in the Soviet Union after Gen. Ryumin of the KGB (later executed with a group of other top secret police officers), told him that if he didn't sign a confession he would go back to Sukhanovka.

"He told me I must confess everything, 'Or we'll use every possible physical and moral means of terror,'" Dolgun recalled. The words have been burned into his memory.

When Dolgun was released from the labor camp in 1956, he was warned not to associate with American Embassy employees or foreigners or he would be reimprisoned.