

# A Soviet Prisoner's Tale

By Bernard Gwertzman  
New York Times

Washington

Alexander Dolgun left his office in the United States embassy in Moscow about 1 p.m. on Dec. 13, 1948, to meet a friend for lunch. He never made the appointment.

On Gorky street, the main Moscow thoroughfare, he was seized by the Soviet secret police and disappeared for eight years into the world of prisons, torture chambers and labor camps described in detail by Alexander Solzhenitsyn in his book published last Friday.

But unique among the former prisoners interviewed by Solzhenitsyn for "The Gulag Archipelago: 1918-56," Dolgun was an American citizen. After much petitioning, he was allowed to return to the U.S. with little publicity two years ago and he now works for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in Bethesda, Md.

When told that his name was mentioned by Solzhenitsyn in the book he agreed to an interview. But prison days was not a subject that Dolgun enjoyed talking about.

"I was walking on Gorky Street, the side opposite the central telegraph office when some guy started calling out my name" Dolgun said, recounting the day 25 years ago when he was carried off.

"He was dressed in civilian clothes and had a big smile on his face. He said 'Oh buddy how many years since we've seen each other.' I immediately thought he was imbalanced because obviously I didn't know the guy."

Dolgun continued in a soft tone with no emotion.

"I told him sorry I don't know who you are. He brought me close to the curb and all of a sudden started talking very quietly, 'You are Dolgun?' 'I said 'Yes I'm Dolgun.' 'And he said 'the KGB would like to talk with you for five minutes.'"

"I said 'Beg your pardon but I'm an American citizen and we're not allowed to meet Soviet officials and here's my identification card' and I turned it over."

"He looked at the identification card and said,

## Tito Implies Purge of Liberals May Be Ending

Belgrade

President Tito indicated yesterday that his purge of so-called liberal elements in politics and the arts might be coming to an end in Yugoslavia.

He said in his New Year's message that the major difficulties facing Yugoslav Communists have been largely overcome and that outside influences were being eliminated.

Faith in the Serbian Communist party has been restored, Tito said.

Diplomatic observers said Tito's comments were the first indication that the purges that have affected many republics might be nearing an end.

Most top Serbian party officials have been fired for opposing the 81-year-old president's drive for tighter party discipline, leading newspaper editors have been expelled from the party and noted artists and film-makers have been publicly criticized.

Reuters

"That's right, that's you. You don't have to worry, it will only be a five-minute talk and we'll bring you back to the same place."

"He started talking loudly again, and he said, 'Here comes a car.' That was the first time I suspected something. I decided to turn around and run. And two guys came up behind me and grabbed me by the elbows and said, 'Be quiet — don't make noise.' I noticed a car by the curb with the doors open — a Fobeda — they shoved me in. Two guys got in back with me and searched me. The other guy said, 'You don't have to worry — we'll bring you back in a few minutes.' They took me to Lubyanka" — the secret police headquarters in downtown Moscow.

Thus began Dolgun's eight years of confinement and terror.

No one was informed of his arrest — neither his em-

bassy where he was a Foreign Service staff employee, nor his parents.

The embassy, suspecting that he had been arrested, filed a protest with the Soviet Foreign Ministry two days later — to no avail. His parents eventually learned what had happened.

At Lubyanka, he was assigned to a "box cell" on the third floor, and early that first evening he was brought before an interrogator where he said he was shown the charge against him: Espionage and anti-Soviet activity.

He said he was told that the Soviet authorities wanted to stage an anti-American trial in which he would be the main performer. At first, he said, he refused to sign anything or confess to the charges.

The worst experience, he said, was at the prison in Sukhanovka not far from Moscow where "they torture you." There, he was beaten on the buttocks with a rubber truncheon by a General Ryumin, the No. 2 man in the secret police. He was struck in the abdomen, which caused internal injuries and resulted in his being operated upon.

It was at that prison that he finally "confessed" several times to various charges, Dolgun said. But by then — 1951 — the authorities apparently had lost interest in the show trial and instead, without a trial, sentenced him to a 25-year term in a labor camp called Dzekkazgan in Kazakhstan.

Dolgun was released in 1956 in the general amnesty for political prisoners. He said that he was told that if he went back to the American embassy or had anything to do with foreigners again, he would be sentenced to life imprisonment.

Nevertheless, he eventually made contact with a sister abroad who started the steps leading to his eventual return to the U.S.

He had come to Moscow from New York as a boy with his mother and sister to join his father, an engineer, who had accepted work in a Soviet truck factory in 1933.

But in 1936 authorities took away his father's American passport and gave him Soviet papers. He was, however, permitted to retain his American passport.

In 1943, at the age of 17, he

was hired by the U.S. embassy as a clerk. He was the head of the file division in the consular section at the time of his arrest.

Dolgun's sister had been allowed to leave Russia in 1941, and now lives in Vienna, where she persuaded the American ambassador, John P. Humes, to take a personal interest in her brother's case.

Dolgun credits Humes for pressuring the State Department and in seeking President Nixon's help as a major factor in his receiving Soviet permission to return to the U.S. in December, 1971.

In the early 1960s in Moscow, Dolgun was introduced to Solzhenitsyn by mutual friends, Dolgun said. He said the novelist interviewed him in detail about his experiences in the prisons.

He said that Solzhenitsyn had already known from personal experience about the labor camps, but wanted a first-hand account of the prisons and the torture procedures.

Dolgun's return to the U.S. was without public announcement, in keeping with the State Department's apparent desire to avoid damaging prospects for other Americans to leave the Soviet Union.

On Jan. 27, 1972, Dolgun was honored in a small ceremony at the State Department. Martin J. Hillenbrand, then the assistant secretary for European affairs, gave him a certificate and a pin for service from 1943 to 1956. He also gave Dolgun a check for his salary from 1948 to 1956, which Dolgun said came to \$22,000 after taxes and pension deductions.

He believes he was paid "peanuts" for his time in prison, and should at the minimum have received interest on his salary. As the result of his experience his health is poor and he needs expensive dental care, he said. Dolgun, his Soviet-born wife, Irene, and son, Andrew, live in nearby Rockville, Md.

Dolgun said that his mother and father were also arrested after he was seized. His mother went insane under torture, he said, and died in a hospital. His father survived confinement and died in Moscow.