





# BACK IN THE USSR

Na Zashchitu Zdorov'ya

I remember taking a train  
from Helsinki to Leningrad.

It was Sunday night,  
late April 1958, and I  
was sitting in a coach  
reserved for  
foreigners  
all  
alone.



Once we crossed the border from Finland into Russia, the train stopped, and I was ushered into a huge room to have my passport stamped.

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There I met a fellow traveler, an Englishman who worked for the British Government. The cavernous hall was filled with large red velvet draperies and propaganda posters, worthy of Malevich.

The diplomat said it was tradition to toast when you first arrive in Russia.



He poured me a full glass of vodka.

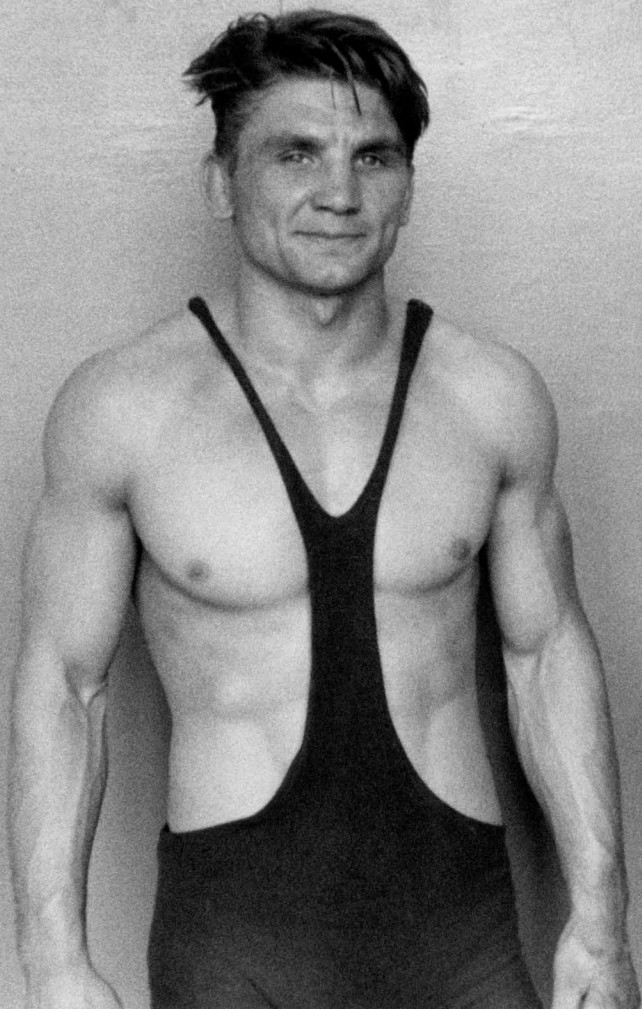
“Na vashe zdorov'ye!”

Then I quickly got drunk. Welcome.



In Leningrad I was directed to the back seat of what seemed to be a 1939 black hispano-suiza. Sharing my space was another non-Russian, and extraordinarily interesting woman, a Dietrich look-a-like, Swathed in black, mysterious, dangerous; Marlene was out of my league. Midnight was never more alluring. I was off to the races!







НА ВАШЕ ЗДОРОВЬЕ



НА ВАШЕ ЗДОРОВЬЕ





After a three day stay in the Ukraine, I took an overnight train from Kiev to Moscow. There were six of us in the compartment, five were chubby, sullen, seemingly non-friendly confrères, plus me. The first thing they did was to put on their pajamas, so I followed suit. Roaring into the sunset, across mother Russia, my new found comrades took out their dinner sandwiches. Since there were no diners on the train, at each stop everyone hopped off and visited the local villagers displaying their vegetables and refreshments.







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I





СТРОИТЕЛЬ КОММУНИЗМА!



„Надо  
ВСЕГДА  
ПОМНИТЬ,  
ЧТО  
БДИТЕЛЬНОСТЬ —  
|| ЭТО ||  
НАШЕ ||  
ОСТРЕЙШЕЕ ОРУЖИЕ  
ПРОТИВ ЛЮБЫХ ПРОНСКОВ  
КЛАССОВОГО  
ВРАГА?“  
/н.с хрущёв/



As we all became more familiar with each other, my compartment companions offered to share their sandwiches and fruit with me, I felt communal.

I remember looking out the window as the Ukrainian landscape and the sunset flew by. The wind blew in my face, and I knew this was an adventure. Clutching Tom Lacy's Argus C3, what would Cartier-Bresson do at a time like this? I had no clue.

I learned how to say in Russian “Могу я сфотографировать тебя?” or “May I take your photograph?”



ЛЮБОВЬ

СЕРИЯ

СТАРЫЕ ЖЕНЩИНЫ

КОТА

СЮЖЕТ

НОВЫЕ НАУЧНО-ПОПУЛЯРНЫЕ И ХРОНИКАЛЬНО-ДОКУМЕНТАЛЬНЫЕ ФИЛЬМЫ

**БЕРЕГА ГОЛУБОГО АЛТАЯ**

**В КРАЮ СОЛНЕЧНЫХ НОЧЕЙ**

**Д Н Е П Р**

**НА БЕРЕГАХ ЕНИСЕЯ**

**ДОМЕНЩИЙ МАГНИТНИ**

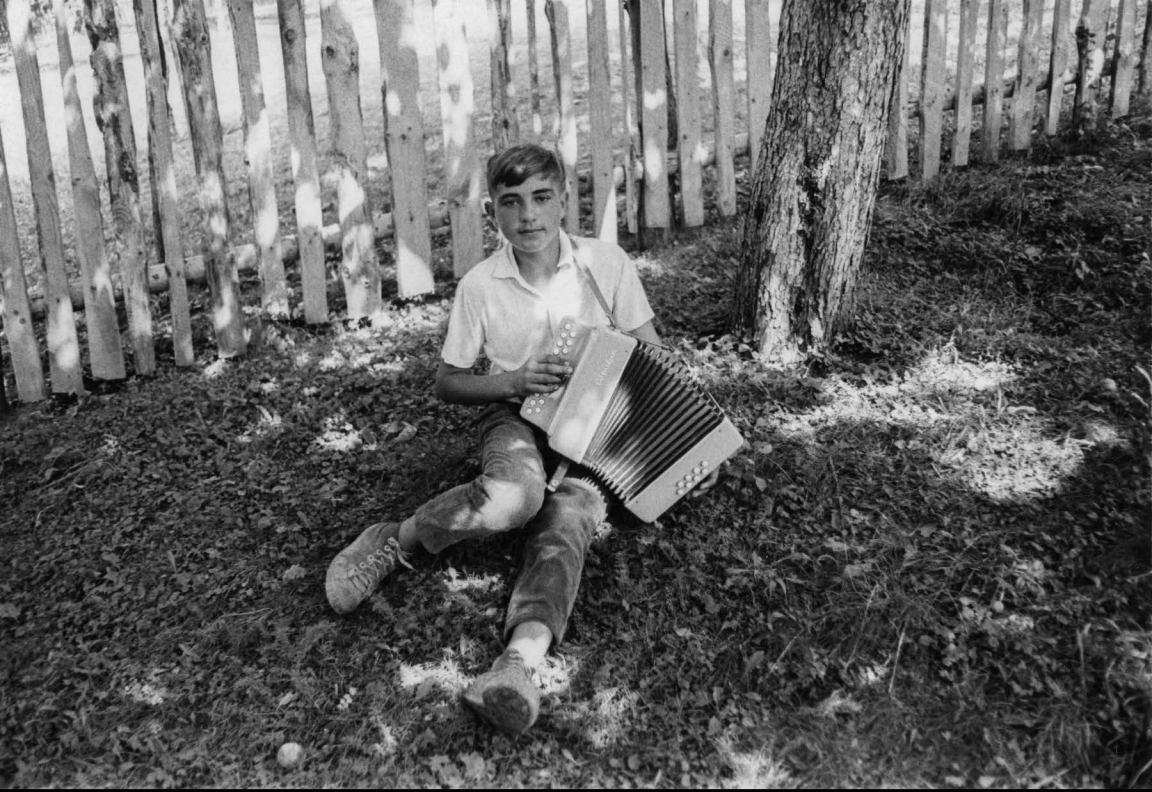
**ТРУДНЫЙ ПУТЬ**

Early  
Monday  
morning I  
found myself  
wandering through  
Winter Palace Square,  
and spied a young boy  
following me. Being  
paranoid, I decided he was a  
NKVD agent, disguised as a  
communist boychick. I would walk half  
a block, and he would walk half a block.  
I turned abruptly and confronted him.  
He walked towards me and put out his hand  
to deposit something in my palm. It was a  
tiny red star pin, suitable for a lapel.  
He walked away, stopped and looked back,  
and that's when I took his picture.















Могу я сфотографировать тебя?



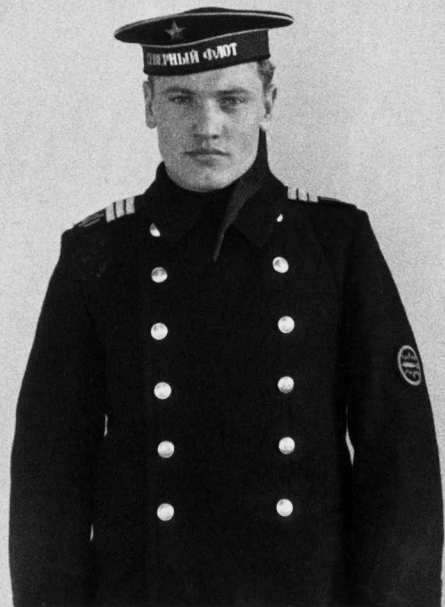
Могу я сфотографировать тебя?

Могу я сфотографировать тебя?



I seemed to be a novelty item, and most people were friendly. When I photographed the Russian sailor in Minsk in the airport, he seemed flattered to have me take his picture. After the second frame I noticed the sailor was looking at somebody over my shoulder, and then abruptly walked away.

Amerikansky agent?











One Rusky commented that my white floppy hat was only worn by children in Russia, not grown ups. "But I am childish!" I thought.

The National Hotel was the oldest, grandest, most elegant hotel in Moscow in 1958. It survived the Romanoffs, and the Revolution, and the Nazi invasion. After two weeks in the USSR, I found myself staying at there and having dinner on a Sunday evening.

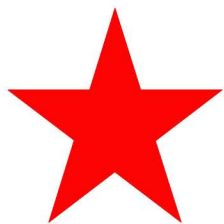


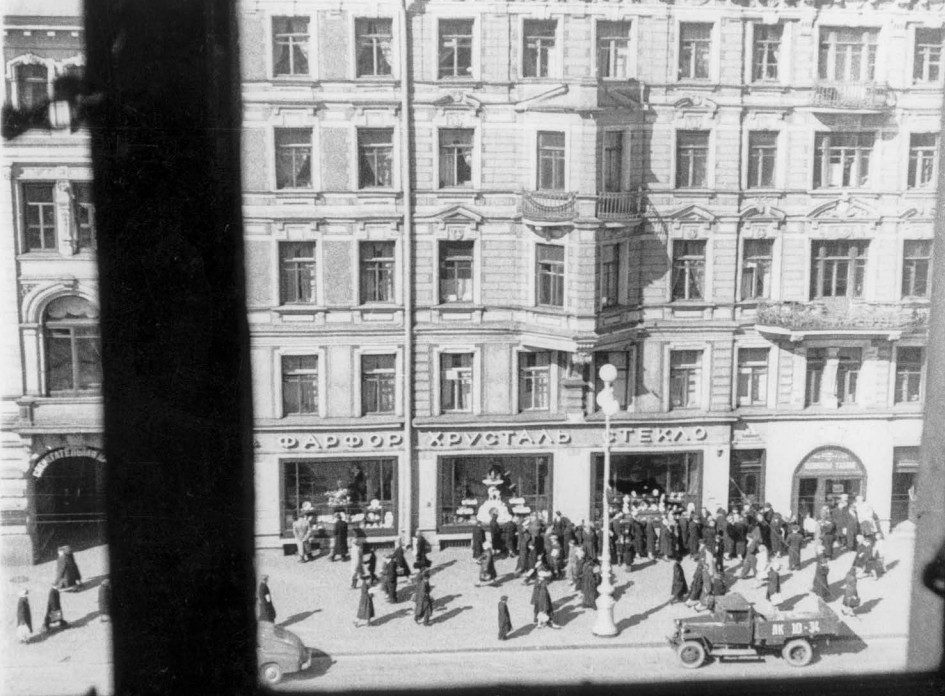
TROTSKY



LENIN









The novelty of being there had begun to wear off. Having been seated in the grand dining room, I noticed the tables and chairs seemed worn, and the staff was just polite. Through the large windows I saw the domes of the Kremlin, glowing golden, in the reflected setting sun over Poland. Illuminated red stars crowned the domes as they spun in circles brightly.

The evening sky became inky black, and a full moon silhouetted the minarets.



КЛИНОМ

КРАСНЫМ

БЕЙ

БЕЛЫХ





As I watched the spectacle, very far from home, I felt I was a stranger halfway around the world in a strange land. My bravado and showing-off melted to sadness and melancholy. I was away away. My triumph was imploding and I began to feel like a wandering Gypsy without a tribe. A violinist played something touching, a strange sentiment forgotten.

The music sounded like shadows.





There was no one to talk to. I sensed  
loneliness. I was haunted by the  
memory of Mckeesport.  
Mother and father were ghosts.

Who can protect me now?

I became a little boy about to cry.  
I wasn't yet the grown man I thought  
I was. If I was struck, I would echo.  
I had exiled myself.  
A small price to pay for adventure.

My romance here was a right of passage.

