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**A ROPE-DANCER  
(A WRECKAGE)\***

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*Translated from the Russian by A. Yarkho*

**PREFACE**

I wrote my memoirs as a chronicle of the century, a chronicle lived and experienced by myself. It is for this reason that some seemingly minor events are illuminated more thoroughly, while other ones, of a more universal significance, are touched upon only to the degree they had an effect on my personal experience. What you are going to read is a chronicle written not by a public figure but by a free thinker who led an active life and participated in the resistance.

I speak about science to the extent I took part in its development. I also speak about mystical anarchism, an esoteric teaching that became popular among Russian intellectuals in the 1920s. I was connected with this movement for ten years, though I was only on the lowest stage of initiation. I speak about Bolshevist terror, since I spent about 18 years in prison, in camp, and in all kinds of exiles, or under limited deprivation of civil rights. I speak of my experience abroad: this world opened to me only at the end of the 1980s.

I am fortunate and privileged to have known many outstanding people of my epoch, and for this reason my memoirs can also be regarded as fragments of the history of the Russian intelligentsia of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century.

Much of what is only mentioned here will certainly be studied with great attention in the near future. The history of the latest decades has left us numerous mysteries to solve.

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*\*Editors' note:* The excerpts printed here are from Professor Nalimov's memoirs originally published in Russian in 1994 (*Kanatokhodets*, Moscow: Progress). A complete English translation of the memoirs is currently underway and will be published in the United States by Panigada Press, P.O. Box 22877, Honolulu, HI 96823-2877.

## THE PROLOGUE: ON THE THRESHOLD

### *Madonna's Lily*

*Thou, to whose light feet are plinth  
Narrow spires of temples  
Looming over the town of stone,  
Over merlons of palaces, over blocks,  
Shelter from whistling blizzards  
Protect as your children, Madonna,  
Those who start without armour or mail  
On the road of fathomless sorrow.*

—Daniil Andreev  
“The Song of Monsalvate”  
(unfinished poem, 1934-38)

*And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads ... [13:1]*

*and they worshipped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” [13:4] And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words ... [13:5]*

*and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. [13:15]*

—The Revelation to John

Fragments of the family chronicle in the days of the revolutionary terror when the new  
**MEANINGS WERE BLOODTHIRSTY**

...Onward still the Twelve go striding;  
In their rear—a starving cur;  
And with bloody banner leading,  
Hidden by the howling storm,  
Safe from human hurt and harm,  
In a chaplet of white roses,  
Stepping through the pearly snowdust,

Shrouded in the stormy mist  
In the distance—Jesus Christ.

—Alexander Blok, “The Twelve,” January, 1918  
(1981, p. 318)

When a hurricane arises on the semantic field, when whirlwinds are formed saturating meanings with unrestrained energy, then the Revolution breaks out.

Revolution is a gust of people's passion, unrestrained, unfettered, and cruel.

Revolution is a thirst for the new, for the unprecedented. Revolution has the romantics of destruction: belief that the destructive spirit is transformed (as Bakunin believed) into a constructive spirit.

However, there is always resistance to any destruction, even to the destruction of decrepitude. The new meanings became savage and craved for blood. The chaplet of white roses became red with blood. As it had been said long ago: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth, I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Mt. 10:34). But the sword is always dangerous: "... all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Mt. 26:52).

Passion is always instantaneous. It is replaced by despondent hangover. Meanings trying to gain strength become rigid and dogmatic. They turn into an ideology. Resorting to power, they started to form a depressive unprecedented *authority* that turned into ineffaceable national tragedy.

The winds of fate made me, from my childhood, contact tragism generated by rabid meanings. And none of my kith and kin escaped them.

My mother, Nadezhda Ivanovna, was a surgeon. During the Civil War she was mobilized into the Red Army to work in a hospital with spotted fever patients where she died of this horrible disease. But her death in service to the Red Army never saved her father, an energetic businessman in the past, from deprivation of civil right and expulsion from his own home. Her brother, and later, her sister, were not able to withstand the humiliation and committed suicide. When I leaf through old family photographs I see that my mother always looked very sad. Was it a presentiment that she would never see her children grown? I remember once, when a boy, I accompanied her to the hospital (that was during World War I) where she had to examine the patients after the operation. For some reason I put my hand into the pocket of her coat. She took my hand and said, "Soon you'll be a grown-up and I'll be able to lean on your hand." But that was not to come true.

My father, Vasily Petrovich, who came from a small Northern village, died in prison in 1939, after the second arrest.

My sister, Nadezhda, during World War II was the wife of a British military officer on the staff of the Royal Military Mission. After the war was over, her husband had to go back to his native land, and she was naturally sent to a labor camp. After Khrushchev's rehabilitation she returned to Moscow, sick, with a broken soul. Passionately, she longed for England, but in vain. Her British husband denied her when she was in a Russian camp.

Noteworthy is the paradoxical history of the family of my stepmother, Olga Fedorovna. It makes explicit the absurdity of opposing meanings within one family. Her parents were village teachers who also had a farm with hired agricultural workers (in the revolutionary terms they were simply called "kulaks"), but that was the only way in pre-revolutionary Russia to give seven children the opportunity to have a college education. One of her brothers was a White Guard officer during the Civil War, but fate somehow protected him. Another brother, who in his school years had links with the party of socialist revolutionaries during World War I, was sentenced to death by hanging. He fled abroad—it was easy then. After the revolution he came back, but did not like the new order either; he fled again: a Polish smuggler took him abroad in a suitcase. In Poland, he was arrested as a Russian spy. Later he was in Liege where he received a diploma as a mining engineer. He worked in Belgian Congo. He sent alluring post-cards: a cottage among palm trees, black servants in white clothes. But the soul of the former revolutionary could not resign itself to the colonial order: he intervened in the forbidden. His wife was poisoned; he found himself in Belgium, imprisoned in a Catholic monastery (his firm was afraid of revelations) where he received a brilliant education in mystical teachings. Then Russia again: his activities of discovering major resources of non-ferrous metals in Kazakhstan were intermittent with a rest in mental clinics: his *idée fixe* was saving Negroes in America. The younger sister of this "quite ordinary" family, immediately after classic high school, became an investigator of the "extraordinary Commission" (an early

name of the KGB) in Kazah. Later she graduated from the Chemistry Department of Moscow State University and worked for the Central Committee of the Communist Party. But that was not for long. She was irreparably broken in spirit. They say that in those days the investigator on duty was to shoot, personally, those whose shooting was due that day; another version is that they had to shoot those whose cases they investigated. Be that as it may, we, then adolescent, were strictly forbidden to ask her any questions. And we were very eager to do that.

The husband of my step-mother's sister, Josif Moiseevich Feigel (he later adopted the name of Pavlov) was first a doctor's assistant in the village where my stepmother came from. Then he took the position of the head of the province KGB in Kiev. (It's easy to imagine the atmosphere in the city which was a stronghold not only of refined intelligentsia but also of the Russian Black Hundreds.) Some time later, Dzerzhinsky, the first head of KGB, proposed to him the position of the head of the Moscow KGB. He refused and entered the College of Red Professorship. (It seems that in this college everybody supported Trotsky's leftist communism and he tried to inspire me, then a boy, with these ideas, but in vain; they seemed to me absurd even then.) I remember an emotionally tense talk between him and my father:

*Feigel:* I feel they will have to shoot you soon.

*Father:* I feel the same. But you will be shot earlier than me.

The forecast came true: Feigel was arrested before my father and died in the camp. Even the military order awarded to him for the bloody repression of rebellious Kronshtadt<sup>1</sup> did not save him. His only son perished during the war. He defended not only his Motherland but also those who made short work of his loyal father's life.

Now I would like to recall my godfather, D. T. Yanovich. I often visited him: he had a brilliant library of books, available for teenagers. His apartment (in a memorial Gogol's house) resembled a museum; like my father, he was an anthropologist. He traced his origin back to the Ukrainian Kazak freemen called Zaporozhskaya Sech (army). He had at his home both his great-grandmother's armchair and great-grandfather's battle saddle. My godfather's passion was anecdotes, not only obscene, but also political ones. He was a superb master in that. It is only natural that his life ended in purely Russian phenomena. They were gibes behind the Power's back, the last possible protest. The protest was dangerous: one had to pay with his life for a jeer. But some people could not keep silent any longer.

Let us however return to the family chronicle. My first wife was Irina Vladimirovna Usova. Her father, a nobleman and landowner of modest means, had an estate in Kursk province. He received an education in agronomy in Germany, and his passionate efforts were directed at demonstrating that it is possible to rationally manage the technically equipped farm on Russian black soils. He was not able to survive the destruction of what he considered to be the principal cause of his life. He died of a heart attack after running away from his home. His son Alyosha, a young man only entering an adult life, was shot after the army of Kolchak had stopped fighting. The officers were shot without a trial<sup>2</sup>; this was told in a letter written with a deep sorrow by a Siberian peasant woman, the hostess of the house where Alyosha had lived in his early career of a village teacher. Later, in 1947, his sister Tatyana was arrested in connection with the case of a friend of the house, poet Daniil Andreyev. (The "case" was a major one: from 50 to 100 people were arrested in this connection. I will come back to it in detail later.) It was amazing that the other sister, then my wife Irina, could be saved from arrest. Their mother, Maria Vasilievna, could not stand the arrest of her beloved daughter and the poet close to her in spirit who fascinated her. It is a rare happiness to be a friend to a poet by divine grace when you love poetry. Everything collapsed, became a disaster for everybody. (M. V. had graduated from the College for Noble Maidens, she spoke French and German fluently. In the '20s, she studied in the courses for translators headed by the famous Russian

poet V. Bryusov. She translated professionally such poets as Rilke, Verlaine, and Baudelaire. Then some people became suspicious. She was given an antireligious verse to be translated. She refused. That put an end to her translator's job. She lived on poetry. She could discuss a translation of one line for hours on end: she would suggest new versions and ceaselessly compare them to other people's translations.) This fine islet remaining after the Russian noblemen was also destroyed.

My second wife is Jeanna Drogalina. Her father was arrested at the end of the '30s or at the beginning of the '40s and nothing else is known about him. Jeanna's mother and step-father are rigorous Party members. Nobody ever mentioned her father's name at home. The first time she heard about him was at a personnel department<sup>3</sup> when she was employed at a new job. "Do you know you don't have your own father?" She did not.

Where are the friends of my youth? If they or their families were not sucked into the bog of repressions, they perished during World War II against Germany, seized by its own demonic powers. I would like to remember here my school friend Petya Lapshin. He was a charming person, open, responsive, ready to help everybody. We, his friends, always swarmed into his cramped apartment in a lane to Arbat<sup>4</sup> Street. We often went out of town together. We had a lot of things in common: We were young, educated and intelligent, and to a certain degree aware of the absurdity and tragism of life at that time. This is the list of current withdrawals: suddenly they arrested the father of Dina Kuzmina, Petya's relative (he was a college professor); later they arrested the father of Galya Chernushevich, in the same unexpected way (he was chief metallurgist of a major plant in Moscow and literally spent days and nights at his job)—a characteristic detail: Galya's husband abandoned her on the night of the search leaving his pregnant wife without any sustenance; there was Fedya Vittov, who never lacked the attention of the secret police—he was a descendent of a once noble Lithuanian family and was not free from sin, a passionate lover and brilliant master of anecdotes, naturally, he received three years of imprisonment that were due to him; for a short period of time we had a girl named Katya among us (I can't remember her second name now): she had a voice of an unusual timbre, she was training to be a real actress, and her voice made her especially fetching—it ruined her, because she did not respond positively to someone's importune claims. She disappeared. Petya himself during the war refused to remain at his job (he was released from mobilization), volunteered for the army, and was immediately killed at his machine-gun.

Another recollection: mathematical department of physical-mathematical division at Moscow University, 1930. On a gloomy day, we students whispered to one another: Professor Dmitri Fedorovich Yegorov has been arrested. He was the founder of the Moscow school of mathematics. We attended his lectures and studied his manuals. His views were old-fashioned, of course. Besides, he had previously been the elder of the University church. When he was arrested, he was old and sick and soon died in prison. And the same question comes back: Who would need his death, and why?

Where are my spiritual teachers whose names I honor and whose causes I try to continue in my philosophical papers? The only thing I know is that they had been rehabilitated much earlier than I was. Prison cases are also full of paradoxes.

My own life was full of wanderings. I was arrested at the age of 26. In the spring of 1937, the Special Conference<sup>5</sup> (without a trial) condemned me to five years of Reformatory Labor Camps for counter-revolutionary activities. Repressive actions in various forms took 18 years of my life. In 1954, the conviction was removed by amnesty. The reason for removal was that I had been sentenced to only five years. In 1960, I was eventually rehabilitated. But even now I feel behind me the shadow nicknamed "people's enemy."<sup>6</sup> Many others were arrested together with me: two of my friends since school years, Yura Proferansov, who perished in the camps, and Ion Sharevsky, who was shot. As to the "Case" itself, I know practically

nothing about it. Spiritually, everything seems to have been lost, I feel sometimes I am the only one who continues the new thread of philosophical comprehension that started then in Russia and that approaches the world synthetically, ready to absorb the riches of both Western and Eastern thinking without rejecting either religious concepts or scientific constructions.

The reader should not think that tragism was condensing only around individuals and their environment. It was omnipresent. Since the beginning of the '30s, it had become an epidemic, embracing, to varying degrees, all layers of society. This epidemic could be called Robespierrian. As any epidemic, it was selective, and struck primarily prominent, gifted people. In my book I sometimes quote Russian poets of the recent past. A few words about their destiny: Alexander Blok,<sup>7</sup> who accepted and glorified the Russian Revolution, died of a nervous breakdown in starving Petrograd; Nikolai Gumilyov<sup>7</sup> was shot in 1921 (later, his son Lev Gumilyov, the historian, was put in a camp)<sup>8</sup>; Sergei Yesenin<sup>7</sup> hanged himself; as did Marina Tsvetaeva<sup>7</sup> after endless humiliations; Vladimir Mayakovsky<sup>7</sup> shot himself; Nikolai Zabolotsky<sup>7</sup> was condemned to a camp imprisonment; Maximillian Voloshin<sup>7</sup> died a natural death but at the beginning of the '20s, in the turbulent Crimea, he saw his name on the list of those condemned to death<sup>9</sup>; Daniil Andreev (I mentioned his name before) was released from prison in the town of Vladimir in the mid-'50s with completely ruined health, and died in 1959; Alexander Kovalensky, a relative of Alexander Blok, an outstanding writer and poet whose works seem to be lost irretrievably, being almost unknown, was condemned in connection with Andreev's case, was also released with ruined health and soon died; Osip Mandelshtam,<sup>7</sup> the greatest master of Russian words, died in a camp; Alexander Vvedensky,<sup>7</sup> a poet-philosopher, who had a striking approach to the problem of time, was arrested and died, up to now he is known in our country only as a poet for children. The obituary list of poets is certainly incomplete. But it is frightening as it is. The destructive force was inexorable and inventive. Its task was to break the links between generations, to free the road to the new, unfettered by the past. And that seems to have succeeded.

. . .

Indeed, all that was but a severe and cruel recompense for the attempt to acquire new meanings not on the personal level but for an entire people that was not prepared for the burden of the freedom opening. But the burden turned out to be too heavy, cumbersome, unbearable. Freedom turned into debauchery that gave birth to unfreedom even more cruel than before. A new ideology is always more frightening than a senile one.

There were periods between rulers, however, when freedom could not be restrained. Remember the February revolution. The Russian Bastille, the penal prison of Schlisselburg, fell on February 28, 1917, without a single shot.<sup>10</sup>

The '20s are also a memorable time. The Civil War was over, NEP<sup>11</sup> began, and people started to hope for the better. Many still were open to freedom. And they had belief, a striking belief that social justice could be achieved then and there. Everything that was happening seemed unheard of, unprecedented. That was supposed to be the very best thing, the dream of mankind come true. The intense search for the new was going on in all fields: in philosophy, scientific and religious thinking, in art—especially in theater, in school, even in ordinary secondary school, in sectarianism, both folk and sophisticated, that was flourishing in the period.<sup>12</sup> The dissidence also grew.

But the state-established tendency towards all-embracing uniformity of thought started to oppose dissidence even then. At first, the opposition seemed to occur at the periphery, at points of extreme tension. But by and by it became obviously omnipresent, affecting each of

us. Each of those who was unable to follow without demur the whimsical course of evolution of the new ideology.

In my school years, I had a friend, Igor Tarle. His father, the well-known Menshevik,<sup>13</sup> spent the '20s in political prisons and in exile. Only once did I see him, between two exiles; he was in Moscow in transit.

I remember Lyolya Gendelman. At the end of school, Ion Sharevsky introduced us. She was our elder, but we made friends quickly. For some time she was an indispensable participant in our highbrow, philosophical discussions. More often than not they occurred in her room, for she alone among us had a room of her own. I never saw her parents: her father was a member of the Central Committee of right-wing social-revolutionaries and was always in exile. The enthusiastic discussions did not continue for long: I was depressed by her passionate adherence to Hegelian-Marxist ideas. Later I learned that she was arrested and condemned to three years of political prison for participation in a Menshevist oriented circle.<sup>14</sup>

I was acquainted with the family of Professor Alexander Petrovich Nechaev, the well-known psychologist, former member of the party of constitutional democracy. For some time I was a student of the Experimental-Model School where he was the principal. Later, he was sent away from Moscow in exile, as he was a person of adamant beliefs. His elder son, Modest, an Orientalist and theosophist, was also sent into exile.

An especially noteworthy case took place in either 1926 or 1927. On the first day of Easter (it was still a national festival, everywhere accompanied by chimes), in the afternoon, I went to see my schoolfriend Sergei Znamensky (who later became an architect, and during the war perished in a field engineer battalion) and learned that his younger brother, about 16 or a bit older, had disappeared that morning. He disappeared without a trace. They looked for him and made inquiries everywhere, but in vain. About two weeks later he appeared again, quite unconcerned. What had happened? On Easter morning he had gone to the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. On the church porch he saw a lively crowd deep in argument. These were various sectarians. Listening to the discussion, he saw it was on the level of his intellectual development and he took an active part in it. Naturally, he was arrested for illicit independence of thought, whereupon for two weeks they tried to find out whether he was somebody's secret emissary. But no dangerous source of heresy was disclosed, so he was let out. And without consequences, which proves there still was some freedom!

But that happened in the '20s. By the '30s clouds started to condense, arrests came close to almost every family. In 1931 my father was arrested for the first time, but then it was still possible to save him. We knew what was taking place in the villages. But in towns, under the impending clouds, life was going on as usual. People kept working as always. The amazing thing is that people worked intensively and often with enthusiasm. That is how it was in R & D institutes where I happened to work, and in the plants related to the institutes. People worked this way not because they believed in a glorious future—nobody seemed to believe it any more. But almost nobody understood anything. What can you understand in an epidemic? They worked because very deep in their souls they retained the potential planted in the '20s.

Now through the mist of the past years, the '20s seem the golden age of the Russian Revolution. But it also had a blemish, a growing, expanding worm-hole.

. . .



It is sad to write memoirs. Again the soul is clouded with the smell of burning. Fire. Not woods or villages were burning, but human destinies. The country's fate was burning. A lot burned out completely.

For the first time in the history of the human race, the revolution was successful. That was a great revolution; it's impossible not to acknowledge this. The revolution that turned into a bloody mystery: one cannot help seeing it. The revolution was prepared by the entire past of European history. The old culture was completely destroyed for the sake of creating a new culture. Meanings that were long smoldering in the underground at last came to the surface of the world's history. They showed what they were capable of. It seems that the giant social experiment is over. It can be summed up. But no, it is going on, because new meanings capable of carrying away masses of people have not yet ripened.<sup>15</sup> I was not only a witness to those events, but a participant as well. The participant who always strived to remain himself, not to obey the gloomy ideology of the forcible way to common happiness, lawfully (as they told us) intended for all of us.

I wish to tell the reader about all that in my sorrowful memoirs. In the course of the story I will give my comments not from the viewpoint of a historian (archives are not accessible to me) but as a participant. What follows is but memoirs of a speculative participant passionately wishing to comprehend human nature and predestination.

Meanwhile, the rigorous meanings of forcible transformation of humankind are still bloodthirsty, lurking in the background. At present, many want to find those to blame and to punish them. But there are no such people. There was no sinister plot (anyway, nobody seemed to sense it in the early '20s), but there was an urge towards the new, the unknown. Everything was as it was and as it was prepared by the entire history of the country. Now, not having forgotten the old strifes, we are rapidly approaching a new catastrophe, not on the national, but on a planetary scale. Who is preparing it? It seems that everybody is; everybody who, submerged in matters of everyday concern, does not feel the responsibility for what is going on, does not care.

Could it be that we, spiritual heirs of ancient Mediterranean, are under *Fatum*, the severe menace of fate?

We could not perceive what had been given to us. Entering a temple, especially a dark Catholic one, I hear the sorrowful words of the unuttered prayer: "Oh Lord, give us the power to overcome ourselves on the way we are to go!"

We hear the alarm bell, we discern the words: *Care, Destiny, Fate*.

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## NOTES

1. Kronshtadt: The first serious rebellion of sailors of the Baltic fleet directed against the Bolsheviks, and mercilessly repressed by the latter. The island of Kronshtadt is the former base of the Baltic fleet close to Leningrad.
2. Later, in the '30s, prisoners in the cells of Butyrka prison, when their comrades were taken away, used to sing two hymns: "The Hymn of Solovki Prisoners," and a romance by Vertinsky devoted to a woman lamenting her husband-officer in the common grave of shot officers. Here it is:

I don't know who needs it and why,  
Who sent them to death with an untrembling hand,  
But they were mercilessly, maliciously, and uselessly  
Released into the Eternal Peace!  
Cautious spectators silently wrapped themselves into furcoats,  
And a woman with a distorted face  
Kissed the dead man into his blue lips  
And threw her wedding-ring into the priest.

Spruce branches were thrown onto them, and mud covered them  
And people went away to their homes, to talk on the sly  
That it's time to stop the disgrace  
That soon we'll start to starve.  
And it occurred to nobody just to kneel  
And to tell those boys that in an unkind country  
Even glorious deeds are merely steps  
Into bottomless abysses, to the unattainable Spring!  
—Moscow, October 1917

Then we bade farewell to those who were leaving; Now the above lines are a memory of those who never came back.

3. A special department at any plant, college, or research institution interested not as much in hiring staff, but rather in guarding its "class purity."
4. One of the oldest streets in the center of Moscow.
5. A special institution formed to condemn people to punishment without a trial, even without their presence.
6. Genocide has different manifestations. In old Russia there was a proverb among reactionary circles: "A christened kike is still a kike." The same is true of the rehabilitated: one is still the enemy for those who preserve the purity of belief.
7. Famous Russian poets of the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century.
8. The tragedy of his arrest is imprinted in the famous poem, "Requiem," written by his mother, Anna Akhmatova.
9. His poem, "A Poet's House," includes the following lines:  
And he read his own name  
In the bloody lists, together with others.

10. 12,000 workers of the Schlisselburg powder plants came to liberate the prisoners. The latter knew nothing of the revolution. Nobody expected anything. What happened was unthinkable, like in a fairy tale. The stronghold of the imperial power of ages collapsed. The central state prison ceased to exist. The related pages in the book (Gernet, 1963) cannot be read without emotion, especially by those who know from personal experience what a prison bar is.
11. The New Economical Policy started by the state in 1922 after the hungry years of imposed military communism revived the free market, closed by Stalin at the end of the '20s.
12. Just one illustration: While in 1917, the evangelical Christians-Baptists numbered 250,000; by 1988, their number reached 2 million (Bayley, 1987). This testifies to the fact that people began choosing their beliefs themselves. It is only natural that they chose to be Baptists, who had great spiritual freedom and at the same time required more kindness, sympathy, and honesty.
13. The Russian Marxist party was divided into two groups: the Mensheviks (softened social-democratic trend) and the Bolsheviks (based on dictatorship). The former branch was entirely suppressed by the latter after the Revolution.
14. Still freedom was not then completely exterminated. Two societies for help to prisoners were still in existence: The Red Cross, a Menshevik agency (headed by Vinaver), and the Black Cross, representing anarchists (headed by Agniya Solonovich). Having learned about what had happened to Lyolya, I found the Red Cross office. These were two cozy little rooms somewhere in downtown Moscow, crammed with papers. I was greeted in a friendly manner by two young women. I told them I had brought for L. G. money and books on mathematics (as a matter of fact they belonged to her brother, a student of mathematics also repressed as a menshevik). I felt that the political prison was the best place for a philosophically concerned girl to study mathematics. The women accepted everything with gratitude and understanding, and nobody asked who I was and where from. Here are the names of Central Political prisons: Orlovsky, Yaroslavsky, Vladimirsky, Suzdalsky, Verkhne-Uralsky, Chelyabinsky. Even now they sound menacing but also romantic: at that time people went to these prisons voluntarily, because of inner conviction, duty, protest. They wanted to warn, but were never heard.
15. The semantic vacuum is always filled with something. Pseudomeanings start to emerge. Now, as in the old days, our country is witnessing the forming tendency towards national isolation. The tribal archetype is awakened again, a powerful archetype penetrating the entire history of humankind. But the times have changed: the culture of today is facing new grave problems that cannot be solved by means of national isolation. These problems are common for all people, and their solution, if possible at all, can only be achieved by united efforts. What we need is common aspiration towards the new. The future culture will necessarily be very versatile, multidimensional, transnational. National isolation belongs to the past, but this problem must be discussed elsewhere.