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I Chose Freedom - The Personal And Political Life Of A Soviet Official

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I CHOSE FREEDOM The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official by VICTOR KRAVCHENKO Jfevr Yorfc CHARLES SCRIBNERS SONS 1048 , 1946, mr VICTOR jPrfaxted IA tfe United States of tJkr fMi jinPn CJUrlc CONTENTS PACK I. Flight in the Night I II. A Russian Childhood 6 III. Glory and Hunger 19 IV. Youth in the Red 34 V. Break with the Past 50 VI. A Student in Kharkov 59 VII. Triumph of the Machine 74 VIII. Horror in the Village 91 IX. Harvest in Hell IIO X. My First Purge 132 XI. Elienas Secret 148 XII. Engineer at Nikopol 167 XIII. Faster, Faster 187 XIV. Super-Purge 206 XV. My Ordeal Begins 221 xvi. AScan f OT jftllPER YJUN 1949 33 8 XVII. Torture After Midnight 256 XVIII. Labor Free and Slave 278 ft XIX. While History Is Edited 298 MOB XX SStertotfaftoaV. 316 XXI W Europe Fights 332 . XXII. The Unexpected War 352 XXIIL Panic in Moscow 372 XXIV. The Kremlin in Wartime 393 XXV. The Two Truths 412 XXVL Prelude to America 436 XXV1L Stalins Subjects Abroad 455 XXVIIL Fugitive from Injustice 473 Postscript 480 Index 483 I CHOSE FREEDOM CHAPTER t PL1GBT IN THE NIGHT EVKBY MINUTE of the taxi ride between my rented roam and Union Station that Saturday night seemed loaded with danger and witbf destiny. The very streets and darkened buildings seemed frowning and hostile. In my seven months in the capital I had traveled that route dozens of times, light-heartedly, scarcely noticing my surroundings. But this time everything was different tkh time I was running away. The American family with whom I lived in Washington had been friendly and generous to the stranger under their roof. When I fell ill they had watched over me with an easy unaffected solicitude. What had begun as a mere financial arrangement had grown into a warm human relationship to which the barrier of language added a fillip of excitement. 1 sensed that in being kind to one homesick Russian these good Americans were ex pressing their gratitude to all Russians to the brave allies who were then rolling back the tide of German conquest on a thousand-mile front. They gave me full personal credit for every Soviet victory. My rent was mid for a week ahead. Yet I left the house that night without a word of final farewell. I merely said that if my trip should keep me out of town beyond Tuesday, they had my permission to let the room. I wanted my hosts to be honestly ignorant of my whereabouts and of my intention not to return, should there be any inquiries from the Soviet Pur chasing Commission. For several days, at the Commission offices, I had simulated headaches and general indisposition. Casually 1 had remarked that morning to a few colleagues that I had better remain home for a rest that I might iiot come in on Monday. I was playing hard for an extra day of grace before my absence would be discovered. After collecting my March salary-I insisted on straightening out my expense vouchers for the last trip to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and the trip to Chicago before that. It appeared that about thirty dollars were still due to me. The idea was to erase the slightest excuse for any charges of financial irregularity to explain my flight. I also made sure that all my papers were in perfect order, so that others could take up the work where I had left off. Later, when the news of my getaway was on the front pages of the Washington and New York papers, some of the men and women at the Commission must have recalled a peculiar warmth in my talks with them thai Saturday, a special pressure in my handclasp when I said So long. They must have realtied that I was bidding them a final and wordless fare-, well. Never again, not even here in free America, would any of them dare to meet me. In the months of working together some of these people had 2 CHOSE FREEDOM come close to me without saying much we had understood one another Had I been able to part with them openly, emotionally, Russianly, some of the weight that pressed on my spirits would assuredly have been lifted...

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