

Vladimir Tarskiy



This is me after my arrest in 1939 in the bull pen, NKVD of the Kalinin Railroad, Rzhev. This is a photo from the file of my case that I could make a copy of after my rehabilitation in 1993. I was born in 1925. I went to the Russian school in 1932. My school life till the 6th form could be described with my mother's saying: 'Quiet successes and noisy conduct'. I was a naughty and lazy idler. I was a pioneer like everybody else and blindly believed in communist ideas. My sisters Victoria and Inga, the younger one was five years old, and I, eleven years old, were taken to a transit home for orphaned children - that we became all of a sudden because our parents were arrested - at the Holy Danilov Monastery in the center of Moscow. They took our fingerprints and photographs en face and profile, as if we were adult criminals. Our aunt Sophia saved us. She took us to her home. We went to school. When the war in Spain began, the schoolchildren began to dream to fight on the side of the republicans. I was no different. 'It's important to go abroad!' - I thought naively. So I took a train to Rzhev from where several international trains were going to Riga. I got to Rzhev [about 200 km west of Moscow] and managed to get into an international railcar. It was empty and all doors to the compartments, but one, were locked. My heart was pounding. I got into this compartment: there were rolled mattresses on the third bench and I hid behind them. I woke up from the noise of slamming doors: a frontier man and the conductor were inspecting the railcar. They didn't notice me and the border was crossed easily. So all I had to do was stay quiet till the train reached Riga [about 680 km west of Moscow]; it was like a sentence to ten years in prison to wait that long. At the first stop I got out of the railcar and into an empty barrel without a bottom to spend the night. A janitor discovered me and took me to the local police who put me back on the train to transfer me to the transportation and road department of the Rzhev NKVD office. They searched me and discovered a compass, a map and the flyers with the false slogans of the Soviet power, about the absence of freedom and lines for bread. 'Who gave you these, boy and where were you going to take this anti-Soviet stuff?' 'I wrote them myself'. I spent the first month in a cell of 4x1.5 meters and about 2.5 meters high.