

**VADIM DELAUNAY**



**PORTRAITS  
IN A  
BARBED WIRE FRAME**





Paris, 1982. Photo by G. Faif

VADIM DELAUNAY

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A BARBED WIRE  
FRAME

*Translated into English and Edited  
by Anna Tucker*

BOSTON • 2019

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[mgraphics.books@gmail.com](mailto:mgraphics.books@gmail.com)

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## CONTENT

ANDREI PIONTKOVSKY. **Peak Delaunay**

*Preface to the English Edition, 2019 . . . . 7*

VLADIMIR BUKOVSKY

*Preface to the French Edition, 1984 . . . . 11*

VADIM DELAUNAY

*Portraits in a Barbed Wire Frame . . . . 17*

Vadim Delaunay. *Short Biography . . . . . 259*

*Original Verses by V. Delaunay . . . . . 262*

## PEAK DELAUNAY

### PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION, 2019

Twice, with sixty-two years in between, I was fortunate to be given a chance to be involved in the work of two different generations of an incredibly gifted Russian family with French roots, the Delaunays.

In 1957 I started studying mechanics and mathematics at the Moscow State University. The very first class I attended in the famous Room 1408 on Lenin Hills was an introduction to analytic geometry read by a famous mathematician, Boris Nikolayevich Delaunay. That whole year analytic geometry remained my favorite subject. Boris Nikolayevich impressed us freshmen with his creative way of presentation as well as its clarity and depth.

In 2019 my friend and publisher of my book *A Third Road To Serfdom* Michael Minayev suggested I write a preface to the first English edition of a book by Boris Nikolayevich's grandson Vadim Delaunay *Portraits in a Barbed Wire Frame*.

Vadim Nikolaevich Delaunay (1947–1983) passed away so tragically early that in the memory of the admirers of his literary talent and his civil rights activism he will forever remain as just Vadim.

Vadim, like many other young people in Russia, was shaken by the truth of the terrible crimes of the Soviet Communism that was revealed during the crucial years of their lives.

What hurt that generation most emotionally was not the half-truth by itself as much as the awkward “condemnation” of Stalin’s evil deeds that sounded more like justification.

It was impossible to settle for the fake official declaration that the important figure of the Communist movement comrade Stalin made a few mistakes, but the Party successfully overcame the consequences of the cult of his personality.

When in August of 1968 Soviet tanks crashed not only the Prague Spring but also the last illusions of the Khrushchev’s Thaw, the best and the bravest came to the Red Square on August 25 to protest the Soviet military occupation of Czechoslovakia with the slogan “*For your freedom and ours!*” There were seven of them and the poet Vadim Delaunay was the youngest.

Vadim and his friends were defending the honor of Russia. The next day the front page of the not yet banned *Literarni Listy* in Prague opened with the following words: “*These seven men in the Red Square are the seven reasons why we will never be able to hate the Russians.*”

His reward for that noble act were three years in a Soviet correctional camp. He was chosen by Fate to create *The House of the Dead* of his generation. Vadim must have foreseen it when in 1967 he wrote these stirring lines:

*By God’s own hand I must have been touched  
When I was born, for I’m distressed  
By this land’s fate and worry much.  
With fatal illness I am blessed.*

For many centuries every new generation of the most honest and conscientious “Russian boys” has written its



own *The House of the Dead*. The core of the Russian government stays the same and only changes its outfits and masks as clowns do—from the tsarist to communist to “democratic”. Since the 13th century it has been the same rule of the Golden Horde invaders in varying likenesses. The Horde has a perfect sense of smell to sniff out those who carry the spirit of freedom of the old Kiev Rus’ and culls them mercilessly.

The current war between the *Ulus of Jochi* and Ukraine is the last battle of the Golden Horde with Kiev Rus’. On August 25, 2018, exactly half a century after the first one, another anti-war protest came to the Red Square with the same slogan “*For your freedom and ours*”. Among those arrested was Vadim’s first cousin Sergei Sharov-Delaunay and Natalia Gorbanevskaya’s granddaughter Anna Krasovitskaya.

As a prisoner Vadim was allowed a three-day visitation by a close family member. Since childhood the closest to him had been his grandfather Boris Nikolayevich. When Boris Nikolayevich, an older man of eighty, arrived to the camp, he was shocked by what he saw and depressed by his own inability to somehow help his favorite grandson. Vadim realized that his grandfather should not stay there a minute longer or he would not survive the distress. He managed to set his grandfather on the way back home after three hours in the camp.

Vadim spent three years there from whistle to whistle. These years were smelted into this book that you are about to read. It is a terrifying book. The poet that went down to hell many years after Varlam Shalamov in the post-Stalin Russia agreed with the author of *Kolyma Tales*. A prison camp was a negative experience. A prison camp could never teach anyone anything positive.

*Portraits in a Barbed Wire Frame* is another Peak Delaunay\*, the peak of the literary and philosophical work of Vadim Delaunay.

Vadim lived an intense and dramatic life full of unquenchable creative fire and desire to serve the people of his country.

**And when I prayed to God, I ever  
prayed for my friends and not myself...**

— *Andrei Piontkovsky, May 2019*

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\* Boris Nikolayevich Delaunay was not only a distinguished mathematician but also a famous mountain climber. In the Altai Mountains there stands a peak named after him.

## PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION, 1984

by *Vladimir Bukovsky*

The history of the relationship between political and criminal prisoners in Soviet correctional camps is too complicated and tangled to discuss it in detail in a short preface. Long time ago in the early days of socialism the ideologists of the proletarian state declared criminals “a socially close elements”, basically also proletarians only “stray”. In full agreement with the naive belief of all socialists in circumstances over personal responsibility, the bearded philosophers of the '20s and '30s insisted that criminals are spawned by the predatory rules of a capitalist society where *homo homini lupus est* and that criminals would naturally go extinct in a socialist society: If you feed a wolf carrots long enough he will turn into a fluffy white rabbit.

However, it was one thing to publish all this delusional nonsense in socialist magazines and popular pamphlets and a totally different one to make it true on a scale of a huge country. It was expedient to the history's plot that the bearded philosophers and their trusting followers turned suddenly into “enemies of the people” and shared the bunks in the concentration camps with the victims of the capitalist inequality and “remnants of the damned past”. It is easy to see what that social experiment led to. There was no easier prey for the “socially close” who were encouraged by the

authorities besides. Even much later, in the times described by Solzhenitsyn, in the '40s and '50s, the worst part of the punishment for political prisoners was sharing their prison with criminals.

But it was in those years that the balance tilted. First of all, the contingent of political prisoners changed. Now it was war veterans that had been through fire and through water, the former residents of Nazi occupied territories, and the national resistance fighters from the Baltic republics, Ukraine, and the Vlasov army.

Secondly, the criminal world itself had changed. Supported by the authorities, the "socially close" had grown into a power that presented a danger to the government. The crime rate in the country had reached a threatening level, especially in the years following the war, and this contradicted the doctrine that claimed that it was supposed to decrease as socialism was being built. Somewhere in the ideological depth of the government a slogan was born: "The criminal world shall destroy itself!" Soon the criminals craftily split by the authorities into two hostile groups started destroying each other in the "bitch war".

There is no need to talk again about how the political prisoners' uprisings first led to their liberation from the oppression of the *blatnoys* to creation of separate political camps to Khrushchev's releases. All this is vividly described in the third volume of *GULAG Archipelago*. Suffice it to say that segregation of the political and criminal prisoners lasted until the mid-'60s and all the while each party knew little about the other. That is probably why "politicians" still clung to the older concept of criminals as mortal enemies. Among criminals there existed a misconception that life was easier

in political camps where there was less work and more food. Occasionally a desperate criminal would raise a Nazi flag (the Soviet propaganda invariably depicted all “politicians” as fascists), spread pamphlets or get a political tattoo on his forehead to earn a “politician’s” sentence and was greatly disappointed to find the conditions of the political camp the same as those of his former one or even worse. There was no way for him to go back and tell the story, however, and so the legend lived on.

In 1966 the Soviet government was unsettled by the rise of the human rights movement and strove to decrease the statistics of political crime. To that end several new articles were introduced into the Criminal Code. They were little different from the existing political ones, but allowed to ship human rights advocates off to criminal camps. The authorities hoped that the two groups would once again be incompatible and the old fight would flare anew. It was more convenient to kill with the hands of the criminals than with their own. Much less fuss this way.

Of course life in a criminal camp was not easy for everyone. Some paid with their health and returned broken and disabled. On the whole, however, the experiment failed. Most human rights advocates found a way to coexist with criminals. In many cases “politicians” in criminal camps became the center of resistance and were greatly respected by the inmates.

In truth, calling the large number of current prison camp residents “criminals” is a wide generalization. There are no less than 2.5–3 million incarcerated souls in the USSR which is about 1% of the country’s population. Most of them are imprisoned for a drunken brawl, a petty workplace theft,

breaking passport and identification rules or a traffic accident—things only formally related to serious crime. Under different circumstances they would have been very unlikely to find themselves in a camp. Many are made felons by the very nature of some Soviet laws. For that sort of people a “politician” is first and foremost an educated and intelligent person, a walking encyclopedia, someone you can turn to with your questions and for help to write an appeal. Besides, they also have been mistreated by the state and, naturally, they sympathize with the “politician”.

The actual criminal population, or the world of *blatnoys*, is no larger than that of any country of the West and their philosophy is very similar. This is a subculture with its own laws, authorities and code of honor. Some of them are men of extraordinary qualities, outstanding abilities, and rare generosity. They are a sort of “aristocracy”. Denying the power of any government is the corner stone of that world and that is why anyone who resists the government earns their respect.

Unlike his predecessor in Stalin’s time a modern political prisoner is not merely a victim of the regime. As a rule it is a person that goes to jail knowingly for his ideals and keeps defending them in prison. In the Soviet environment, and even more so in the camp environment, where the dirty tricks, betrayal and unscrupulousness of the fight for survival become the norm those who stick to their guns and honor inevitably help one another. However different their moral compasses may be, they find it easy to achieve mutual understanding and respect. I will never forget the words one of the most influential thieves said to his fellows when he was leaving the camp with a new sentence and leaving me in their

care: *“Remember, we are each here for our own gain and he is here for everybody’s.”*

Perhaps this attitude saved me more than once. It also protected Vadim Delaunay, a Moscow poet of a peculiar and even tragic fate.

A young man of 19, he was my accomplice in the protest in Pushkin Square and spent a year in a KGB’s investigation jail.

After being released in the courtroom and “nicely” exiled from Moscow, Vadim attempted to study at the Novosibirsk University. A year after his first release he participated in a protest against the occupation of Czechoslovakia and was sentenced to three years in a criminal camp.

So it was in the camp that he matured and grew into a man. Maybe that is why Vadim forever left part of his soul there, as he says in his book. Some outside forces with the support of the inside ones did their best to not let him out of the “familiar, enchanted circle of camps”: As soon as he got out the KGB launched a campaign to destroy the human rights movement and many of his friends and his wife Irina were thrown behind the bars.

When Irina was released they emigrated to France, but Vadim never felt happy there. On June 13, 1983 at the age of 35 he passed in his sleep in his flat in the Paris suburb of Vincennes.

Vadim’s literary talent was not conventional: He wrote little and only occasionally and did not see it as a fine entertainment or killing of blank paper. His restless soul, his genuine life in every line, the months of spirit suffering that he paid for every stanza—that is the poetry of Vadim Delaunay, honest and real.

Such is this book of Vadim's, the only novel he ever wrote. It is not a memoir or a thesis on prison camp life. It is a collection of sketches in which the author vividly depicted the personalities and nature of his campmates and relationships between them. He managed to convey the emotional state of the life in a camp with that ultimate honesty that is paid for with your heart's blood.

Vadim's death made a strong impression on many people. At his funeral in Paris the church was packed full and hundreds of friends and acquaintances and sometimes even strangers offered their help to his widow. Many sent letters of condolence, including Natalya Solzhenitsyna and Mstislav Rostropovich. Vadim was also remembered by his friends in Russia. He was never a leader or an ideologist or an academician, but he was a man they needed, an honest, loyal and sympathetic man. So sympathetic, in fact, that he could write this:

**My girlfriend writes to me while I'm in camp:  
There was a concert, you'd have been inspired.  
Not everything is lost and there's still hope  
They still put Bach on, with me or without.**

\* \* \*

**And when I prayed to God, I ever  
prayed for my friends and not myself...**



VADIM DELAUNAY

PORTRAITS IN A  
BARBED WIRE FRAME

THIS BOOK RECEIVED THE DAL PRIZE\* IN LITERATURE IN 1984

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\* **The Dal Prize** is a literary prize of the Russian immigrant population that was awarded in Paris in the 1980s. It is named after the Russian author and linguist *Vladimir Ivanovich Dal*.

## FOREWORD

My friends call me from Moscow to ask “How’s it going?” and I respond with a prison camp line: “Only the first five years are bad. After that it gets worse and worse still”. In essence, emigration is very similar to imprisonment; it is the same lifelong alienation from your true life and your past. However, the chow is better, the hallways are as long as plane flights and you can pick and choose your cellmates to your liking. On my first day in Paris my French buddies drove me all over the city and then asked: “Well, what did you like best?” I pointed at a building on a bank of the Seine. My companions burst out laughing. “You must be missing prison! This is the Conciergerie.”

Yes, the *Conciergerie*: First, Marie-Antoinette, then Robespierre.

“But you have returned to the land of your ancestors, Mr. Delaunay. Why are you so anxious? What did you feel when they let you go free?”

I could not give a short answer to this. I had felt horrified, because I was walking up the ramp to the plane of my own will when thousands of my compatriots were suffering in prison or awaiting arrest and many others would have given up everything to have the chance I had been

graciously given to escape the country of the victorious socialism.

I had felt humiliated by the KGB who, even after the darkness of the prison camp, managed to bring me to my knees in front of the Lefortovo prison\* gates when they arrested my wife.

I had felt desperate, because I knew I would probably never see many of my friends and family again.

And I always knew that for a poet the loss of the sounds of his native tongue is tantamount to the loss of hearing for a musician.

However, all this was very difficult to explain to my companions.

“I think, *messieurs*, we should better appeal to history.” I suggested. “True history is always more frightening than anything one can make up.”

My distant ancestor was a commandant of the Bastille. For his loyalty to the king he was beheaded by the outraged populace that jubilantly carried his head on the rebels’ pikes along the streets of Paris.

The commandant’s nephew, my direct male ancestor, was a famous doctor and served in Napoleon’s personal guard. He was wounded and taken prisoner near Borodino. He never returned to France, instead having fallen in love and married a moderately poor Russian noble woman

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\* *Lefortovo Prison* is a prison in Moscow, Russia. It was built in 1881. During the *Great Purge* Lefortovo prison was used by NKVD for interrogations with torture. Lefortovo was an infamous KGB prison and investigative isolation unit in the Soviet Union for detainment of political prisoners.

by the last name of Tukhachevskaya. His private medical practice supported the family. By the way, the famous Soviet military leader Tukhachevsky, also known as the Red Bonaparte, came from the same family. He was one of the career officers in the Russian military that went over to the Bolsheviks. Tukhachevsky was executed by a personal order of comrade Stalin in 1937 and exonerated post-mortem in 1956. Quite possibly he was murdered in Lefortovo prison where I did my time in the late 1960s.

My family, the Delaunays, had nothing to do with the Bolshevik revolt. In 1923, when desperate impoverished people exhausted by the bloody Soviet terror were running from Russia, my then very young but already very well-known as a scientist grandfather was offered a college tenure in Paris. He refused with full understanding of the risk. He believed that his duty was to remain in Russia. Even in the time of the worst mass executions and torture he dared appeal to the government officials to pardon his friends and relatives. By then he had earned a rank of academician for his works in mathematics, but that did not guarantee safety neither during the Stalin years, nor after. Until the end of his life he kept up enthusiastic work with his students, many of whom became celebrated mathematicians. He also was an avid mountain climber and hiked trails that not many attempt even when young.

In 1970, at the age of 80, Grandfather was granted a special privilege of visiting his grandson in a prison barrack of a camp for criminals in Siberia. The visitations were only approved for three days once a year and only for immediate family. After only three hours I begged Grand-

father to fly back to Moscow. I understood how unbearable it was for him to see me in that situation and know he could do nothing to help.

So, my grandfather never left Russia.

The post-revolt wave of emigration brought to Paris his cousin, a Delaunay on her mother's side, a poet and artist, whose literary gift was praised by Alexander Blok and many of the authors that formed the core of the Russian Silver Age culture. She is known in France as Mother Maria, an orthodox nun. At first she helped the homeless and sick Russian immigrants. She raised funds and rented a house for these people to stay and take meals at thanks to her desperate efforts. A garage next door was turned into a Russian church where many icons were painted by Mother Maria herself. When the Nazis occupied Paris Mother Maria would hide Jews in the same house on *Rue de Lourmel*. She procured fake papers for the Jews and helped them escape to Nazi-free areas. She was an active member of the Resistance. In 1943 someone reported her and Gestapo broke into the house. Mother Maria was not home and they arrested her 22-year-old son and held him hostage promising to let him go if Mother Maria came to their headquarters. She was arrested the next day. Her son was never freed. Mother Maria died in Ravensbrueck and her son died in Buchenwald.

My first encounter with the KGB's literary experts was related to Mother Maria. I was 18 in 1966. I was a student at the university and working as a freelance writer for the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Literary Paper). I was invited over for a lengthy conversation and informed, firstly, that I had improper friends like Bukovsky, Galanskov, and

others. Secondly, well aware that I was a relative of Mother Maria's, they suggested I go on a business trip to Paris, something even the loyal Soviet authors rarely dreamed of, to gather materials for writing her biography. At the same time they hinted that I was supposed to explain Mother Maria's fight against fascism not by her deep Christian faith but by her sympathy for the Communist ideology.

I was somewhat surprised to receive such a request. "You see," they elaborated, "we send hundreds of staff members abroad and each and every one of them would trade his Motherland for a pair of jeans. You are different."

"That is true, I would never trade Russia for anything", I replied. "But your definitions of Motherland and honor are very different from mine."

"You better watch out, Delaunay. You may be headed in a very different direction from Paris soon".

In December of 1966 I was committed for several weeks to a mental hospital for publicly reciting poetry and an attempt to organize an independent group of poets and writers. A month after I was discharged, I was arrested along with Bukovsky for participation in a meeting in Pushkin Square in defense of Galanskov and others. I spent ten months in the Lefortovo prison. In the autumn of 1967 I left Moscow for the Novosibirsk Academgorodok and with the help of my scientist friends was accepted to Novosibirsk University.

During the days of court hearings of Galanskov and Ginsburg the walls of the buildings of the Novosibirsk Academgorodok, thousands of miles from Moscow, bore the following words:

**“HONESTY IS A CRIME”  
“SOVIET JUSTICE IS THE SAME AS THE NAZI’S”**

Should I tell you what the punishment was for such words? No less than three years of prison camp. But even in the restricted and constantly patrolled by the KGB Academgorodok the culprits were never caught.

In those magical times the government could not stop the numerous gatherings where uncensored poetry was read and unapproved songs were sung. This was the only time that Alexander Galich freely performed for such a large audience in his native country. The billboards all over the Academgorodok community center dubiously read “*Poets! Siberia awaits you!*”

The reason the powers that be allowed such improbable for the Soviet Union liberty was temporary confusion.

We stayed close to our radios at night listening to the first broadcasts of the Western stations about the Prague Spring. That brought meaning to our lives. Dubcek announced partial lifting of censorship. The marches in Prague demanded condemnation and removal from government positions of those who was involved in prosecution of the innocent. These reports brought us joy and united us. Many believed that the wall separating us from freedom was slowly coming down.

But the government was gradually coming to its senses. The first to denounce us was *the most honest in the whole world* Soviet media. The newspaper *Vecherny Novosibirsk* (The Evening Novosibirsk) devoted to me a two-page article titled *Through A Funhouse Mirror*. They implied that



my poems were a funhouse mirror that distorted the glorious Soviet reality. One of my friends, an actor, read this opus with great pathos. We most enjoyed the following sentence: “He cannot see neither the stars nor the sun nor the eyes of his beloved”. However, this nonsensical article contained one unpleasant threat: “It is odd that this belligerent *anti-Sovietist* is being supported by some respectable academicians.” I felt I ought to show up at the Rector’s office and ask to be expelled. I wanted to be loyal and not make others suffer because of me and to help them avoid the imminent prosecution. I said goodbye to my many Novosibirsk friends and left for Moscow in June.

In the capital everybody argued over only one thing, whether Soviet tanks will be sent to Prague. Everybody realized that the Soviet Union’s “big brother’s help” would mean the end of all our hopes. If they dared to suppress a whole country, a foreign country, we could just imagine of what they would do with their own freethinkers at home. Still, we hoped that they wouldn’t dare do that fearing the West’s public disapproval. We hoped that the Czechs had succeeded in breaking through the lies and the Soviet rulers would not dare to crash freedom with tanks while the whole world watched. I, personally, was not as optimistic. Ten months of interrogations in the main KGB’s prison showed me that not much had changed in my country since the Chief of the People.

I knew that the regime of the state of victorious socialism could not allow neither personal liberty for its own citizens, nor a collapse of the unbreakable Warsaw Pact. Also, the Czech government officials during the famous conference in *Cierna nad Tisou* too readily fawned

upon Brezhnev and swore fealty to the Communist ideals, while the Soviet media had already started labeling them traitors.

During the days of that conference I lived out in the country and on one of my walks to a neighboring resort ran into a group of Czech youths there on vacation that stood quietly together. Other vacationers averted their eyes. The resort management and the omnipresent KGB agents warned everyone not to approach the Czechs and not to interact with them under the penalty of being reported to their employer. I ran straight for the Czechs. They almost cried with joy of having someone talk to them.

Meanwhile, steadfast fealty was being sworn *nad Tisou*.

On the morning of August 21 I learned that Soviet tanks entered Prague. The humiliation, powerlessness, desperation and shame for my country was unbearable. Many country homes started campfires, not to burn the autumn leaves but home-printed and copied books. Everyone expected to be searched.

On August 25 my friends and I came to the Red Square to protest the occupation of Czechoslovakia and to be arrested again. This time I was sentenced to three years of criminal camp. In my final statement in court I said:

*“I will not repeat what my attorney has already said. I declared the charges against me unsubstantiated at the very beginning. My opinion has not changed after I heard what the witnesses and the prosecutor had to say.*

*“I will not waste my time explaining why those slogans are neither untrue nor defamatory. The slogan I carried, ‘For your freedom and ours,’ expresses my profound personal belief.*

*“In this courtroom Mr. Prosecutor asked me a question: ‘What kind of freedom do you demand? Freedom to lie? Freedom to form gangs?’ No, I do not need freedom to lie.*

*“I understand this slogan as follows: On our freedom depends not only democracy in our country, but the freedom of another state and its citizens.*

*“My decision to go to the Red Square was based upon the understanding that I would not break any laws and still will be prosecuted and charged. However, the fact that I had been sentenced to prison before could not stop me from protesting.*

*“I realized that the price of five minutes of freedom in the Red Square could be years of imprisonment.”*

\* \* \*

*“Bad people are to be found everywhere, but even among the worst there may be something good, I began to think, by way of consolation. Who knows? These persons are perhaps not worse than others who are free. While making these reflections I felt some doubts, and, nevertheless, how much I was in the right!”*

*Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The House of The Dead*

The cell door opened with a familiar screech. The bulk of Colonel Petrenko appeared on the doorstep. I stood up obeying the orders to greet your betters on your feet. “You will soon learn, Delaunay, that the camp is not the same as Lefortovo prison. Nobody will be polite to you there. They’ll break you fast. And remember once and for all that we shall never let you speak your mind. I don’t understand you. You are only nineteen and in jail for the second time. You are a gifted young man. You have never lacked anything. Why can’t you live like everybody else? Don’t you love yourself?”

I did not think I didn’t love myself. I knew very well that I loved myself probably too much and my only consolation was the words of the Gospel: “*Love your neighbor as thyself*”.

No, if I didn't love myself I would not have trouble breathing from shame when I read in *Pravda* (The Truth) how unanimously the Soviet people supported the measures to assist Czechoslovakia.

I loved myself too much to put up with that. I remembered Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. Ivan Karamazov said he was ready to love the whole of humanity, but only the abstract humanity. He was ready to sacrifice and bear torture for the humanity, but he could not bring himself to love a particular neighbor and would not move a finger to help a tricky drunk. Nor to help himself, either, actually. How many were they, those who spurned their neighbors for an abstract idea? From Nero to Danton to Ivan Karamazov to Verkhovensky to Lenin to Stalin.

"Still, I don't get it", Petrenko went on. "You grandfather is a famous mathematician, an academician. You father is a physicist. They both has been working for the communists, for us, their whole lives. And you are against us? How does that work?"

Yes, I thought, that's exactly the point. We are all meekly laboring for you, for the tanks in Prague, for those who thirty years before tortured people inside these walls where Petrenko is chatting with me now like an old pal before sending me on to a concentration camp.

No, thank you, I don't want your communism. I'm returning my ticket to your bright future. Replace my Soviet passport, the scythe and the hammer that the poet Mayakovsky was so proud of, with a copy of the SENTENCE IN THE NAME OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION. I have trouble believing that I will any time soon be able to throw it

in your faces as an accusation. But it is my absolution for myself, for my neighbors, for Prague.

I thought with sorrow of leaving the prison. Lefortovo, whose silence drove many insane, now seemed like my last chance for shelter, the last chance to be by myself. The trip to Siberia awaited me.

The doors screeched and banged. The familiar crate of the *voronok*\* was locked shut. You couldn't even light a smoke in there, so cramped you were inside the rocking, shaking, and squeezing walls. Then there was the exhausting body search at the entrance to *Krasnaya Presnya* transfer station. While repacking my messed up belongings inside the box of a jail cell, I listened to many voices yelling. Anxiety of traveling into the unknown, to a place you may not return from, excited people and wound them up to the extreme. From every cell along the echoing hallway there came screaming, cursing, and singing. The voices overlapped one another and were lost. They asked and waited for no reply. They responded to no-one and everyone. Suddenly among this chaos I heard the familiar voice of Volodya Dremluga, my partner in crime. We were overjoyed to see each other. You would think we had parted in the courtroom dozens of years ago instead of two months. "Vadik!," Dremluga yelled at the top of his booming voice. "Vadik, I am strong, I will bear it all, I am a laborer, I have been on my own since I was a kid, I will survive, and I will rip their throats out with my teeth! You know me, I will outsmart them all! If I have to,

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\* *Voronok* is a type of vehicle for transporting people under arrest and prisoners.

I'll run. I will get out of their socialist death camp. They can bully you, though. I will never forgive them that. You are a poet. They will torture you. I hope we can stay together."

"My dear Dremluga," I thought, "I wish. There are so many camps across Russia."

Dremluga understood my silence.

"Vadik, read a poem of yours to me as a good-bye!" he yelled.

And I read from my *Lefortovo Ballad*.

What gives you breath, my soul, when in the dark  
 The steps of turnkeys shred your restless sleep  
 Like iron nails that scrape the filthy glass?  
 What gives you breath?

Behind the bars, below the paling dawn,  
 Where bread is rationed out by the crumb,  
 The frost plants flowers on the winter's stone lawn  
 Behind the bars.

I will remember those outside  
 With kindness and I won't ask for their pity.  
 Like tortured arms that raise towards the skies,  
 My road bends.

What if the deeper stores of my heart  
 Do not have power enough to save my days  
 And I will blow them all? It is not hard,  
 I'm used to plenty.

What if my train of thought derails for good  
And I get off not waiting for my stop,  
Alone, abandoned and misunderstood.  
No joke, for real.

.....

I see the portrait of the poet.  
Ah, *podporuchik*\* Gumilev,  
Your every step was as eloquent  
As every word you wrote as you walked  
Towards the firing squad.

Your courage never got commended.  
You never earned that last third cross,  
Not on your tomb inside the graveyard,  
Not in the outside world.

Where is the grave of Mandelshtam now?  
The Suchan blizzard won't confess.  
And this is not a melodrama.  
It's an entangled mess.

And for the lines of truth unbowed,  
For the nobility of verse  
They set him on the frozen road  
That leads from bad to worse.

---

\* *Podporuchik* is an officer rank in the old Russian military equivalent to 2nd Lieutenant. *Poruchik* is equivalent to Lieutenant.



PORTRAITS IN A BARBED WIRE FRAME



The only photo of Vadim  
before his imprisonment.  
*Moscow, 1965*



Vadim, Galina Gabai, and G. Kopylov. *Moscow, 1972*

VADIM DELAUNAY



Vadim Delaunay  
Moscow, 1973



*Left to right: Chancellor B. Kreisky, Tigrid, Victor Nekrasov  
and Vadim Delaunay. Vienna, 1975.*

PORTRAITS IN A BARBED WIRE FRAME



Vadim Delaunay and V. Bukovsky. Zurich, 1976



Left to right: A. Galich, A. Glezer, V. Maramzin, Vadim and G. Faif  
Paris, 1977.



Vadim Delanay and his wife, Irina.  
*Rooftop of Notre-Dame de Paris, 1979*



The grave of Vadim at the  
New Vincennes Cemetery.  
*Fontenay-sous-Bois, France*

## VADIM DELAUNAY

### *Short Biography*

**VADIM DELAUNAY** (1947–1983) was a Soviet poet and dissident, who participated in the 1968 Red Square demonstration of protest against military occupation of Czechoslovakia.



Delaunay was born to a Russian-French family of Soviet Intelligentsia. He was the son of Nikolai Borisovich Delone, a Soviet physicist. His grandfather, Boris Delaunay, was a prominent Soviet mathematician, academician and creator of the Delaunay triangulation. Among his ancestors was marquis Bernard-René de Launay, the last governor of the Bastille, murdered by the attackers on that castle.

Delaunay studied at Moscow Mathematical School No. 2, one of the best in the country at that time, then at the Department of Philology at the Moscow Pedagogical Institute. As a student, he also worked as a freelance author for the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. Delaunay started to write poetry at the age of 13. His poetry was distributed by samizdat and some of it was published abroad.

On January 22, 1967, Delaunay took part in a demonstration on Pushkin Square protesting the arrest of writers Yuri

Galanskov and others (leading to the Trial of the Four) as well as articles 70 and 190 of the Soviet Penal Code—"Anti-Soviet agitation" and "Libel against the Soviet Government". He was arrested and given a one-year suspended sentence (incidentally in accordance with article 190 of the Penal Code). His sentence was much lighter than that of another organizer of the same meeting, Vladimir Bukovsky, who got three years in a labor camp.

Delaunay's sentence required him to move away from Moscow, so he went to Novosibirsk State University to a friend and pupil of his grandfather, Aleksandr Aleksandrov. In Novosibirsk, he continued his philology studies and wrote poetry. At that time, his first official foreign publications appeared in the magazine *Grani* No.66. Delaunay was an organizer of a concert by the Bard Alexander Galich, who was semi-legal at that time.

At the beginning of 1968, after the court hearing for Galanskov and Ginzburg, Delaunay wrote an open letter to *Literaturnaya Gazeta* in which he praised their bravery. The letter was published in the New York City newspaper *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* (*The New Russian Word*).

In June 1968, Delaunay returned to Moscow. On August 25, 1968, he and seven other dissidents organized the now-famous demonstration against occupation Czechoslovakia in Red Square near the Moscow Kremlin. Delaunay and Pavel Litvinov held the famous banner with the words "ЗА ВАШУ И НАШУ СВОБОДУ" ("For your freedom and ours").

Seven people were arrested, and in court, Delaunay stated that the five minutes of freedom on the square were worth the awaiting years in prison. The sentence by the court was

prepared in advance, just as for other defendants. Delaunay was sentenced to two years and 10 months in a labor camp that he served in Tyumen Oblast in western Siberia.

In June 1971, Delaunay finished serving his sentence and returned to Moscow. In 1973, his wife Irina Belogorodskaya was arrested for her involvement with an underground journal, *Chronicle of Current Events*. In 1975, they both emigrated to France.

On 13 June 1983, Delaunay died of a heart attack in Paris at the age of 35. In 1984, his book of poetry *Verses: 1963–1983* was published. In that same year, he was posthumously awarded the Vladimir Dal Prize. His poetry has been published in Russia since 1993.



**VADIM DELAUNAY** (1947, Moscow – 1983, Paris) was a Soviet poet and dissident. Born to a Russian-French family of Soviet Intelligentsia he studied at Moscow *matshkola* ("Mathematical School") No. 2, one of the best in the country at that time, then at the Department of Philology at the Moscow Pedagogical Institute. As a student, he also worked as a freelance author for the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*.

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On June 13th, 1983 Vadim Delaunay died of a heart attack in Paris at the age of 35. In 1984, his book of poetry *Verses: 1963-1983* was published. In that same year, he was posthumously awarded the Vladimir Dal Prize for the book you hold in your hands.

...Delaunay's book is called "Portraits in a Barbed Wire Frame." I would give it another name, "The Book That is Not About Self". On the pages of this small book Delaunay talks, in essence, not only about the fate of prisoners, but about the fate of Russia as a whole, the fate of a country that tragically found itself behind barbed wire. Between the lines he gives an analysis of the strategy of a police state in pursuit of its selfish agenda. This strategy is extremely simple both in relation to those in the camp and those outside it in the Greater Zone, and eternal, like humanity itself. It plays on the worst sides of human nature as well as the best...

— *R.L. Berg, PhD*

...This book of Vadim's is the only novel he ever wrote. It is not a memoir or a thesis on prison camp life. It is a collection of sketches in which the author vividly depicted the personalities and nature of his campmates and relationships between them. He managed to convey the emotional state of the life in a camp with that ultimate honesty that is paid for with your heart's blood...

— *Vladimir Bukovsky*

...This book is a testimony of an eyewitness and a participant in that desperate struggle "for your freedom and ours" and is meant to remind people once again in what place and during what time they are living...

— *Vladimir Bereztkov, poet, friend of Vadim's*

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info@mgraphics-publishing.com

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