



Eloyan Rotefan Marcosovich 271st Inf Reg AT Co — WWII Photo O3



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A Newly Discovered 69th Inf. Div. Legacy of Spirit, Resilience and Valor

[Vladislav Eloyan, Joseph Lipsius, Regtl Hq & Cn Co 272nd Inf Reg, George West, Michael T. McKibben, and George West, 271st Inf Reg AT Co. (Jul. 04, 2010). A Newly Discovered 69th Inf. Div. Legacy of Spirit, Resilience and Valor. 69th Infantry Division Association. Reproduced by permission. Source: <http://www.69th-infantry-division.com/whowhere/photo03-Eloyan-Rotefan-Marcosovich.html>]

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with Joseph Lipsius, Regtl Hq & Cn Co 272nd Inf Reg,
and George West, 271st Inf Reg AT Co
July 4, 2010*



Figure 1: Rotefan Eloyan (Used by permission)

Eloyan Rotefan Marcosovich

69th Inf Div 271st Inf Reg AT Co

Age 19 c.a. Late May 1945

a.k.a. "Roman" Eloyan

AT Co Portrait Session

(See [271st Infantry Regiment](#) and [History of the 271st Anti Tank Company](#), p.78, para. 2)

B. November 9, 1925, D. February 18, 1960 at age 34

Prologue

July 4, 2010 – The story of the 69th must add a new chapter to its legacy—65 years later. On June 14, 2010 Webmaster Joe Lipsius received an email from **Vladislav Eloyan** of Moscow, Russia. Vladislav sent Joe pictures of his grandfather Rotefan Eloyan, a.k.a. "Roman" Eloyan (he changed his name to Roman while a POW in German concentration camps for pragmatic reasons explained below). Joe contacted George West of 271st Inf Div AT Co who remembered him. Joe then asked Vladislav for a biography and photo of Roman to post in the [WWII Photos](#) section.

Joe then asked Mike McKibben, website engineer, to post Roman's information. Later George West told Joe that the [271st AT Company History](#) mentions Roman. At this point, we started asking Vladislav more questions. What emerged is a unique and important postscript to the history of the 69th.

We will begin this story when Rotefan was a Soviet Army [prisoner of war](#) (POW)—captured early in the war during the [Battle of Moscow](#) in October 1941 when he was only 15 years old. From 1941 to 1945 Rotefan was incarcerated in numerous German POW camps, the last one a metals factory camp named “Maksuta” about 4 kilometers from the German town of [Saalfeld](#). His Saalfeld camp was liberated by the [U.S. Army 87th Infantry Division](#) on April 13, 1945. The 87th's route across Germany roughly paralleled the 69th's some 25-50 miles to the south.

On April 13, 1945 Rotefan suddenly found himself “on the streets” about 150 miles east of the Soviet lines. All hell had broken loose as the U.S. forces moved Eastward toward eventual link up with Soviet forces (the first [Link-Up was in Torgau between the U.S. Army 69th and the Soviet 58th Guards on April 25, 2010](#)). Newly liberated POWs like Rotefan from all over Europe were now on the move; looking for food, shelter, transportation, if they were healthy enough to walk. German soldiers were surrendering *en masse* to American forces to avoid being captured by the Soviets. Rumors of Soviet revenge atrocities for the earlier German atrocities were circulating wildly. The citizenry whose homes and farms had been destroyed or co-opted to support the Allied advance were seeking food and shelter.

In the midst of this chaos, Rotefan, now 19 years old, moved north in mid-April 1945, two weeks later, he met the 69 Infantry Divisions' 271st Infantry Regiment Anti Tank Company ([see 271st account of "Roman Eloyan". p. 73, para. 4](#)).

After receiving grandson Vladislav's email, Joe immediately contacted George West, Anti Tank Co. 271st Infantry Regiment, who wrote that he remembered Roman and a couple of other Russian and Italian prisoners who became attached to the 271st Inf. Reg. Anti Tank Co.

Now we'll step back in Rotefan's story and start from the beginning. Rotefan's life *before* and *after* meeting the 271st Inf. Reg. Anti Tank Co. If nothing else, Rotefan's story is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and its desire to live free of tyranny and oppression.

In the few short months that Rotefan was attached to AT Company, he appears to have endeared himself to 271st leaders and troops alike; especially remarkable since he did not speak English, although he apparently spoke German well as a result of his almost four years as a German POW. Roman must have had a remarkable, perhaps infectious personality since the writer of the 271st history described him “as full of the devil as they come.” (*Id.*)

* * *

This narrative is written as a collaborative effort between Rotefan's grandson Vladislav Eloyan and [Michael McKibben](#), Chairman & Founder of [Leader Technologies](#), and son-in-law of the late 69er [Jerry Hoovler 272nd Inf Reg K Co](#). Mike assists webmaster Joe Lipsius with this website. Rotefan "Roman" Eloyan's story is believed to contain new and previously unknown facts about Rotefan's service with the 271st Inf. Div. AT Co., including his heinous incarceration by [Joseph Stalin's](#) henchmen in the political reign of terror that gripped the Soviet Union following World War II—imprisonment due in large part to Rotefan's attachment to the 69th Inf. Div. 271st Inf. Reg. AT Co.

We honor Rotefan and his family for carrying on the 69th's freedom struggle for many more years in the Soviet Union.

The story of your horrible struggles has taken 65 years to reach us, but now we know your story at long last, fallen friend.

May your memory be eternal.

Thrown into the Battle of Moscow at Age 15

Eloyan Rotefan Marcosvitch was born November 9, [1925](#) in [Yerevan](#), Armenia, Soviet Union to Marcos and Araks Eloyan. ([Mt. Ararat](#), the site of Noah's Ark, rises prominently on Yerevan's horizon.) He had a brother Agevs ([click here](#) for Agevs' photo) who was two-years older. Their mother Araks died the year Rotefan was born, so he and Agevs moved to [Moscow](#) with their father Marcos and Marcos' sister in 1930. Marcos was born in Yerevan, Armenia in [1894](#), served in [World War I](#) as a "[Podporuchik](#)" (a military rank in several Slavic countries equivalent to Lieutenant) in the [13th Yerevan Grenadiers Regiment of Czar Mikhail Fedorovitch Romanov](#) ([click here](#) for Marcos' photo), fought in the civilian war that followed the [Great October Revolution](#), and later in [World War II](#). He was wounded many times and died in Moscow on April 1, [1970](#) at age 76.

["The Great Patriotic War"](#) (as World War II is still called in Russia) started in [1941](#) while Rotefan was just 15-years old living in Moscow. In June 1941 Rotefan and Agevs joined the [Red Army](#) 13th Infantry Volunteers Division of the Rostokinsky area of Moscow even though Rotefan was only 15 years old. The normal minimum age for joining the Soviet Army was 18 years old, but the German advance toward Moscow threatened the nation, so young Rotefan joined and was immediately handed a gun with practically no training. Rotefan was a tank and armored car gunner. Their division was renamed the 140th Infantry Division.

95% of His Division Was Killed; He Became a Prisoner of War at Age 15

In October of 1941 ninety-five percent (95%) of the soldiers in Rotefan's 140th Infantry Division were killed near the town of [Vjazma](#). These battles were the beginnings of the [Battle of Moscow](#). His brother Agevs was killed in October 1941 during the battles. Rotefan was wounded by mine shrapnel in his left thigh and was taken prisoner. He was first held in a prison camp near [Smolensk](#), but upon his recapture after escaping, he was transferred to a metals factory work camp named Maksuta Camp near the German town of [Saalfeld](#). [Maksuta camp in Saalfeld](#) (see Wolf Gruner link, p. 98) incarcerated about 1,000 Soviet, French, and Polish soldiers as well as Jewish prisoners. He had changed his name to "Roman" after being sent to Saalfeld because his real name "Rotefan" is translated "Red Banner" in German. Not good, he thought!

Resistance, Defiance, Beatings and Mayer Oska (a good German)

In [1943](#) Rotefan, together with friends, planned an escape from Saalfeld by systematically hiding food deeper and deeper into the surrounding forest. However, a local German peasant encountered them during what turned out to be their last foray and notified police. Rotefan was 17 years old then. His punishment for this escape attempt was a public beating in front of the entire camp which rendered him unable to move for two weeks. Some time after this incident Rotefan writes that a fellow prisoner was beaten to death, after which Rotefan began encouraging his fellow prisoners to resist and not be silent. Someone reported him for these remarks and he was beaten with a bull's tail until he lost consciousness. Then, he was clubbed some twenty-five times over the next two weeks.

In a work accident in early [1944](#) Rotefan suffered a deep muscle cut and fractured his left arm in two places. While recovering in a nearby hospital he wrote a pamphlet in German titled "All Nations are the Same" and placed it in his nurse's pocket. He described how he believed Germany was wrong about the Aryans being the [Master Race](#). His doctor reported him to the camp police, and when he returned to the camp the Deputy Police Chief beat him with a rubber truncheon, causing him to fall and re-fracture his left arm.

Rotefan describes one occasion when a high-ranking labor minister, [Dr. Robert Ley](#), visited Saalfeld and ordered everyone to work harder. In response, Rotefan and friends encouraged their fellow prisoners to work as unproductively as possible without getting caught. As a consequence, they sometimes managed to slow the factory operations down to just a few hours a day. Other times they would fabricate parts and formulate metal mixtures poorly, then falsify the quality reports coming back from the testing laboratory. This meant the inferior metals and parts were then included in the factory's finished products, which resulted in such poor quality finished products that sometimes weeks of factory production had to be scrapped and remanufactured.

Nazi labor minister Dr. Robert Ley, former Head of the German Labor Front, on the treatment of Russian slave workers (Essen, Germany, October 1942):

"The key item on the agenda was the question of **'how to treat the Russians.'** ... Robert Ley, as usual, was drunk. And when Ley got drunk he was prone to speak his mind... With so much at stake, there was no room for compassion or civility. No degree of [coercion](#) was too much, and Ley expected the mine managers to back up their foremen in meting out the necessary discipline. As Ley put it: 'When a Russian pig has to be beaten, it would be the ordinary German worker who would have to do it.'" ([Adam Tooze](#), *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (Allen Lane 2006). p. 529.)(emphasis added)

By all accounts, the Saalfeld work camp guards who beat Rotefan mercilessly were just following Dr. Ley's instructions for the proper discipline of a "Russian pig".

In early [1945](#) an advisor loyal to Nazi collaborator Russian General [Andrey Vlasov](#) was permitted to speak to Rotefan and his fellow Saalfeld Soviet prisoners. He was attempting to recruit Soviet POWs to join a so-called "[Russian Liberation Army](#)" that had the tacit support of [Adolf Hitler](#). (At this time the U.S. Army was preparing to attack German borders along the Western front (including the [69th Inf. Div.](#)) and the Soviet Army was advancing on Poland from the East.) Rotefan is said to have stood up and asked for the advisor's credentials, who had awarded him his medals, who had given him his orders, and whose side he was on. It became apparent to Rotefan that General Vlasov was simply attempting to save his own neck and didn't care which side he was on. He is said to have tried to persuade Vlasov's man, his fellow countryman, that Vlasov's plan was folly. Unable to counter the palpable suspicion of the Saalfeld Soviet POW's, Vlasov's advisor was only able to persuade a few Soviets prisoners from Saalfeld to join their doomed project.

Rotefan's memoirs tell us that the German manager of his factory brigade was a "good person" named Mayer Oska. Rotefan worked with and befriended two French soldiers and one Russian soldier named Tislitskiy. He describes almost daily efforts to sabotage factory operations and for that he was beaten often, sometimes in front of the entire camp. His daily food ration was 300 grams of bread, soup and potatoes

Liberated by the U.S. 87th Infantry Division on April 13, 1945

Rotefan's memoirs of Saalfeld are filled with descriptions of resistance, sabotage and beatings. Saalfeld was his last Nazi prison camp because the [U.S. Army 87th Infantry Division](#) liberated their Saalfeld [concentration camp](#) on April 13, 1945. Saalfeld is approximately 150 miles from where the [69th Infantry Division](#) linked up with the Soviet 58th Guards just a week later.

Attaches to the U.S. 69th Infantry Division's 271st Infantry Regiment Anti Tank Company Weeks Later

After the American 87th rolled through Saalfeld heading east, and amidst the chaos of displaced persons on the move throughout the region, 19-year old Rotefan made his way north some 108 miles over the next two weeks, and met the 69th Infantry Division 271st Infantry Regiment Anti Tank Company, under Captain Arthur R. Datnof, just days after the Link-Up between the American 69th Infantry Division and the Soviet 58th Guards. ([History of the 271st Anti Tank Company](#), p. 73, para. 4) and after AT Company had pulled back to Colditz, Germany (see map in sidebar).

We have been attempting to piece together Rotefan's time with the 271st, but we are handicapped by two obstacles: (1) Captain Datnof died in 2008, and (2) the official documents that Captain Datnof gave to Rotefan were given to the U.S. Army officers with whom Rotefan served after the 271st Inf. Div. AT Co.

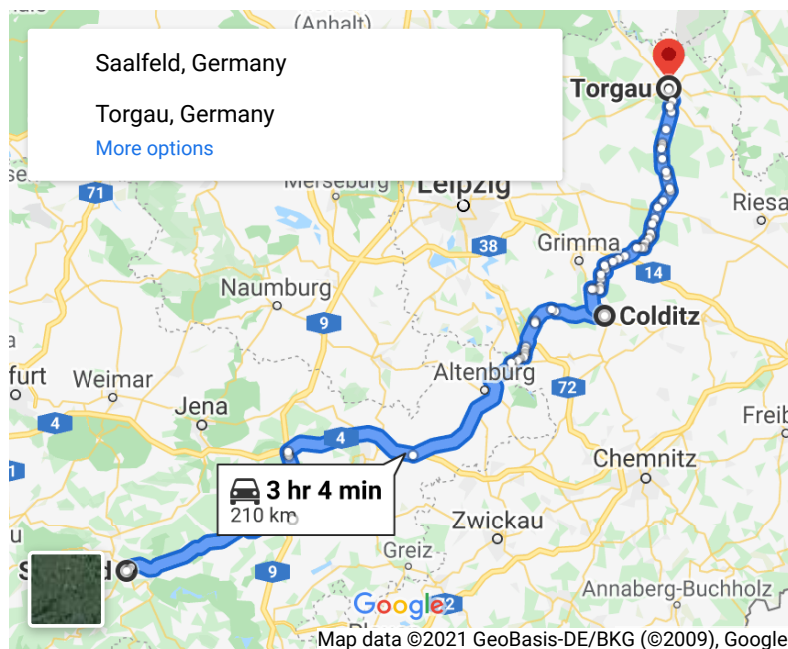


Figure 2: [View Larger Map](#)

Rotefan's journey after (A) liberation by the US 87th Inf Div at Saalfeld, Germany to (B) his linkup with the US 69th Inf Div at Colditz, Germany several weeks later

Current road route from **Saalfeld, Germany (A)** to **Colditz, Germany (B)** to **Torgau, Germany (C)**. Rotefan Eloyan's POW concentration camp at Saalfeld (A) was liberated on Apr. 13, 1945 by the American 87th Inf Div. The American 69th Inf Div Link-Up with the Soviet 58th Gaurds occurred at Torgau (C) on Apr. 25, 1945. The 69th Inf Div 271st Inf Reg AT Co pulled back to Colditz (B), Germany on May 2, 1945 as part of the 69th's compliance with the [Yalta Conference](#) ceding the region to Soviet administration (The birth of East Germany). **Saalfeld-to-Colditz = 174 kilometers or 108 miles. Colditz-to-Torgau = 62 km or 38 miles.**

(Click [+] [-] to zoom in and out, or click and hold map then move the map

disbanded. Five years later, on August 2, 1950 Rotefan was arrested by Soviet State Security (otherwise known as the [KGB](#) secret police), accused of being a “Military Traitor to the Motherland”. The KGB cited Captain Datnof’s documents as Article 58 evidence to convict Rotefan, without a trial, and sentenced him to serve hard labor in Stalin’s political prison system dubbed the “[The Gulag Archipelago](#)” by Soviet writer and Nobel Prize recipient [Alexander Solzhenitsyn](#).

around, or click "[View Larger Map](#)". Download Google Earth for even more detailed views and topography.

Vibrant Personality

Rotefan must have been an extraordinary person. He survived four years of Nazi beatings and starvation—all while still a teenager. Speaking no English he worked his way into 271st AT Company... and apparently into their hearts. He was given 69th uniforms and posed for 271st AT Co portraits in May of 1945 (see below). He received no less than four mentions in the official history of the 271st AT Co where he is described as “full of the devil as they come.” ([271st History](#), p. 73, para. 4) 69er George West remembered Rotefan fondly when he was consulted on June 30, 2010 about the contact from Rotefan’s grandson Vladislav. Captain Datnof issued Rotefan official papers over his signature—identifying Rotefan as serving in the 271st Infantry Regiment AT Company and recommending him to other U.S. Army units after AT Company left Europe. Apparently Captain Datnof wrote that Rotefan served the 271st “like a soldier in AT Company.” Despite the fact that many of Rotefan’s 69th photos were confiscated by the KGB, Rotefan somehow managed to retain the photos below which Vladislav shared with this website. According to Vladislav, these photos were given to Rotefan by his friends in the 271st AT Company.



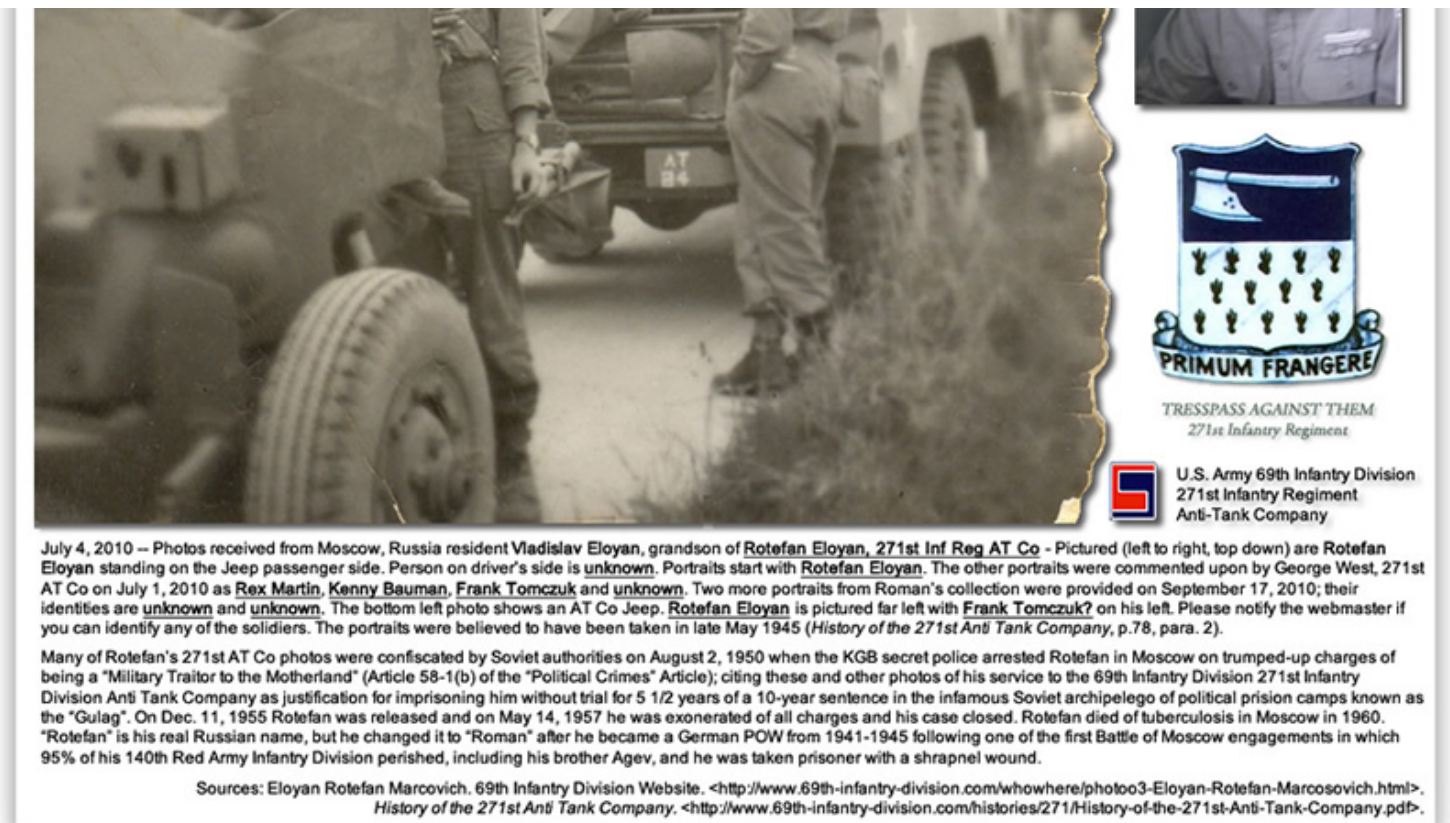


Figure 3: Rotefan Eloyan's photos of himself and friends while he served the 69th Inf Div 271st Inf Reg AT Co in 1945.
Source: The Eloyan Family

Returns Home at Age 20; Marries; Fathers Two Sons

Five Years Later Accused, Sentenced and Jailed Without Trial by the KGB (Secret Police); Service to the U.S. Army 69th Infantry Division a Major Reason for Rotefan's Imprisonment

In late 1945 Rotefan, now almost 20 years old, returned to Moscow to find work, marry his sweetheart Zika and father two sons Eduard and Seva. As happened with so many returning Soviet soldiers who had had contact with the West on the Western front, on August 2, 1950 Rotefan was arrested in Moscow, charged with being a "Military Traitor to the Motherland" under [Article 58-1\(b\)](#). Article 58 is the infamous and now largely rewritten "Political Article". His so-called crimes: (1) cooperating with the Fascists as a Red Army soldier while a military prisoner, and (2) serving as a Private in the U.S. Army 69th Infantry Division 271st Infantry Regiment Anti Tank Company.

Guilty! "We have pictures of you and your 19-year old 69th Inf. Div. buddies in U.S. Army uniforms, Comrade Marcosovich."

To the best of our knowledge, Rotefan's KGB interrogators made no effort to contact American authorities in Moscow in 1950 to corroborate their accusations that Rotefan was a Private in the U.S. Army 69th Inf. Div; even though the old [U.S. Embassy](#) on Novinsky Blvd. was 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) *walking distance* from [Lubyanka KGB Prison](#) at 2 Lubyanka Blvd. where Rotefan was being interrogated.

The United States and the Soviet Union were Allies during World War II, but no American authorities were asked to come to Rotefan's defense. The truth of those facts was irrelevant to their goal. Their goal was to send Rotefan and others like him away to the remotest of [Siberia](#) because he had been *infected* with what young American soldiers thought about "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Thomas Jefferson, [American Declaration of Independence](#), 2nd sentence)—perhaps the most sweeping statement on human rights ever written. Getting rid of free thinkers was the real goal of Article 58—to stop the disease of liberty. Such ideas were the greatest enemies of [Stalin's totalitarianism](#). 69ers other than Rotefan and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice returned home to pursue freedom's goals. Rotefan on the other hand was traded abuse for abuse,

Stalin's for Hitler's.

Following his 3:00 AM nighttime arrest at on August 2, 1950 by the Soviet secret police ([KGB](#)), Rotefan, now 25 years old, was taken first to the infamous (A, see Fig. 5) [Lubyanka Prison](#) in the heart of downtown Moscow (called by some "The Gates of Hell" since many considered it to truly be the Devil's lair; an estimated 7-10 million souls who entered literally and figuratively through Lubyanka perished) then to [Butyrka Prison](#), also in Moscow. During his several months of interrogations, all at night, he was often deprived of sleep and forced to stand in a dark, damp cell dressed only in his underclothes.

Over Five Years Imprisonment in the *The Gulag Archipelego*

Rotefan was convicted without a trial and received a 10-year sentence to hard labor. He spent the next 5 ½ year of his life in 10 prisons in Stalin's labyrinth of political prisons known as the [Gulag](#) ("Glavnoye Upravleniye Lagerey", "The Chief Directorate of Collective Labor Camps"). "The Gulag system was the stage of perhaps the worst atrocities and crimes ever committed by a country towards its own citizens." ([KnowlegeRush.com](#))

The ten (10) prisons and Gulag camps where Rotefan was incarcerated included the following:

- (B)
The
first
camp
was



Figure 4: Nobel Prize recipient Alexander Solzhenitsyn wearing the special markings for political prisoners in a "[Gorlag](#)" (a Special Camp No. 2). These are the same markings that **Rotefan Eloyan** was ordered to wear in Norilsk. Rotefan Eloyan was an organizer of the non-

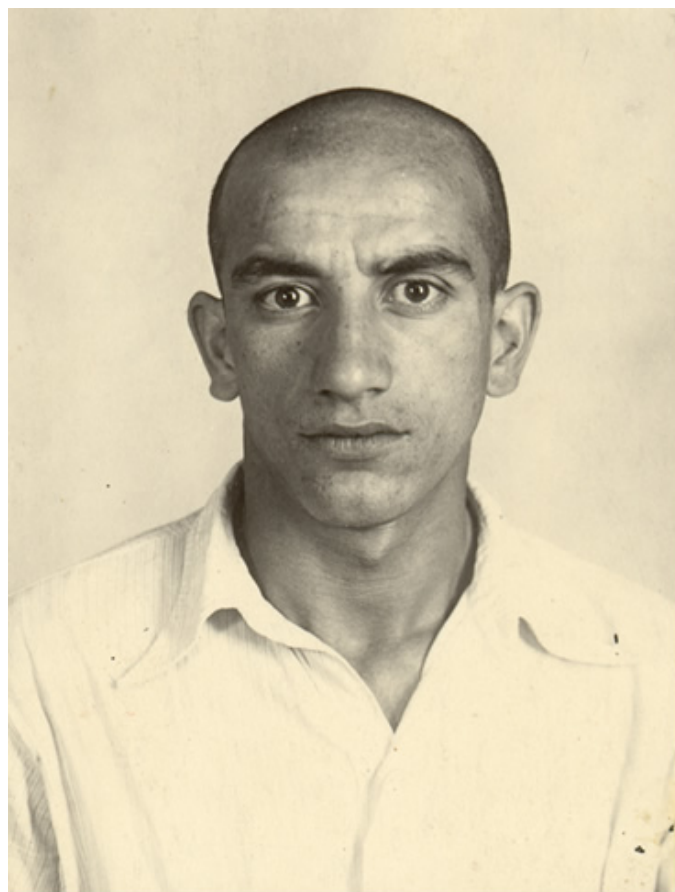


Figure 3a: Rotefan Eloyan at 24 years old. Photo taken by the KGB at Lubyanka Prison in Moscow, USSR in the middle of the night of August 2, 1950. Rotefan was arrested and later convicted on dubious Article 58-1(b) charges that were never adjudicated and for which he remained incarcerated in the infamous Soviet "Gulag" political prison system for over five years before being released and fully exonerated. His "crime" was his friendship and association with the American 69th Inf Div after being liberated from a Nazi concentration camp in Saalfeld, Germany by the American 87th Inf Div.

Source: Vladislav & Tatyana (Svendsen) Eloyan.
Used by permission.

<http://www.69th-infantry-division.com/whowhere/whopix/images/Rotefan-Eloyan-Lubyanka-Prison-Intake-Photo-Moscow-USSR-02-August-1950.jpg>

violent [Norilsk Uprising](#). Rotefan mentions these markings in his [May 29, 1956 Petition](#) to Yekaterina Furtseva, then Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. See section "Released in 1955; Exonerated in 1957" in this article. (*Photo source: theguardian*)

Special Camp № 8 named "Peschanlag" or "[Peschanuy Lager](#)" (translated "Sandy Camp") near the town of [Karaganda](#) (identified in [Alexander Solzenitzyn's *The Gulag Archipelego*, p. 532](#)). As of 2009 Solzenitzyn's *The Gulag Archipelego* is required reading in Russian schools ([Izvestia.ru](#));

- (C) In Autumn 1952 Rotefan was transferred to "Gornuy Lager" (translated "Mountain Camp") near [Norilsk](#). This camp had a "[Gorlag](#)" meaning "Special Camp No. 2" designed specifically for political prisoners. On the second day after being sent to this camp Rotefan was beaten with iron weights. Multiple ribs were broken and one punctured his right lung. He coughed blood for a week. Rotefan described the conditions in this camp as squalid—so bad that prisoners could ask the guards in the towers over the "prohibition zone" to shoot them, and the guards would oblige the wretched souls. During the summer of 1953 Rotefan helped lead the Revolt Committee for the 4th Camp Detachment during the non-violent [Norilsk Uprising](#).

Given Rotefan's four years of prior experience in German prison camps, one can only imagine what headaches the ever-resourceful and "as full of the devil as they come" Rotefan Eloyan ([see 271st account of "Roman Elojan", p. 73, para. 4](#)) created for his Soviet captors, including helping to organize the Norilsk Uprising, which experts credit with triggering many reforms to the Soviet prison system—non-violently.

Rotefan wrote letters to Soviet ministers, including then [Soviet Premier Georgy Malenkov](#), while in the Gulag. In one letter to Malenkov after the "Gorlag" (Special Camp No. 2) was established, he told the Premier his story of meeting German Labor Minister Dr. Robert Ley in Saalfeld (see above) and Ley's effort to *order* slave workers to be productive. Rotefan conveyed to the Soviet leader the folly of Gulag forced labor and what such slave laborers will inevitably do to undermine such efforts and laws. He told Malenkov what he did as a prisoner of war in Germany—encouraged his fellow slave workers to "work as little as possible" without getting caught; and how they falsified laboratory testing reports to ensure faulty finished products. [Click here to read the actual letter Rotefan wrote to Malenkov on October 22, 1953 which mentions his time with the 69th Infantry Division](#) (provided by Rotefan's family).

It is told of Rotefan by his fellow Gulag prisoners that Rotefan always spoke the truth, even to power, even if that power beat him for speaking it.

- (D) After the Norilsk Uprising, Rotefan was sent to an internal prison in [Krasnoyarsk](#), then to the prison town of (E) [Sverdlovsk](#) (now Yekaterinburg), and then to the town of (F) [Vladimir](#). Vladislav writes that Rotefan learned to draw while in prison and among his favorite poets was the English poet [Lord Byron](#) whose drawing is [linked here](#) (provided by Rotefan's family).

Soviet prisons and camps had very different regimes. Prisons were generally more cruel places where sometimes 30 people would be housed in a room designed for 10; where the prisoners were under video surveillance and did no work. In camps the slave laborers lived in wooden camp structures without no cameras, and the work was hard. The "Special Camp Nos. 2" were the exceptions—in these camps the treatment was more cruel than anywhere else in the Gulag slave labor camp system.

- (G) After Vladimir he was transferred to a camp near the town of [Semey](#), which was also the site of the USSR's [Semipalatinsk](#) nuclear testing facility until its closure in 1990. In March 1955 Rotefan wrote a letter to [Roman Rodenko](#), then Chief Prosecutor of the Soviet Union (and the USSR's chief prosecutor during the [Nazi War Crimes Trials at Nurneberg](#)), appealing for an end to the enforced slavery of Soviet citizens and many WWII patriots. Apparently Rotefan's appeals were *not* falling on deaf ears by this time. [Click here to read the actual letter Rotefan wrote to Rodenko on March 29, 1955](#) (provided by Rotefan's family).

Tuberculosis—Rotefan's Parting Gift from the Gulag

- (H) The last camp before his release was Vorkuta Special Camp №6 "Rechlag" (translated "River Camp") near the town of [Vorkuta](#), site of another [uprising](#) two years earlier which had been contemporaneous with the Norilsk Uprising. Unfortunately, by the time of his release in December Rotefan had contracted [tuberculosis](#)—a parting gift of the Gulag.

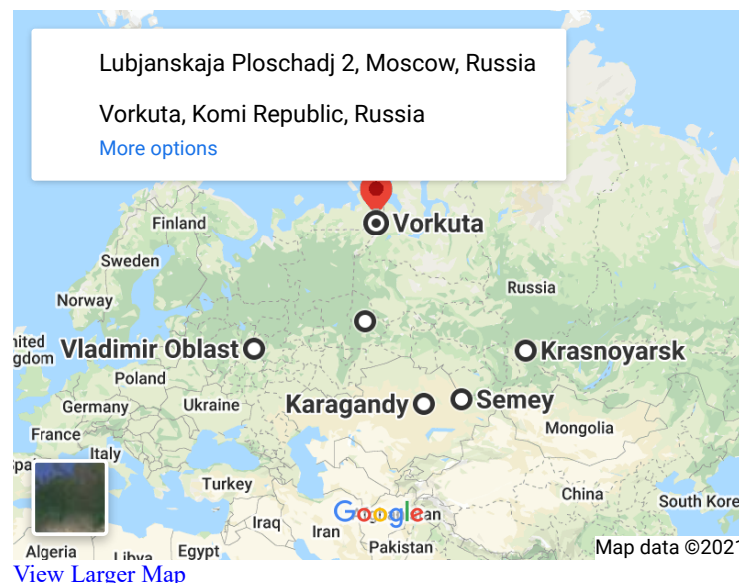


Figure 5: Rotefan Eloyan's Prison & Gulag Slave Labor Geography

Nearest towns at the sites of the 10 prisons and Soviet Gulag slave labor camps where **Rotefan Eloyan** 69th Inf Div 271st Inf Reg AT Co was incarcerated after his Aug. 2, 1950 arrest by the KGB under Article 58 the "Political Article" used by Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin to imprison many returning Soviet Army WWII veterans of the Western Front fight against Nazi, Germany: (A) [Lubyanka Prison](#) & [Butyrka Prison](#), (B) [Karaganda](#), (C) [Norilsk](#), (D) [Krasnoyarsk](#) (E) [Sverdlovsk](#) (F) [Vladimir](#), (G) [Semey](#) and (H) [Vorkuta](#).

Released in 1955; Exonerated in 1957

On December 11, 1955 a "Special Commission to Reconsider Cases of Political Prisoners" came to its senses following [Khrushchev's](#) rise to power and freed Rotefan.

Rotefan continued to write to Soviet authorities about the injustices he and his fellow patriots had endured, and which many *still were* enduring. On May 29, 1956 he wrote to [Yekaterina Furtseva](#), then Secretary of the [Central Committee](#) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union requesting a full rehabilitation of his official records. She became the first woman to join the [Politburo](#) the next year. She supported [Khrushchev's Thaw](#) which led to the release of millions from the Gulag labor camps. [Click here to read the actual letter Rotefan wrote to Furtseva on May 29, 1956](#) (provided by Rotefan's family).

On May 14, 1957, the Military Board High Court of the USSR dropped all charges against Rotefan and closed his case.

Spoke Truth to Power – A Man of Integrity

The petition letters Rotefan wrote to Soviet leaders give a glimpse into the character of the man. He knew that his uncompromising principles caused him to constantly run afoul of brutish men who tried to break his body, but could not break his spirit. Rotefan remained true to his view that human beings deserved respect and to be treated with dignity. Perhaps this is why he so admired his friends in the U.S. Army 69th Infantry Division. They treated him with respect, gave him food, clothing, shelter and befriended him—treating him as an equal in the eyes of God.

Rotefan only lived another five (5) years after his release from Soviet prison. The tuberculosis he had contracted in the Gulag became increasingly debilitating, yet he worked hard to support his family as a nighttime loader at an "artel" named [Mospogruz](#) in between hospital visits. It was

an honest and paying job for which Rotefan was thankful. He realized that no one would understand his [curriculum vitae](#), or the [leadership](#) skills that his life experience had honed; entries that included Red Army tank gunner in Battle of Moscow at age 15, watched 95% of a Red Army Division perish, survived German concentration camps until age 19, sabotaged German war machine factory output until age 19, served the American 271st Inf Div AT Co, survived 5.5 years as a prisoner

Eloyan Rotefan Markosovich – Petitions to Soviet Leaders English translations & original Russian (provided by the family)

22-Oct-1953 – [Georgy Malenkov](#), Soviet Premier
29-Mar-1955 – [Roman Rodenko](#), Soviet Prosecutor General
29-May-1956 – [Yekaterina Furtseva](#), Communist Party Central Committee

in about 11 special prisons and camps (of which 4 years were spent in special "Carcer" [akin to [solitary confinement](#) in damp, cold cells (in winter), or very hot, stifling cells (in summer) where sometimes he could not even sit] and "Bur" [akin to an intensive slave labor work gang] camps which reserved the most cruel treatment for political prisoners), helped organize the non-violent Norilsk Uprising, "spoke truth to power", before age 30.

Vladislav writes that Rotefan's first and probably last contact with Americans after serving with the U.S. Army 271st Inf Reg AT Co in 1945 was simply cordial contact at the [American National Exhibition](#) at Sokolniki Park in Moscow in July 1959. This was the site of the famous [Kitchen Debate](#) between then U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

Rotefan died of tuberculosis in Moscow on February 18, 1960 at age 34. [Soviet General Pokrishkin](#), 3-time [Hero of the Soviet Union](#), said of soldiers like Rotefan who served at the time of the Battle of Moscow: "Those who did not see the War in 1941-1942 did not see war." His wife Zika was a nursery school director during her work life and died in [2004](#) in Moscow.

Rotefan "Roman" Eloyan's Family Legacy

Rotefan's son Seva studied for a time at the Moscow Institute of Aviation and later graduated from a Technical Institute. He currently works in computer programming and lives in Moscow. Rotefan's son Edward married Lubov. Edward and Lubov were both born in 1947 in Moscow and both graduated from the Moscow Institute of Aviation. They had two children, Tatyana and Vladislav. Edward and Lubov are now both deceased. Daughter **Tatyana (Eloyan) Svendsen** is an anesthesiology nurse living in Denmark with her husband Eric, two sons and a daughter. Tatyana serves in the Danish military and recently completed a tour of duty in Afghanistan where she worked with the [U.S. Special Forces](#). See [US 1st Airborne Special Forces Certificate of Appreciation to SYPL Tatyana \[Eloyan\] Edwardovna Svendsen](#). Edward's son **Vladislav Eloyan**, grandson of Rotefan and co-author of this story, was born April 25, 1970 in Moscow (25th Anniversary of the Link-Up). Vladislav, graduated from [Botkin Hospital Medical School](#), served two years in the Soviet Army and then graduated from the [Russian State Academy of Physical Culture](#). Vladislav has served as President of the [Russian Traditional Karate Federation](#) since 1994 (he is in the linked photo on the left, also see this [English language link](#) regarding Vladislav's karate prowess), is both a World and European Karate Bronze Medalist, has won [national recognition](#) for his contributions to sport in the Russian Federation, and can be seen on this [YouTube video](#).

Vladislav Eloyan's closing in his own words:

Our family is proud to be linked by common service to the U.S. Army 69th Infantry Division following the Link-Up. Unfortunately, my grandfather was forced to carry on the 69th's fight for freedom from tyranny for many more years. We are so happy to finally be able to tell Grandfather Rotefan's story to his fellow 69th veterans and their families.

Our warmest regards,

Vladislav Eloyan

Grandson of **Rotefan "Roman" Eloyan**, 69th Inf Div 271st Inf Reg AT Co
Moscow, Russia
July 4, 2010

* * *

Postscript

by Michael McKibben, co-author of this story
Son-in-law of [Jerry Hoover](#), 69th Inf Div 272nd Inf Reg K Co
July 4, 2010

In doing last minute fact checking before publishing Rotefan's story (on July 4, 2010 - [American Independence Day](#)), I asked Vladislav if any American authority knew about Rotefan's August 2, 1950 arrest under Article 58-1(b) ("Military

Traitor Against the Motherland""—and especially of his so-called "crime" of serving with the U.S. Army 69th Inf. Div. 271st Inf. Reg. AT Co.

I was stunned to learn that the only person to testify on Rotefan's behalf was a second Soviet soldier [July 10, 2010—the 69er's name is **Nickolay Alexandrovich**] who had become attached to the 69th Infantry Division 271st Infantry Regiment Anti Tank Company earlier than Rotefan, and had been arrested by the KGB in 1950 several months earlier than Rotefan. This 69er was sentenced on July 22, 1950 under Article 58-10 ("[Anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary propaganda and agitation](#):"") to 8 years hard labor in the Gulag. This person was liberated from a Nazi concentration camp on March 25, 1945 and had also made his way to meet the 271st Inf Reg AT Co, according to Vladislav.

Joe Lipsius and I decided to go ahead and publish Rotefan's story and we'll just have to keep digging for the truth about this second 69er who also appears to have disappeared into the Soviet Gulag.

Finally, Vladislav Eloyan only learned while researching this story the identity of the U.S. Army Division that on April 13, 1945 liberated the Nazi labor camp at Saalfeld where his grandfather Rotefan was a prisoner of war—the [U.S. Army 87th Infantry Division](#).

Therefore, it is only fitting that we close this story with a July 4 greeting from Vladislav Eloyan of Moscow, Russia:

Sunday, July 4, 2010 12:12

Dear Mike,

Congratulations on U.S. Independence Day !!!

We especially send our greetings and thanks to the Veterans of the 69th Infantry Division and their families, and the Veterans of the 87th Infantry Division and their families.

Vladislav Eloyan

Earlier in the day I had sent Vladislav this message:

Sent: Sunday, July 04, 2010 11:15 AM

To: 'Vladislav Eloyan'

Subject: Today is July 4th

This is July 4 today. Our nation's birthday. We have Rotefan and your family to thank for helping keep us and the world free of tyranny. You paid a special price.

May Rotefan's memory be eternal.

Thank you.

Mike McKibben

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