

THE GOD OF SOLOVKY AND THE CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS

The food at the Kremlin was, as elsewhere, not very palatable. We had to go to the kitchen to bring "balanda", prisoner's soup, which was made of evil-smelling salted fish. It was also called "Dark Eyes". Besides "balanda", we were given "pies", small pieces of black mouldy bread. At other times we got what the prisoners ironically called "the vegetable soup made in honour of Mary Demchenko," a much advertised collective farm worker. This soup was made of rotten beets, often saltless.

Living in the Kremlin I began to understand its dark character. It seemed to me to be a vampire, sucking blood from human beings. I wanted to understand this creation of fanatical builders. It seemed that every huge grey stone in that great wall proclaimed the god of Solovky, who was merciless, cruel, and unforgiving. This god was a god of power, without love or tenderness, whose greatest function was to punish and punish without end.

I walked in the darkened passages of the burned Uspensky Cathedral. Looking at the icons, I realized that the underlying conception of God had been of a great merciless punishing power.

There was an icon on the wall representing God with an all-punishing sword and the wild face of a ruthless conqueror. This icon had been produced by the Solovky school of painting. On the other wall was a brutal, merciless picture of the Judgment Day. There was an icon representing God as a grim judge, on his right hand, Christ was painted without any expression of will on his face, and on the left the Virgin Mary was seen as a suppressed slave. On the same icon Satan was painted. There were also big boilers filled with brimstone from which grey sulphuric smoke rose.

I continued my examination. I stopped at a picture which showed a strong woman with a severe mannish face.

Underneath was the inscription, "Katherine, the great martyr". This icon had been presented by the trader of the first guild, Amos Nickolas, the son of Epiphany.

Uspensky Cathedral was half-burned and the icons and crosses were covered with cobwebs and dust. The spiders danced like acrobats on their threads. I entered the altar in spite of the taboo. The iconostas had been taken down long ago. In the walls I found three small openings. These were the openings for the privileged prisoners, who had been imprisoned under the cathedral in the solitary cells. Through these holes they could hear the liturgy thrice a day, and so remember that they had to repent and humiliate themselves before freedom could be obtained. Some of them had obeyed.

Suddenly I remembered the grave of Peter Kalnyshevsky. His slab had the words, "Humbled himself and reposed", engraved on it. My heart almost broke with pain and rebellion from these recollections. Without crossing myself, I turned around and went away, walking on the path of grey stones which had been polished by the shoes of monks, or perhaps by the kissing of the worshippers.

Opposite the cathedral was a small refectory chapel. In the chapel, the 6th platoon of the 13th company which was infamous for its torturing of prisoners, had been quartered. But it is curious that the GPU demanded also that these disobedient lovers of freedom subdue themselves and obey. Above the entrance was a large icon with images of two saints. They had a humble appearance, friendly forgiving faces, and a halo above their heads. These old saints were St. Zosyma and St. Savaty. The man who had painted their images evidently did not know their true natures. History contradicted him. He represented them as being human and forgiving, while in reality they had been the terror of the White Sea.

The icons had lied. In truth they were the creators of the solitary cells and the deep underground prisons. It was they who had built the foundations of the present Kremlin.

I looked at their picture and asked, "If you really were

such gracious saints, then why these cruel solitary cells and chains?" I wanted to shout, "St. Zosyma and St. Savaty, where did you lead the people?" Why these grim towers, underground prisons, and machine guns?"

The refectory was now used as a store house. Bushlats, padded trousers, sweaters, felt shoes, and other things lay around. In my imagination I saw a man with bast shoes on his feet, half a ration of bread in his pocket, a saw under one arm, an axe under the other, his head covered with a hat nicknamed "Goodbye, motherland", looking as though he had been taken down from the cross, this man of such a strange appearance was the greatest power of Stalin's socialism.

It was he who had built the White Sea canal, the Moscow-Volga canal, Kuzbas, the Baikal-Amursk railroad, Turksyb, and Moscow-Mensk. And only due to Hitler had he not had time to finish the "Soviet Palace in Moscow". But Hitler is gone and the palace will be finished by this slave army of 15 million men. If there is a lack of cement, their blood will do the job, and if there is not enough lumber, their bone will serve instead. The coming generation will curse this building, just as I stood cursing the Kremlin.

It began to get dark, and the snow was falling heavily. Then, in the direction of the North Gates, I heard cries and hysterical shouts of "Devils! Anti-Christ! Judas!" Near the gates was a great crowd of about a hundred or so people. Most of them were women in white kerchiefs. They were all on their knees in the snow. About twenty armed guards were trying to put them on their feet. They refused to rise and would immediately kneel down again as soon as the guards dragged them to their feet.

Suddenly we heard a deep thundering bass voice singing.

"Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, and let them also that hate Him, flee before Him."

The commander of the guards, foaming at the mouth with the most blasphemous curses, shouted, "Get up!"

The group did not pay any attention to him but continued to sing, "Thy Christ we worship, O God", and "We praise the Holy Resurrection".

There was so much force and conviction in this singing that even the hardened GPU guards were moved. The prisoners who stood at a distance by the walls began to sob.

"What is the meaning of this? Who are these people? What do they want?" I asked the nearest prisoner.

Don't you know? You are a newcomer, I suppose. These are the Chrystosyky, followers of Christ, my friend. They are heroes."

The Christ's followers continued to sing. The wind drove the snow into their faces with great force, but still they did not stop. They, who were being tortured now, were praising the one who had been crucified long before.

Then a command in French was heard, "End the comedy" and the tall aristocratic figure of the commander of the Kremlin, the former Count Trubetskoy, appeared. His ancestors had been ardent supporters of the throne and the dynasty of the Romanovs. This Russian family was wellknown in the Czar's Russia. They were the bulwark of the Czar's power and full of zeal for the Russian Greek Orthodox Church.

This man was handsome and well-built. He had accepted the god of Solovky, and, without mercy, shot those who had recognized any other god.

"End the comedy", again came the order. Everyone understood this sentence as he had used it very often. It meant that his order must be carried out immediately.

About a hundred guards began to tie up the disobedient followers of Christ and throw them on the sleighs. They did not resist but only crossed themselves and called the guards devils and anti-Christ. In about half an hour, they were all on the sleighs. They were then taken to Mali Zaichiki Island.

Who were this Christosyky? What were their origin and convictions? This group of Christians originated in a monastery in the Kuban Cossack country. The communists

ordered the nuns to disperse, get married and forget about the monastery, but a group of them firmly refused to leave. Then with the assistance of troops they were transported to the northern concentration camps.

The followers of Christ rejected the use of force against an enemy. They proclaimed that the communist government was a government of Anti-Christ. They said that all those who represented it were devils, and that those who obeyed it were miserable sinners and unclean people, for whom a great punishment would be prepared in the other world.

This present life was of very little value to them. It was all decay and suffering. Life had meaning only when Christ's laws ruled on earth. But when the laws in the country became anti-Christian, then, to live, serve, and cooperate with such a government was a mortal sin that would remain without forgiveness. To obey the least orders of the government was to commit a great sin. None of the Christ's followers obeyed any orders of the communist officials. If anyone obeyed any order of any kind, he ceased to be a follower. Not one of them obeyed the GPU. They even did not answer the first question as to where they were born and what their name was.

The Chrystosyky underwent the most brutal beatings and tortures but still refused to tell their names or answer any other questions of the GPU.

Their whole life in the concentration camps was spent under a number. When they were addressed it was always by a number. No one knew their names, neither the prisoners nor the GPU, as they called each other brother and sister.

The communists were not able to break their will and force them to work, by any tortures. The only solution that was left was to have them all shot. The communists tried it, but when they saw with what joy and satisfaction these disobedient women and men stood in front of the machine guns, they were perplexed.

The terror did not work, and the movement gathered

strength in spite of hard opposing blows. The number of Chrystosyky, instead of diminishing in the concentration camps, grew steadily and increased its ranks with new volunteers from among the prisoners. Many of the volunteers were those who had at first laughed at them, calling them a fanatical group with no prospective victory in sight. This was a movement of desperate resistance that could have been born only in conditions of Soviet horrors. Clashing with the indescribable brutality of the government, it developed an attitude of total rejection of everything born of communism. The Christ's followers did not proclaim any special programme for the future, but they, without compromise, rejected the things of the present.

Everything was always clean and orderly where they lived, and all the sisters wore kerchiefs that were as white as snow. Their clothing was always mended and neat. They walked among the prisoners and asked if they could mend or wash their clothing, or help them in any way. What they did was done thoroughly and well. They never asked any reward but if anyone gave them something for their work, they accepted it with thanks. If a prisoner did not give them anything they never showed any sign of dissatisfaction. The Chrystosyky avoided conversation with others and most of the time kept silent. Many of them were young and attractive women but not one of the prisoners, even the demoralised criminals, dared offend these women with a word or look. They remained unapproachable to all, because they were so pure and Christ-like. Their purity and the fact that they could face the machine guns with a smile, subdued the most filthy men and made them admire these heroic women.

As I learned more about these people, I found out about unbelievable sacrifices that they suffered. I am not able to describe the horrors that these people bore with Christian patience and cheerful smiles.

Philemon Podoliak was the leader of this group. He joined the group on Solovky, and his spiritual authority was recognised by the Christ's followers. His frank and sacri-

ficial character appealed to the Chrystosyky, while he accepted their views with all his heart.

He was strong and muscular, and reminded one of a huge bear. His head was covered with long hair reaching to his broad shoulders. It was like a thick mane but he always kept it clean.

From the time Philemon renounced the world he never covered his head with anything. He walked bareheaded and barefooted in all weathers; in the summer heat, during the winter, in snow storms, in rain, and in knee-deep mud.

It was said that at one time he had been a well-to-do farmer and had had a large family. In the year 1921, only his daughters remained of his whole family. All his sons had either died or were lost without trace. One day he took a walking stick, removed his shoes and hat at the gate, and went out into the world. He had left his family and disappeared. The attempts of his relations to find him produced no results and they decided that he had died.

No one knew about the life of Philemon after his disappearance and he himself never revealed anything. Philemon was sent to Solovky in 1926. We can only guess about his activities during the five years before his imprisonment. Those years in Ukraine were the years of great religious manifestations. It is possible that Philemon was one of those who called the people to repent and fight against communism. It was known, on Solovky, that Philemon had been regarded in the district of Zhitomir as a saint and ascetic. Many came to him seeking his prayers and there were reports about the miraculous power of these prayers and intercessions.

He did not speak much. When a man would come to him with some tale of suffering to recount, he would listen to him attentively, and then looking him straight in the eyes, would say, "Go in peace. I will pray for you."

His fame worried the GPU. One day the press announced that the Supreme Court of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic would consider the case of a certain rich peasant,

Philemon Podoliak, accused of murdering a thirteen-year old girl.

This announcement was widely advertised. There was no shadow of truth in the accusation. A girl had been sent to the ascetic by her aunt to ask him to pray for her sick mother. On returning home, she was caught in a snow storm near the village, and, not reaching it in time, died from cold.

Later on, when her body was discovered, the local Soviet attorney decided to exploit the death of the girl so that Philemon would be discredited. Police were sent after him by sleigh. He was found in his hermitage in the forest. It was zero weather and a sharp wind was blowing, but Philemon walked alongside the sleigh without his hat or shoes on. One of the guards asked him whether it was not cold for him and whether it would not be warmer and better for him to sit in the sleigh. Philemon told the driver to stop the sleigh. Then he threw his staff away, crossed his hands on his breast, and, looking straight into the eyes of each guard, said "Don't you feel an undying fire in your soul, that warms you. You talk about cold. Why don't you think about your souls instead. Take away the mask and be men. Try, at least once in your life, to become heroes." He concluded his admonition with the thunderlike command, "I order you in the name of God, who sent me, to get up and follow me barefoot".

The guards, like obedient children, took their shoes off, and, leaving them in the sleigh, followed Philemon. They walked twenty-five miles in that way, and finally appeared before the building of the local police. The whole town gathered to watch the procession. The local chief of police immediately imprisoned the guards, and Philemon was sent in a car to the prison in the city of Zhitomir.

His case was delayed as no one believed the accusations against him. Crowds of peasants from the provinces of Kiev, Volyn, and Podilia, came to the prison to find out whether he was still alive. In the prison Philemon received a large amount of parcels with food and clothing. He gave

it all away to the other prisoners, leaving only a small piece of bread for himself. It seems that such a big man would need a great amount of food, but the small prison ration was more than enough for him. Philemon was not shot only because a new economic policy (NEP) had been announced by the government and they did not want to irritate the peasants.

He was condemned for ten years hard labour at Solovky and was sent there in 1926. When Philemon arrived, he was the only earnest believer of Christ, and had an intense hatred of communism. When he met the Chrystosyky, he found a people of his own heart. His magnetic influence, thundering voice, and Christian teaching, made him a dangerous person on the island for the communists. He never incited anyone to escape and this saved him from liquidation. For all that, he spent all his years on Solovky in solitary confinement.

There were heart-rending happenings. When the guards led him from one cell to another, as soon as the prisoners heard about it, a great crowd of them would gather at the North Gate where he was to enter. They would fall on their knees and shout hysterically, "Philemon, save us!"

On one of these occasions, the guards fired at the crowd for the first time with machine guns. When he was again taken from the cells, the prisoners, from bitter experience, did not rush to him, but stood near the walls, watching him.

The last time I saw him, was on Mali Zaichiki Island in 1935. He stood barefoot on a great stone, leaning on his staff and looking in the direction of Anzer. His hair was ruffled by the wind. He reminded me of the skeleton of a great mammoth which I had once seen in a museum. Only his eyes were burning with a deep fire. Noticing that I was watching him, he turned around and went away.

At the end of January, the news of Kirov's death reached our island. At the prayer meeting one of the sisters said, "Did you hear that someone has killed the best friend and successor of Stalin?"

"Yes, he is killed", clamoured those present. Then they became silent.

"Yes, he is killed", said Philemon, "but why are you silent? He is killed, thank God. It is only a pity that they did not kill the anti-Christ, himself", and banging the door, he left the barrack.

Two days passed. One night, when they were sitting and talking, two sleighs glided up to the doors, and a detachment of armed guards ran into the barrack accompanied by Count Trubetskoy.

Trubetskoy very politely asked those present, "Tell me whether or not Philemon really said, 'Kirov is killed, thank God. It is only a pity that they did not kill the anti-Christ, Stalin, himself'."

The Chrystosyky were silent.

"I know", he continued, "that you will not answer my question, but I asked you, so that you who seek eternal truth, will not shun earthly truth. Now tell me what happened."

The Christ's followers did not move.

"Philemon, who had stood silently looking on the ground, crossed himself and followed Trubetskoy. Silence reigned in the barrack, only broken from time to time by suppressed sobbing.

Then one of the older sisters stood up and said, "Whoever is a Judas among us, let him leave us, and we will forgive him like Christ did".

Philemon was shot that night.

THE BLACK FLAGS OVER THE WHITE HOUSE

"Comrades, don't sing that song" shouted Myronenko hitting the table with his huge fists. He followed this outburst by falling on the sleeping platform, and covering his head with his coat, his body was shaken by sobs. This scene occurred one day when we were singing a sad Ukrainian song, which he could not bear to hear.

"Nick, we don't want to cause you any pain. Forgive us" pleaded Zbarazhsky, a grey-haired man, who was a former High School teacher and member of the first Ukrainian Parliament.

Everyone felt embarrassed. They quietly returned to their places on the wooden platform circling the room except Zbarazhsky, who seated himself near Myronenko and spoke to him in a soft low voice with tender, brotherly words.

"My friend, do you think that only you have children? I have them too, as do millions of other men like us".

Myronenko objected. "Did I fight and suffer wounds only for my children? I carried the banner of the revolution through blood, sweat and tears. Did I suffer all this for them alone? Did I take part in the attack on Warsaw only for them? Was it for them that I shot at you, Maxyme, and at men like you?" Myronenko again covered his head with his coat and sobbed quietly.

Zbarazhsky did not move. The other prisoners sat silently, unable to break the chain of tragic memories. It was the third time during two years that Myronenko had acted like this. It was a bad sign when a man reacted so strongly. It happened first when the prisoners sang a popular song which described how a brother returns from captivity, and his own sister, overcome by sorrow, is unable to recognise him. It happened a second time when they sang the song, "Green Hills", which Myronenko could not stand. It told about a poor widow, who asked her brother to help

her, and promised to send her children away every time he came home from work, to placate the hatred of her sister-in-law.

Suddenly Myronenko tore the coat from his head, stood up on the wooden platform and, with a voice full of emotion, said, "Eight sons! Eight falcons! How they grew! The eldest completed high school. And now all have perished. All were continually hounded. All became homeless. All were scattered. Their mother they tore away from her year-old baby! Was it for my guilt? I was fighting for the revolution with my sword, but now I am made a 'counter-revolutionary'. Everything has changed. The revolution has become a counter-revolution, reactionaries and slave-owners have become revolutionaries, and the revolutionaries have been transformed into counter-revolutionaries. But their mother! She had eight small children and only thought about them. She fed them, washed them, and spent sleepless nights at their cribs. She was sent to Siberia to work in the slave-camps. Why?"

"Friend, why are you telling us, as if we did not know all about it? Did you know the prisoner, Strikha? Do you know what he did? He killed his three-year-old son in a moment of insane despair. From that time on he was out of his mind. He never recovered. Yes, brother, everyone has experienced these horrors."

"It is so, but Strikha was an insane man", said Myronenko quieting down.

"Who would not become insane?" demanded Ivan Stepanovich, and old grey-haired peasant. "Strikha became prosperous by hard work after the revolution. He had been very poor before, but finally he built himself a new home. He had two good horses, one cow, some pigs and chickens, and he was able also to afford to buy some clothing for his family. One day, without any warning or reason, he was arrested with all his family, and everything that he had earned by hard work was taken away from him. On a cold winter day they took away their warm sheep-skin coats. When a communist saw the little boy's warm shoes he took

them for his own son. After that they were driven into a cattle car to be sent to Siberia. Who would not become insane under such treatment? This is what your revolution brought us". Ivan Stepanovich spat and went to his corner.

"What you are describing is not my revolution! It is not revolution but counter-revolution" defended Myronenko, who had commanded a red banner cavalry division when the Soviet armies had marched on Warsaw.

"Sha, mamasha, sha!" came the warning.

The discussion stopped suddenly. Liberberg entered the room. His brother had been a professor of world history at Kiev University and he himself was a Zionist. Together they had been sent to a slave camp in Siberia. However, his brother was left in a special isolation camp, and Liberberg was transferred to Solovky where he was appointed an instructor of the "educational" section which, except for the third section, was the most despicable institution. He was not considered to be an informer, but at the same time nobody trusted him. Many of the men had known Liberberg in Kiev when he was in charge of a large boarding house for students, located in the former monastery of St. Michael, which had been liquidated by the government in 1934.

Liberberg visited the prison cells often, to tell the men the latest news, as he had access to the newspapers. To-day he had something of interest to say.

"There are black flags over the White House."

"Black flags? Is to-day some mourning day?"

"To-day is the 2nd of December. It could not be a mourning anniversary".

"What is it then? What has happened?"

"I do not know yet. The chief of the cultural and educational section has a black band on his sleeve but has not said anything to me about it." Liberberg made a cigarette, smoked silently for a while, and then left.

"This is interesting", said Hop Skok. He was a carefree young criminal, but a good comrade. Somehow, he was always able to obtain complete information about any matter.

"I will be back in five minutes. I will find out". And he disappeared through the door. He returned in about half an hour. Everyone waited in a tense silence.

Hop-Skok, for the first time in his life had lost his cheerfulness. He looked seriously at us, and said, "Sergey Myronovich Kirov has been killed!" After that, he went without a word to his platform, sat down and began to smoke a cigarette.

"So the black flags were for him, then", said one of the prisoners. Everyone turned to him. The prisoner, as if excusing himself, hastily added, "I meant nothing. What is the matter with you?" and went to his portion of the wooden platform.

The news spread like lightning throughout the camp.

The siren in the Kremlin began to wail, calling all prisoners for the roll call.

Thousands of prisoners stood in the yard and waited. Around them, the usually dark walls of the Kremlin were covered with white snow. All the towers had black flags and under the flags shone the muzzles of machine guns.

The inmates of Solovky stood without a sound. Every second seemed an eternity.

Every prisoner thought, "This may be my last second."

Everyone knew the consequences for all those who were imprisoned in slave camps and prisons, when a party mogul was murdered.

Everyone expected that the procedure would be the same as on other occasions. They expected that the governor of the Kremlin, Count Trubetskoy, would give an order for every tenth prisoner to step forward from the ranks. All these would be imprisoned in subterranean cells and shot in groups at the leisure of the GPU.

At last the command was given to stand at attention. Ivan Ivanovich Ponamarev himself appeared with his retinue. Each of them was wearing a black band on his sleeve. They came to the table that had been placed beforehand in the yard. The chief of the Solovky slave camps

addressed the prisoners with a short speech, stressing every word.

"Prisoners!" he began. "You must know by now that your friends beyond the sea have killed Sergey Myronovich Kirov. I know that many of you laugh at our mourning. But remember, only those who laugh last, laugh best. I warn you who stand here, and who have not been shot yet, due to the mercy of our dear father, teacher and leader, Stalin, that those who dare to laugh will do it to their own sorrow. From now to the first of June I am cancelling all your correspondence. The food ration will be cut 30%. No clothing or shoes will be issued. All previous permits to leave the Kremlin or to enter it will be cancelled. At ten o'clock each night all cells and other rooms with prisoners will be locked. If you conduct counter-revolutionary propaganda, you will be shot. Do you understand?"

From every section of the yard, the prisoners shouted "Yes!"

A long roll-call began after the speech. We had to give our surname, our father's name, the date and place of our birth and the section of the Soviet law by which we had been condemned. At the end, the command to stand at attention was again given. Sirens sounded, and the prisoners were taken back to their cells. Everyone felt relieved after the long tension.

All the Kremlin was flooded with electric lights. Powerful searchlights and projectors were placed everywhere. Machine guns were directed at the windows of cells, and in the yard they seemed to follow the prisoners, whispering a menacing "good night". They seemed to say, "You have not been shot yet, but your turn will come".

A menacing silence spread over the Kremlin. We were all waiting. At ten o'clock all lay down on the wooden platform but none could sleep. About two o'clock we heard heavy footsteps approaching.

"They are coming!" said one.

"Let them come" another answered.

The key turned in the lock. The door opened. In the

lights that burned continually day and night, we were all clearly seen.

"Get up!"

We all got up.

"Take all your clothing off, come to the door, and stand on this side."

We began to take off the rags that served us as clothing. The guards started a thorough search.

"Who is sleeping here? Whose bag is this?"

Everyone looked in that direction.

"It is mine!" Michael Sergeiv, a former student of the Pedagogical Institute at Leningrad stepped forward. The representative of the third section was holding a new book in his hands.

"Does this book belong to you?" he demanded with hatred, waving this evidence of crime before Sergeiv. I never had a book like that in my possession". Sergeiv stated firmly. His strong young body began to tremble.

"No, prisoner," quietly said the guard. "This is not the work of an informer. This is counter-revolution. You are one of those who killed our Kirov!" He opened the title-page of the book and pointed to the large letters which said, "The Lessons of October" by L. D. Trotsky. Fearfully, Sergeiv looked around. Turning to us, he said with a trembling voice, "Comrades, I will be shot tonight. I know that this was the work of an informer. I never had a book like this, I never read it, and I never had anything to with Trotskyism".

"Silence!"

Sergeiv was taken naked from the cell by the guards, with his bag, clothing, and the supposed evidence of his participation in the killing of Kirov.

We were all depressed and silent. The search continued.

"Whose trunk is this? Why is it locked?"

Wasylko, a youngster, who was very popular among the prisoners, and who was famous for his songs and ability to shirk his work, said with a guilty look that he had lost the key.

This aroused the interest of the representative of the third section. He ordered the guard to break the cover of the trunk with a gun butt. He lifted some rags from the trunk with two fingers. Then he got out a pair of old torn bast shoes, rusted pieces of iron, a nail and other rubbish.

"Why did you keep these under lock?" he asked. At the bottom he finally found a piece of newspaper and inside it a piece of white paper with a large drawing of a hand with the fingers formed in a way that expresses extreme derision.

The representative looked at the picture and then at Wasylko.

"What is this?"

"Citizen commander, it is nothing. I only tried to learn how to draw".

"Watch yourself, or I will teach you myself", said the representative throwing the paper on the floor, and spitting on it. He realised that the picture was specially prepared by Wasylko for those who thought they would find treason in his trunk.

The search was finished. Numbed by cold and fear, the prisoners returned to their places. Everyone was very cautious as we all feared that even our closest friend might betray us.

We all knew that the book "The Lessons of October" had been put into Sergeiv's bag while he was outside at roll-call. From then on, everyone, when leaving his cell for any length of time, or when going to sleep, examined his possessions to be sure that some informer had not planted condemned literature among them. They often found some. In most cases it was books, leaflets, pictures or similar materials by Trotsky or others who opposed the communist regime.

This method of planting "seditious" literature did not produce much result. The prisoner immediately knew the purpose of these "traitorous" books placed in their belongings, and every day, the leader of each labour squad took a bundle of books found by the prisoners to the police quarters.

The third section (the department of the communist secret police which ferreted out opposition) found that this did not produce good results, and therefore concentrated on informers.

The denouncers and informers had to work very hard to keep up with the demands of the GPU. The prisoners organized their own secret service called the ATC in order to uncover traitors. During the epidemic of arrests and shooting this organisation found over two hundred secret informers among the prisoners. These informers were recruited, as a rule, from the foreign communists and other adventurers, who had come to the USSR in search of an easy livelihood. Many of them had done the same work while at liberty, but for insufficient results or some other reason were taken off the balance sheet and banished to Solovky.

Jean Reno was one of the most depraved spies. He was a French communist and had hundreds of prisoner's lives on his conscience. Another was Samuel Can who had come to Soviet Russia from Poland.

Reno and the other informers could lead into unguarded confidences only those who had come to Solovky recently and who did not know about the police system. The men who had spent years on the island and who were bound by unseen ties of common national interests, knew the informers and it was hard for men like Reno and Can to get them involved.

Once I chanced to meet Can after Kirov's death. During the usual night roll-call I stood near a young man whom I did not know. I asked, "Are you from the third column too?"

"No, I am from Nova Sosnova and only came to-day".

"That is interesting. Do you have many people there?" I asked.

"No, not very many. Excuse me, but what is your name?"

I told him.

"O, yes, Professor Pidhainy. Are you working in the agricultural branch?"

"First of all, I never was a professor . . ."

"No! No! No! Do not say that. I have heard about you. I know that you are a man of unusual gifts". The young man was speaking rapidly and evidently was intent on flattering me.

The guard called, "Can?"

"Samuel Lvovich" responded my new acquaintance.

"Move along".

The roll-call ended. I was much disturbed by my new acquaintance and those undeserved praises. I went to the ATC (I dare not mention the names of the men in charge of it, as I am not certain whether they are dead yet or not.) I asked them about Can. In about fifteen minutes they gave me this information. "Samuel Lvovich Can, a former member of the Union of Communist Youth in Poland is an informer".

The Kremlin had three ATC centres, all forming one organisation. It originated in 1924 and has never yet been discovered by the GPU. I found out about it from Genady Sadovsky, who had known of its existence since 1929.

At the head of the organization a wise and brave man had been directing the activities of ATC. No one would have thought that he was an expert in undercover work and that he had never before had anything to do with it. But now, thousands of men were able to avoid unexpected denunciations and death because of him.

Ivan Ivanovich kept his word. The very first night, a great number of prisoners were tortured and many were murdered. According to the calculations of the ACT, the GPU took over four hundred men from the cells of the Kremlin. Every night, the guards removed some men from the cells, "with belongings", and imprisoned them under the White House. This continued until the middle of February, 1935.

One night, guards came to our cell and took away

Nickolas Myronenko. Nothing was ever heard of him again.

Everyone tried to discover the true story about Kirov's death. There were two versions secretly circulating, when the wave of terror had abated a little. According to one story, Kirov had been killed by the command of Stalin, who was afraid that he might try to supplant him. Another version came to Solovky from Kolyma. According to this rumour, Kirov had been killed because of a romantic feud.

A young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Nikolaev, lived at Leningrad. Nikolaev was an outstanding member of the communist party and occupied all kinds of responsible positions. His wife was a beautiful woman with aristocratic manners, who knew how to dress well. She too belonged to the Communist Party. Kirov once saw her, and immediately issued instructions that she should be appointed to a higher position, and transferred to the provincial committee of the party at Leningrad. Of course, he was the secretary of that committee. Step by step, he promoted her, and finally made her his personal secretary.

Kirov was very friendly with her husband, and gave him the freedom of the offices of the Provincial Committee. Thus it was that he could enter, without any formalities, into the office of Sergey Myronovich Kirov, the second most influential man in the USSR. Nikolaev considered all these favours to be well-deserved rewards from Kirov for conscientious and prompt execution of all party orders and instructions.

Red-headed Kirov was an ugly old man, his face marked by smallpox scars. He treated his subordinates brutally, and they all detested him. However, Nikolaev considered him a grand old man. So the days, weeks and months passed.

Finally someone called his attention to the unusual courtesies that Kirov paid to his wife, but he did not say anything. Some time later, he received an anonymous letter which contained the same information about his wife and Kirov. Nikolaev began to watch them and found that

the relations between them were more familiar than those that should exist between a boss and his secretary.

Nikolaev took the anonymous letter and spoke with Kirov about the matter. He told him about party ethics and the relations of a friend. Kirov persuaded him that there was nothing true about the story, and that somebody had lied. He promised that he would take all the necessary precautions to forestall any possibility of such gossip in the future.

Nikolaev was satisfied. One day he found his wife in Kirov's embrace. She told him that he could do anything he wanted, but that she would not leave Kirov. Nikolaev argued and reasoned with her all that night. The result of his talk was not known, but after it, he went to the party offices. Greeting everyone pleasantly, as was his custom, he went to Kirov's private room, and knocked at the door. On entering the office, he emptied eight bullets into Kirov.

This was the other version of Kirov's death. Which one of them is true is not important. The important thing is, that his death provided a pretext for the murder of thousands of innocent people. Of course, from Stalin's point of view, they were guilty anyway and so were shot without mercy.

TWENTY-EIGHT

Liberberg, whom I had mentioned before, came in January, 1935 to our cell with the newspaper "Visti" and showed us the list of men shot in Kiev. This was only one of the many lists of the thousands of Ukrainians who were shot by the Russian communists.

It was possible that only by an accident, or most likely by the Providence of God, I was arrested and sent to Solovky by the Moscow tyrants. If I had remained free until then, my name would have been without doubt, listed among the twenty-eight who were shot at Kiev. Many of my friends, colleagues and acquaintances were among them.

Later on when I escaped from Soviet Russia, I searched for that number of "Visti". I was interested in it, because, long before the death of Kirov, I was one day unexpectedly taken to the White House. The guard brought me to a section of the building which had the inscription "Secret Political Department" on the door. In room number thirteen, I was welcomed by a well-shaven young examining judge who was dressed in a brand new uniform. His office was clean, and the whole floor was covered with an expensive carpet, on the top of which was placed a fine runner.

I had on my feet dirty bast shoes, wet from the rain, and seeing all this luxury before me, I stopped between the door and the table. The examining judge thanked the guards, and, noticing my embarrassment, told me in a friendly, weary voice, "Never mind. Please come and sit down".

I sat down and laid my hat on my knees.

"Are you 'Pidhainy' or 'Podhainy'?" he asked. I told him that my name was Pidhainy and always had been, but that the warden of Kharkiv GPU had not liked it and had changed it, so from that time on I had been 'Podhainy'.

"So this is your name of our choice", said he, as if agreeing with the decision of the warden.

"Yes, it is your choice", I agreed.

"Are you a subject of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics?"

"Yes, I am a subject of the USSR."

"Do you mean the Ukrainian Socialist Republic?"

"No. I meant the Union of SSR."

"I thought that you meant Ukrainian, but I am certain you know that we have only subjects of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and no other".

"I know it very well".

"Naturally such an educated man as you, condemned for breaking the laws of the state, should know it."

I was silent.

"Do you smoke?" asked the examining judge offering me some very expensive Soviet cigarettes.

"I do not smoke that kind. Allow me to smoke my own clay pipe".

"Please do", he said, with displeasure, offended that I preferred cheap prison tobacco to his cigarettes. Lighting a match for me, the examining judge casually asked me if, per chance, I had known a man called Lyashenko. I pretended that I did not understand him.

"Lyashenko? Oh yes, I knew him. He was a famous professor of Russian economics. I heard that he died recently. It was a great loss, as he was a first-rate scientist." I was ready to give a complete evaluation of his scientific work.

The examining judge interrupted me, and said that he was not interested in any dead professor, but in a young Ukrainian scientist. The man about whom he was talking was one of my friends with whom I had studied when we were both aspirants to the Scientific Historical Institute. I had also worked with him in the archives and libraries.

I looked straight into the judge's eyes with an expression of great innocence and sincerity, and declared that although I was willing to answer all his questions with complete

frankness, I did not recall any one with such a name among my friends.

"Try to recall him", the examining judge said calmly.

"I have an excellent memory, one of my distinctions, but I do not remember ever meeting such a person."

I noticed that the examining judge was an experienced man, but my sincerity must have shaken his suspicions. He took some papers and looked them over. Then he asked me about twenty questions, every one of which was intended to trap me into an admission that I had known Lyashenko. I decided to deny everything. This was dangerous, as the GPU could very easily prove that I had known him.

When the examining judge was convinced that I would not admit anything about Lyashenko, he gave me a paper with questions about him. As I had stated that I did not know him, I answered "No" to every question, and signed the paper.

Then I had to sign another paper, which stated that for telling anyone about the questioning, I would be punished by an additional five years in jail. After that the examining judge rang the bell. Two guards came into the room.

"Take the prisoner away."

"Where, that way or the other way?"

"That way", answered the judge. I wished him good-night and left with the guards. I knew that I would not be sent to solitary confinement.

For a long time I waited fearing that the GPU would return me to Kharkiv to confront witnesses. In that case my lie would be discovered. I suppose that my examining judge was not greatly interested in the matter, as the reward for the blood of Lyashenko would go, in any case, to the examining judge in Kharkiv or Kiev. He fulfilled the order of the GPU and while he corresponded with Ukraine, Kirov was killed and Lyashenka was added to the group of "terrorists", and shot. The local examining judge in Ukraine evidently had reports from informers about Lyashenko visiting me. The GPU sent inquiries to Solovky to

find out if they could connect me in some way with Lyashenko.

If Lyashenko had been acquainted with a man sent to Solovky, this would have been sufficient reason to punish him severely, and knowing this, I stoutly denied knowing him. My denial saved him from the accusation of participation in "The Union of Kuban and Ukraine" but it did not save him from death. Unable to shoot him for one trumped-up reason, they shot him for another.

In this announcement of the execution of twenty-eight outstanding Ukrainians Lyashenko is the last on the list. On the 18th of December, 1934, all papers in Soviet Russia published this statement:

"From the thirteenth to fifteenth of December, the Session of the Military College of the Highest Court in the USSR, under the chairmanship of comrade Ulrich and members Rychkov and Horyachev, examined the cases of:

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Krushelnitsky Ivan | 15. Vlyzko Oleksy |
| 2. Krushelnitsky Taras | 16. Dmytriev Yevhen |
| 3. Skazynsky Roman | 17. Bohdanovych Adam |
| 4. Lebedynets Mychailo | 18. Butusov Porfiry |
| 5. Shevchenko Roman | 19. Butusov Ivan |
| 6. Karabut Anatoly | 20. Pyatnytsya Volodymyr |
| 7. Sydorov Petro | 21. Blachenko Yakiv |
| 8. Skrypy-Kozlovsky Hryhory | 22. Polevy Domyunik |
| 9. Falkivsky Dmytro | 23. Choptyar Ivan |
| 10. Kosynka Strilets Hryhory | 24. Boretsky Petro |
| 11. Oksamyta Mychailo | 25. Lukyanov-Svitozarov Lern |
| 12. Shcherbyna Olexander | 26. Pivnenko Konstantyn |
| 13. Tereshchenko Ivan | 27. Matyash Sergy |
| 14. Burevy Konstantyn | 28. Lyashenko Olexander |

accused of the organization of terrorist actions against the workers of the Soviet government. The court established that the majority came to the USSR from Poland and some from Rumania, in order to commit a number of terrorist actions in the territory of the USSR. Fulfilling the decision of CVK USSR, on the first of December of this year and by articles No. 54-8, 54-11, KK USSR, the Session of the Military College of the Highest Court of USSR, condemned all the above mentioned persons to be shot and their property confiscated. The sentence has been executed." (TARS) "Visti" December 18, 1934.

Who were these twenty-eight men? The statement said that "The court established that the majority of the accused came to the USSR from Poland and some from Rumania". The truth is, that of twenty-eight, only eight had come to the USSR from Western Ukraine, which was then under Polish domination. These men believed the communist propaganda which trumpeted that the USSR was a true paradise and that Ukraine had become an Eldorado, a country of happiness and justice. They believed that Ukraine had become an independent socialist republic.

They thought that the long awaited socialist state was now a reality. This lie was believed by hundreds of others who finally went to the USSR, only to lose their lives.

These eight men were among those who believed in the land of happiness and justice. For that faith they were condemned.

Two brothers, Ivan and Taras Krushelnitsky, and Roman Skazynsky, were declared to be the worst of the criminal terrorists. Krushelnitskys and Skazinsky were well known in Western Ukraine. Their friends tried to persuade them that they were mistaken, misled, and that they were just helpless flies in the web of a cunning spider. But they did not heed the warnings, and they believed the Soviet lies. They believed because their people were oppressed by the foreign Polish Government. They felt the national humiliation deeply, and their hearts longed for liberty and justice. They were bewitched by the communist propaganda which painted attractive pictures and told wonderful stories about their own country and people under the Soviet rule.

When they first came to USSR the Soviet newspapers praised them to the skies. They were greeted as victims of Polish fascism. Their pictures were widely distributed and theatres showed the "happy men", who at last had found their true fatherland.

After the receptions ended, everyday Soviet life began. The "happy men" began to learn that they would have been happier under Polish "tyranny". They expressed their dissatisfaction. Others warned them and advised them to

get used to Soviet life. Finally, one day they spoke out boldly and an informer heard them. Summoned by the GPU they rejected the unjust accusations, and rebelled. The GPU arrested them. Two months later, Kirov was killed in Leningrad and they were classified as terrorists and shot. That is how all eight men perished. In this way the family of Krushelnitsky was wiped out. The two sons, Ivan and Taras, were shot as terrorists, and the grey-haired father and his beautiful young daughter were sent to Solovky to end their lives in the camps of the unexplored bushland of the north.

Who were the remaining twenty? They were Ukrainians from under the Soviet regime; members of the party, members of the Union of Communist Youth, or plain Soviet citizens of Ukrainian birth. Their crime was to want Ukraine to become an independent state.

Falkivsky Dmytro was born in 1898 in a family of poor peasants from Polissya. Before the revolution, he took part in revolutionary underground organizations. He joined the Red Army in 1920 and took part in the war against the Ukrainian National Government. When the Soviet Government was firmly established, he left the army and finally had an opportunity to discover the truth of the "revolutionary achievements". He realised that he had wasted his time and had needlessly shed the blood of his own people for the victory of the oppressor. He understood his mistake and protested. He too, fell victim to his former friends whom he now renounced without regret.

Olexa Vlyzko was the youngest of the twenty-eight. He was born in 1908, the son of a peasant, and as a member of the Union of Communist Youth, and a gifted poet, he was optimistic in his views. Educated in Soviet schools he knew very little about the heroic struggle of his people for liberty. In 1930 he travelled abroad, and what he saw opened his eyes, and made him realize the frightful oppression of his own people. Then he wrote an article entitled, "The Trains go to Berlin". In it he stated, "We never will forgive Moscow for the defeat of our greatest leader, and president (Hetman) Ivan Stepanovych Mazepa".

The Bolsheviks could not forgive such a sentiment, and had him shot without delay.

Among these victims, Kost Burevy stands out. He was a revolutionary who cherished the cause of social liberation above everything else.

I would also like to mention a few writers, and young scientists; Michael Lebedynets, Roman Shevchenko, Ivan Tereshchenko, Konstantyn Pivnenko, Sergy Matyash, Olexander Lyashenko. All these men belonged to the Ukrainian intelligentsia, which, in spite of the fact that it was educated under Soviet influence, always cherished the idea of an independent Ukrainian nation. They fought for this independence and sacrificed their lives for it. A special place is reserved among these men for Hryhory Kosynka, one of the most outstanding Ukrainian writers. He believed that Ukraine would live, and that in spite of tragedies, suffering and defeat, the Ukrainian people would build a free Ukraine. He never compromised with the Bolsheviks and he was one of the very few that would have dared, if an opportunity had offered itself, to throw a bomb under the feet of Stalin. However, the Kremlin dictator was too well guarded and, in the end, Kosynka also fell victim to the GPU.

These men were never terrorists, but were simply fighting for their people's freedom; for the right to live like human beings and not as beasts of burden.

As we read the news about the death of our friends, we grieved for them. Their suffering, our misery, and the sorrow of our people, were matters of indifference to the world. World democracy had given up the freedom-loving nations conquered by the numberless masses of Russian communists and their followers. The hope of democratic nations that the Bolsheviks would be satisfied with the blood and possessions of these unfortunate nations was not justified.

Nowadays the Red Dragon, fattened up on the blood of once free nations, is threatening the whole world again with slavery and death.

EVERYDAY LIFE ON SOLOVKY

With the approach of winter, a pale and warmless sun appeared above the Kremlin for only about two hours each day. The rest of the twenty-four hours was made up of either a continuous grey or, as winter wore on, a grey which darkened towards nightfall.

The sea-gulls, which had been our only consolation, had left the islands long ago.

Thousands of them came here every spring and in the autumn they flew away. They had become used to people, since the monks, for hundreds of years, had allowed them the freedom of the islands without molesting them. From time immemorial, it had been prohibited to kill them. The monks had loved them, and now the prisoners did too, especially since they were the harbingers of spring.

The first seagulls always came about the twenty-fifth of March. They would fly screaming over the Kremlin and sit on Uspensky Cathedral. They looked intently at the Kremlin as if to see if there were any changes, and then flew away.

Two weeks later the Islands would be filled with the peculiar noises of these white-bellied creatures with black wings. They occupied the Kremlin and settled on the window-sills of the prisoner's cells. We shared our food rations with them, and often fed them with fish from the "balanda".

After a while the seagulls began to pair off. When the time came to lay, the female found a suitable spot and produced two greenish-white eggs somewhat larger than those of a hen. The nesting place was never situated very high, but was usually on the ground, a large stone, or a path used by the prisoners. The female then sat on the eggs and the father provided food for her, and guarded the nest. The mother sat proudly on her offspring-to-be and hissed at all the prisoners that passed.

A silver fox called Katka, from a Solovky fox farm, was their enemy. She was almost domesticated and loved tit-bits. When the seagulls began to lay eggs she tried to get into the Kremlin by every means so as to feast on the eggs or young fledglings.

At the North Gates, the only entrance to the Kremlin, the guards were ordered not to allow her to sneak in, but sometimes she was able to fool them. However, her arrival was always announced immediately. From every direction, the seagulls, screaming hysterically, would fly at her and strike the ground with their wings. But they were afraid to attack her, and Katka, on her part, was not interested in the old birds. The prisoners always came to the assistance of the seagulls, driving Katka away. The guards, in such cases, were reprimanded for negligence.

The seagulls were not so noisy with the approach of the dark rainy autumn nights and their cries then sounded somewhat sad. I often shivered at night when I listened to them, reminded of the moans of a mortally sick child. Just before their departure from Solovky, their cries became unbearable, and when they left, the prisoners wished them a safe arrival at their winter quarters, as they did not want them to stay at Solovky where they would increase the sorrowful memories even more.

Doves and cheerful sparrows remained on the islands all year round. The sparrows, however, never enjoyed any privileges and hundreds were caught by the prisoners and boiled.

For killing a seagull, a prisoner was punished with three months in solitary confinement, but it often happened that hungry prisoners killed them in spite of the prohibition and the threat of severe punishment. The killing of muskrats before their maturity was also vetoed, but this rule too was violated.

Prisoners ate everything they could get their hands on. No rules or prejudices were considered so far as food was concerned. The men had returned to the rules of the primitive savage. They started eating rats and seagulls, and

ended with human beings. In some cases the animal instinct took the upper hand and the men became brutal beasts, while in other cases, they used all their spiritual resources to remain decent. In this place where everything, beast and man, holiness and blasphemy, laughter and tears, were mixed, we often witnessed the efforts of men trying to save their power and keep walking on the "straight and narrow path".

After the killing of Kirov, the population on Solovky Islands doubled. The regime became extremely severe. Silence reigned over everything. Hundreds of the older prisoners received additional sentences. I was transferred to the stalls which were built two miles from the Kremlin, near Varyazhske Lake. My task was to feed the calves, wash them, and clean the stalls. About three hundred calves were brought from the mainland in the autumn. They were the spoils of wholesale "collectivization".

Ivan Ivanovich loved to make unexpected visits to the calf stalls. Often in the dead of the night he would arrive, and, without greeting anyone, would investigate the condition of every corner and every calf. He would take a handkerchief as white as snow out of his pocket, and wipe the back of a calf from head to tail three times. After that he would go to the electric light and attentively look at the handkerchief. If it had any traces of dirt, he would curse everyone roundly, the prisoner in charge of the stalls would be sent for at least a week to solitary confinement; all the prisoners working in the stalls would be deprived of rations, and the man who had been looking after that particular calf would be mercilessly whipped on the spot by Ivan Ivanovich himself.

However, if there was no trace of dirt at all, Ivan Ivanovich would smile with satisfaction, and, without saying anything to anyone would drive away in his sleigh.

I again lived outside the Kremlin, while my friends from Pichuhy were inside. Sadovsky had been appointed watchman of the hay storage, and Tverskoy was working with a cart transport.

The silence which reigned in the Kremlin was interrupted occasionally by insane Kharytyna, a powerfully-built woman of Cossack origin. At times she was able to escape from the cells in the hospital, and create a commotion for a while. When she got free, she rushed from the cell, knocked down the guards at the doors of the hospital and, finding a stick or any weapon like that, hit everyone she saw in military uniform. The prisoners enjoyed watching Kharytyna chase the guards around. She had immense strength and was not easily subdued. After chasing all she felt inclined to, she would climb up on a huge pile of rubbish which had remained since the time Uspensky Sobor had been burned. On the top of the pile she would begin to sing as loud as she could:

“I will not wed Trotsky,
I will not wed Lenin,
But Don Cossack Kaledin”.

After she finished singing, Dr. Katayama, a Japanese who had spent many years on Solovky, would come from the hospital, dressed in a white dressing gown, and persuade her to return to her cell.

Kharytyna considered him a friend and, as a rule, agreed to follow him.

This pile of rubbish also attracted Father Klym, an old priest, mentally ill. When he had an attack of insanity he would climb the pile, and, tying a bast shoe to a string, pretended that it was a censor, and conduct a regular Greek Orthodox service. No one paid any attention to him, as he did not annoy anyone. Some prisoners thought that he was only pretending. There were many cases like that, when a prisoner saw no escape from the tortures of the GPU and would feign insanity.

TROTSKYISTS ON SOLOVKY

Some men were brought one night and lodged on the second floor of our building where the calf brigade was kept. One of them was a socialist-revolutionary, another a Zionist, still another a social-democrat and two were Trotskyists. At first we were strictly forbidden to meet them, but later, when the guards got used to it, they pretended not to see us meeting and talking with them. Among the newcomers, was Kharachinski, a man who belonged to the social-democratic party. He was brave, idealistic, and a very likeable person. Jewish by race, he was the nephew of Martov, the famous organiser of the social-democratic party in Russia. He never lost faith in democracy and its final victory

When we saw the hesitating and appeasing attitude of the English and Americans, our faith was shaken but we never lost hope. The Zionist was not much interested in social questions. He was a typical Jewish nationalist. He always said, “Money, wisdom and faith in the Jewish mission — this only will save us, where our sacred places are to be found, and where the blood of our people was shed, is the only solution of the problem”.

The most interesting of the new prisoners were the Trotskyists. The first Trotskyists appeared on the Solovky Islands in 1932. Until that time, the GPU had not dared to send men so closely related to them politically, to the concentration camps.

In Soviet Russia, the name “Solovky” meant an extreme measure of hatred for the communist regime. This was so in the times of the Czars and remained unchanged under the communists. The Solovky Islands were always a safe place for keeping all political opponents of the Russian government.

In the beginning, until the time of Trotsky’s departure from Soviet Russia, his followers were treated as political

prisoners. They were granted the right of meetings, and their cells were unlocked. They were allowed to criticize the government openly in the jails. At least 90 per cent of the Trotskyists were of Jewish origin.

After 1932, a large number of persons of other nationalities were arrested, but most of them had nothing in common with the true Trotskyists. The Trotskyists represented, not only a movement directed against Stalin, but also a kind of national Jewish movement, in their struggle for better conditions of life in the USSR. They thought that if a person of Jewish origin was at the head of the Soviet government then the Jewish people would be certain to have just treatment. They thought that Trotsky, one of the ablest men in Soviet Russia, would be the most suitable man for this purpose. At the beginning of the struggle, Joseph Utkin, a Jewish poet, in his novel, "The Story About Red Motyl", skilfully described the feelings of the Jews in the USSR during the revolution, when differences took place between Trotsky and Lenin. He wrote:

"And the days were babbling like the tradeswoman Maud,
And the Jews were arguing, yes or not.

Hopes were changed to doubts, joys into distress,

No, we said, for Lenin, but for Trotsky —yes".

Neither Lenin nor Trotsky guaranteed the Jews their money and possessions, but the Jewish people hoped that Trotsky, being one of their own race, would be more lenient with them. Stalin, when liquidating Trotsky, offered the Jews, Kahanovitch, with his four brothers instead, but the Jews had never liked Kahanovitch, and had always considered him an adventurer.

When Stalin liquidated his own wife, Alilueva, and married the sister of Kahanovitch, the Jews in Solovky considered it the lowest act he could have done, and a blot on a good Jewish name. The Trotskyists unanimously asserted that Kahanovitch was the instigator of Alilueva's death, and that her murder was manipulated by Stalin. This is one of the reasons why he persecuted the Trotskyists without mercy.

In 1931, before the appearance of Stalin's infamous letter to the editor of the journal "Proletarian Revolution" (nothing else but a direct command to liquidate all Trotskyists as enemies of the people) the communist authorities treated them with tolerance even in the prisons. At the close of 1931 a few hundred Trotskyists were imprisoned in Kholodnohorski Jail, almost all of them of the Jewish race. The prisoners were composed of people of different ages, from young girls, who were members of the communist youth organisations, to old communists, who had taken part in the revolutionary wars. Their cells were unlocked. They were allowed to meet in the prison corridors, but were prohibited to leave "Trotskyist corridor". Every night the prisoners gathered in the corridor to listen to lectures and speeches. They sang songs, and always included the singing of the Internationale.

Every night, they had a representation of news called the "Living Newspaper". "The Living Newspaper" usually criticized the measures of the Stalin clique in a very satirical way. They laughed at Stalin and openly told his blackest deeds, as well as those of his henchmen. They attacked all who followed Stalin without fear and always finished the meetings with a humorous song which they would sing without restraint. I remember some of the verses of this song:

"Greetings to you, Uncle Stalin,

Ai, ya, ya,

Lenin's Will by you was stolen

Ai, ya, ya,

Good-night to you, Lord Bukharin,

Ai, ya, ya,

Half worker and half baron,

Ai, ya, ya,

Good-night to you, Kahanovitch,

Ai, ya, ya,

You traitorous Cainovich,

Ai, ya, ya."

Etc.

Trotskyists were sent to Solovky in 1932, but, at that time, all of them were given privileges, which the other prisoners did not have. They could demand better conditions from any island authority, threatening a hunger strike if they did not get them. The authorities, fearful of trouble, would try to pacify them. The Trotskyists were kept separately in small groups on different Solovky islands. They were prohibited to communicate with one another. In the spring of 1935 they decided to start a hunger strike, with the demand that they be allowed to live together, and move around freely. After getting in touch with one another, they simultaneously started the strike. Ivan Ivanovich Ponamarev, chief warden of the islands, who, up till then, had been very considerate to all their demands, changed his method. He ordered them to be brought to the fortress and put in hospital cells. When the chief of the third department came, they would not even speak to him, but demanded that Ponamarev, himself, should come. Ponamarev did not come, but sent a number of strong guards who tied them up, put them on carts, and brought them to the fortress. All the groups were dealt with in this way.

Andrey Andreivich, a former member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, was appointed to supervise the strikers. He was a Serbian, and an outstanding communist, very active in the Balkans, Greece and Italy. In 1928 he was sent for similar work to Turkey. But the Turkish government did not dilly-dally with communists, and Andreivich was imprisoned in Istanbul and later returned to Soviet Russia. In 1929 there was a heated debate in the Comintern concerning the position of Trotsky, and Andrey Andreivich dared to disagree. Without much ado he was jailed in Butyrky and in 1934 was sent to Solovky. He did not have any privileges and was treated like the rest of the prisoners. It was then that he was ordered to supervise the strikers.

Later on, Popov came to Solovky. He was the chief of NKVD, the secret political department of the infamous

Bilomorsky-Baltisky concentration camp. He tried to persuade the Trotskyists to stop the hunger strike as it was useless, but they refused. After that, Popov called Andrey Andreivich and told him that he would be very pleased if he would spy on the Trotskyists and report to him what they said. Popov suggested that this service might alter Andreivich's fate somewhat. He added that Andreivich, in spite of his imprisonment was considered to be a communist and therefore should be willing to work for the victory of communism. Andreivich answered that there was no doubt about his being a communist, but as long as he was imprisoned, he was, in the first place, a jail inmate. And he would not report any other prisoner, no matter what their convictions were. He said that for himself and all the rest of the prisoners, the real enemy was Popov himself.

"You are the enemy, not the Monarchists, Trotskyists, Nationalists and all the others with whom the prison cells are packed." Popov did not like the answer, but said; "It is your business and I will not order you to do it" and, to the great surprise of Andreivich, earnestly shook his hand. The same night, Stolypin, brother of Arcadi Stolypin, former minister of internal affairs in Imperial Russia, was assigned to the job, although it is not known if he agreed to be a spy. Shortly after, Popov left Solovky and the Trotskyists continued their hunger strike. After a week, two of them died. Those who did not lose consciousness would not give in. On the ninth day, one more died. Then one of them suggested that the hunger strike be ended, that he would not continue on strike, and finally signed a declaration to that effect. The strike was broken and 177 Trotskyists remained alive. For two weeks they were kept in the same hospital cells. Then one night they were transferred to the lowest and most remote cells in the Solovky prison and were never heard of again.

After these real Trotskyists were liquidated, the prisoners were stirred up by another example of the inhuman brutality of Stalin's henchmen. In one of the wings of the third isolation prison, about two hundred young girls,

who had been high school scholars at Leningrad, were kept.

They were also alleged Trotskyists. These children had been brought to Solovky by aeroplane. The men who lived in the fortress occasionally had the chance to see these children, as they were led in groups, heads covered by hoods, to the fortress bath. These baths were built purposely inside the fortress, so that it would not be necessary to take the prisoners outside. These girls were from 14 to 17 years old. The prison guards and the attendants at the bath house were all men. The children were taken to the baths at night, and, as it became known later, this building was a place of unspeakable horrors and suffering for them. They were taken in groups of 40 or 50, as the bath house was small. They were met by intoxicated NKVD men and other representatives of the "revolutionary law". What they did to these children is hard for a normal person to imagine. All kinds of the most horrible rumours were circulated among the prisoners. It was known for certain that every time they were taken to the bath house, two or three dead bodies were brought to the prison morgue. The authorities gave the explanation that they were killed while attempting to escape. These children were treated so brutally, that when they were visited by Popov, they were so frightened that they did not dare tell him how they were used by the NKVD men.

How long this inhumanity and brutality would have continued, it is hard to tell. But in June, when the Arctic "white nights" began, a group of these little girls, led by a strong detachment of guards to the bath house, all at once tore off their hoods when they came to the central path, and, with hysterical cries and calls for help, ran in every direction. The shouting was so loud that all the prisoners were awakened and their faces could be seen at the barred windows. The guards began to shoot at the men in the windows and at the girls.

Then Ponamarev, the chief warden, and Trubetskoy, the commandant of the fortress, appeared. The little girls shouted with all the strength they had, about what had been

done to them in the bathhouse. Trubetskoy, crazy with rage, shouted, ordering them to keep quiet. One of the girls, evidently out of her mind, climbed on a tall ladder, and screamed with all the strength that was left in her. Then some guards ran to the ladder and pulled it down, with the girl still on it. In the meantime, the guards caught the rest of the girls took them back to the isolation wing of the prison. Ponamarev and Trubetskoy knew that all this might end badly for them, as they had enemies among other communist officials. A commission was sent to Solovky. The girls told the truth this time, but they did not say anything against Ponamarev and Trubetskoy. They did not give any evidence that these two had also taken part in the "heroic communist deeds" in the bath house.

Four men, all of them minor officials, were shot as a result of the investigation of the commission. So at least partial justice was meted out, but the root and source of the evil remained.