

PREFACE

In the lower reaches of the White Sea, in the latitude of Central Baffin Land, is a bleak little archipelago known as the Solovky or Solovetky Islands. Their isolation is absolute for most of the year, for from October until June they are cut off from the mainland by ice floes.

First colonized by monks in the fifteenth century, the area came under the rule of the Russian Tsars. With Ivan the Terrible, the lonely monastery became a place of confinement for exceptional offenders, who mouldered to death in black unventilated caves in its vast eastern wall. Abolished as a prison in 1905, the place of incarceration was restored in the early twenties by the Soviet government and placed under the control of the OGPU.

Only one man has ever escaped from Solovky. With that daring exception, its Arctic ramparts have never lost a prisoner. Some of its victims have, however, been transferred elsewhere after serving their term on the islands and have later managed to make their way to freedom. Among that number is S. O. Pidhainy, an innocent Ukrainian intellectual and author of the present book.

His story, told with simple veracity, reveals the existence in Soviet Russia of a system of slavery more vast, more brutal and more inhuman than any that history has known in the past. Merely to have survived from years of such suffering speaks much for the vitality of this Ukrainian writer. Every Canadian and American should read his chronicle in order to see the fate that the Kremlin and its North American agents have planned for the free world that we still possess.

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