ISLANDS OF DEATH

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TO MY FATHER

AND

ALL THOSE WHO DIED

AS HEROES ON SOLOVKY

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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INTRODUCTION

Any knowledge of life in Soviet Russia can only be gleaned from the limited accounts published in the daily newspapers, or from those who are brave enough to write truthfully of their own experiences.

I feel privileged in writing this introduction to Islands of Death, because I truly believe that it is only through books such as this, that the free people of the West will understand and appreciate the horror and menace of life under the Communists.

It must appear unbelievable that such a vast number of people would willingly submit to such conditions, but in this book you will read of the difficulty of avoiding a living death in the labour camps which are to be found throughout the U.S.S.R.

The worst of these camps have always been in the North, in or close to the Arctic Circle, and of these, the Solovky Islands Camp is known as one of the most horrible.

The Ukranians have always resisted Soviet domination and because of this resistance, thousands upon thousands of them have been forcibly placed in labour camps to serve terms of ten years or more. Under the conditions prevailing in these camps, a great percentage die and there is rarely an opportunity of any record being published to reveal the life they are forced to lead.

In this book, we have an exceptional account from a man now living in Canada, who, by his own efforts and courage, escaped from these horrors.

There is no doubt of the authenticity of this story, and the tragedy is, of course, that these conditions still exist today for hundreds of thousands of ordinary human beings in different parts of Russia and the countries which are occupied by the Communists.

We must fight this evil for the sake of humanity and I only hope that the message in this book, will be taken to heart by every freedom-loving man and woman.

IGOR GOUZENKO

CELL SIXTY-SEVEN

On January 17th three GPU guards were driving me to the place where true heroes had sacrificed their lives. Large flakes of snow were slowly settling on the ground and it seemed that we were driving just as slowly. When we arrived everyone was silent, as if standing over a grave, and it was not proper to speak. Feeling unconcerned, I got out a cigarette and began to smoke. With the cigarette, I was taken to the office of the commandant on duty, and was ordered to undress completely. They lifted my arms, put my feet apart, opened my mouth and generally made as thorough an examination of me as if I were a horse being sold at the market. Then I was ordered to dress, and two guards took me to cell sixty-seven and banged the door behind me. I lay down on the bed, smoked another cigarette and fell asleep. I slept restfully and in the morning I felt indifferent to everything. In this manner I began my adventures on Chernishevsky Street in 1933, the year that brought so much suffering to the Ukrainian people in Soviet Russia. Russia.

Cell sixty-seven was a fashionable dwelling. It had five beds, and the floor was inlaid. The beds had mattresses, blankets and even pillows.

The other inmates of the cell did not pay any attention to me that night, but in the morning they introduced themselves, and gave me instructions on how I should behave at the questioning. My fate depended on my behaviour at the examination, they said, and I would be either shot or left alive.

"Do not admit anything, even if the examining judge produces factual evidence. Do not admit anything for any price, and it will be easier for you", advised my companions. "Remember that the Bible says, 'Let thy words be few', warned Bondarenko, a man who gave an impression of honesty and kindliness. Before imprisonment he had been

chief of the planning section of the Department of Agriculture in Ukraine. I thanked my new friends for their advice and I wondered how fate would deal with me.

After a short time, the examining judge decided to call me forward and I was brought to him.

The NKVD at Chernishevski Street did not maltreat me physically. They had two separate treatments, one for educated people, and one for simple prisoners.

To break down educated men they used the more refined method. Such persons were kept on a very meagre diet. They were not allowed to sleep and to make sure that the prisoner did not fall asleep, an armed guard sat beside him. At the first sign of sleepiness the guard would either push his gun in the face of the prisoner, or hit his toes with the butt end. When the prisoner was on the verge of insanity and was beginning to have hallucinations, they showed him his crying wife and children in the distance.

The man was informed that unless he signed the confession prepared by the NKVD, his wife and children would be shot as well as himself. The examining judge then persuaded the prisoner that nothing could help him and no one could do anything for him, but if he signed the confession then everything would be all right.

Many a man could not stand such heavy pressure and methods, and with a mind half-crazed from lack of sleep and fear for loved ones, would sign the fatal paper. Now the examinging judge would suddenly change his manner and treat him as if he were a bosom friend. He would put a cigarette in his mouth and give him water with his own hands. Then he would be taken to his cell where he would fall on the bad and sleep.

On awakening he would try to remember what took place. Realizing what he had done, he would cry, beat the wall with head and fists, call the examining judge names that are not in the dictionary and demand an attorney. From such behaviour the NKVD would conclude that this man deserved different treatment. After gagging and tying him they would drag him from the fashionable cell to the

cellar, where the common people were imprisoned. To teach him a lesson and to equalize the treatment of prisoners, he would be beaten and a few teeth knocked out. In this way an educated man would be made conscious of his privileges and duties.

I escaped all these experiences at Kharkiv NKVD but I saw how other inmates of my cell were tortured and forced to sign confessions. However, I was not allowed to sleep for two days because for some reason the examining judge thought that my name, Pidhainy, was a pseudonym and demanded my real name. During these two sleepless nights I was expected to recall to memory my real name. However the judge found in my file, among the reports of informers, that my father, also named Pidhainy, had been shot by the communists in 1922. He was pleased with his finding, and remarked that "evidently, the apple didn't roll far from the tree. The father was a bandit and the son is the same".

I kept silent.

"Were you a member of a comsomol (a society of communist youth)? I know that you were not a member of a comsomol. You were afraid that your 'proletarian' origin would be discovered", said the examiner sarcastically.

"Don't you worry, GPU (later NKVD, still later MVD) knows everything. It knows all that is in the air, on the earth and three metres under the earth."

I reverently bent my head to show that I was convinced that GPU was omniscient.

After that the examiner began to lecture me on the communist fight with the Ukrainian counter-revolutionary movement. From his speech I formed the impression that my examiner knew nothing about the Ukrainian struggle, had no facts to accuse me of anything, and was not very smart after all.

At the end of the conversation I was persuaded that I was lacking in appreciation of his craftiness. He declared that he intended to arrest all readers and subscribers of Ukrainian Communist journals then printed in Ukraine.

He mentioned the journal "Ukraine" a (scientific and historical journal of the Ukrainian Academy of Science), "Life and Revolution", and "The Prolitfront". He said that he would also arrest all those who agreed with the outstanding Ukrainian Soviet writer Sosiura. The magistrate said that Wolodka Sosiura had himself confessed that he had two souls; one that of a Ukrainian Communist, and the other of a Ukrainian nationalist.

"You are a historian and a marxist and probably you agree with Sosiura?" he inquired. I answered him that I did not agree with Sosiura but with Pidhainy.

"Sosiura at least fought in the Red army, but your father fled to the forest." I did not answer him.

Suddenly he said to me, "Do you think that GPU shot the army commander Tyutyunnyk?" I said that it did not make any difference to me, and did not say anything more. The examining judge told me that I was to be sent to another place where I would become more talkative. That was all.

A week later I left fashionable cell sixty-seven. I was leaving a sobbing Bondarenko, aforementioned chief of the planning section of the Department of Agriculture. He had advised me not to sign, but had signed himself. He was crying quietly and wringing his hands, all the time looking wildly at the grating of the window. He did not become insane. Bondarenko was shot fully aware of what was taking place and bravely facing his torturers. One of my former inmates of cell sixty-seven told me this later.

I was taken from Chernishevski Street to the station in the black police truck, which was called the "Black Crow".

On the train four guards cleared one compartment of Soviet citizens who were not yet arrested. They ordered me to lie on the middle shelf in the compartment and prohibited me to move in any way.

I lay on my shelf and the guards took turns sleeping. Late at night I asked the guard to take me to the washroom. He consented and appeared to be very friendly and considerate, and told me that he sympathized with me. In the

washroom he said that I was being taken to the GPU at the city of Rostov. If I would like to send a few words to my family he would be very glad to drop it in the mail box for me.

I was impressed and thought that even among the guards of the GPU there were good kindly men. In the meantime the guard gave me a piece of paper and a pencil. I wrote three short innocent sentences and signed my name. We shook hands and marched back to our compartment.

"This is evidently an important bird", I heard from among the passengers as I climbed to my shelf again. I liked the remark.

I smoked my clay pipe and thought about my family, and about the landlady, evil Palageia Lukianovna, who was threatening to throw my family from her dwelling. They had no means of livelihood as the country was being ravaged by a famine organized in Ukraine by Stalin. I thought about all that I had left behind at Kharkiv but I did not think at all about what was awaiting me at Rostov.

"Get up!" came the order.

All the passengers had already left the cars. On the station platform I was met by four guards of the Rostov GPU. One of them ordered me to follow him. We were passing by the side doors, but crowds of people were everywhere and they watched us with interest. It looked imposing indeed.

I am a man of small stature and thin, but I was guarded by eight well-fed husky guards. One preceded me and seven followed, all with guns ready.

"Yes, I appear to be an important bird", thought I, and in a few moments was climbing into the 'Black Crow'. They brought me to a door and ordered me to enter. As I stepped over the threshold my hat fell off and I thought it was a bad omen. I picked it up and followed the guard, entering a small room. The guards banged the door and went away laughing. My cell was a small toilet room with ruined pipes. The floor was covered with ice and everything was extremely cold. I thought that they had put me in that

cell just temporarily as they probably did not know where to place me.

Only a very naive man could think so. I spent three days in that room. Three times someone asked from behind the door, "Any complaints?" and immediately left. At first I thought about the fashionable cell at Kharkiv, but at the end of the second day I could not think. At the end of the third day I was lying on the floor in a high fever. When the governor of the GPU jail came, I told him in a voice weak from hunger and cold, "Better shoot me. I can't stand it any longer".

"But you can do this, can't you?" shouted the governor, and pushed in front of my face the letter which I had written in the train and given to the guard to mail to my family. I was silent. Everything was clear.

Indeed as the Marxian doctrine (widely quoted in Soviet Russia) states, "The condition of existence determines the character of thinking". The governor went away. I remained, with the thought that I would be left to die in the ice-cold toilet room. I was again mistaken.

His excellency governor Kukushkin granted me his forgiveness and ordered me transferred to cell fifty-four.

CELL FIFTY-FOUR

Cell fifty-four with its iron bedsteads (no mattresses or blankets), automatic locks, dirty floor, and stinking pail for the necessities of nature, seemed to me to be a first class apartment. All this I noticed a little later. Entering the room I looked for the radiator, and without paying any attention to anyone went over to it. I leaned over it, enjoying the little heat it had. I embraced and caressed it as if it were someone I loved dearly. My fingers were twisted from cold and my whole body was numb.

It took at least an hour before I began to pay any attention to the other men in the cell. I think I looked rather queer as no one in the cell had disturbed me.

"How wonderful it is in your cell", were my first words, and the rest of the men laughed.

"You are right, comrade. It is so quiet here that soon we will howl like dogs.

"Do not complain", said another.

I sided with the second man and told them about the guard who was so interested in my family, about the letter and my three days in the small toilet room with frozen pipes.

I spent the whole night against the radiator and if I had had at least 100 grams (about 3½ ounces) of bread I would have felt that I was the happiest man on earth. In the morning I was given 200 grams of bread (the kind they used to give to prisoners in jail in 1933), and some hot water. After breakfast I felt so well that I began to approach that stage of well-being when a person is ready to forgive anyone anything. Suddenly the lock clicked and the governor entered the cell. This was the same man that yesterday had pushed my letter to my family in my face.

All my colleagues jumped up and stood at attention. I tried to do the same, but probably did not do it very well, as the governor asked me in a hoarse sneering voice, "How are you now?"

Standing at attention, I thanked "the citizen commander". He grunted with approval, and went away banging the door behind him.

"How did you come to know him?" my inmates asked. "This Kukushkin is a dog." I explained that this was the man who had kept me in the frozen toilet room for three days.

"Well comrade, you're lost. He won't leave you alone" concluded Hastings. Hastings was an Englishman, a former commercial traveller for a large trade company. He called it "The New Russian Company".

After the visit of Kukushkin I acquainted myself with the other prisoners As it appeared, all who were confined to cell fifty-four, without exception, were charged with spying against Soviet Russia.

Hastings was charged with spying for England. Engineer Rem, a Ukrainian Belgian who had worked at Donbas, was accused of spying for France, Kelerman, a German pastor from the German communities on the Don River, was charged with spying for Germany. Lastly an old peasant from the province of Podilia was there for spying in the service of Rumania.

Among all these "traitors" (as I learned later) I alone was imprisoned for a supposed political crime.

I was not accused of spying, but was charged with taking part in a secret organization which worked for the destruction of communist rule in Ukraine and in Kuban Cossack Country (North Caucasus), by organizing an insurrection. The purpose of the organization was to establish a Ukrainian Capitalistic People's Republic.

In spite of the fact that I was a "criminal" of ideological character and not a "spy" as my other colleagues, I was treated with the utmost severity. I was put on a reduced ration and prohibited to correspond with or to see my family. Although many food parcels were sent to my colleagues they very rarely received them. This was in accordance with the campaign organized to keep food away from Ukrainians during the Soviet organized artificial famine of

1933. This famine was created by the Russian Communists in a move to suppress the resistance of the Ukrainian population to the Soviets. It has gone down in history as the most cruel, unnecessary, and not-to-be-forgotten story of inhumanity yet heard of.

After my meagre breakfast, I left the radiator and decided to occupy the fifth iron bedstead. All of them were locked for the day. Only now, I noticed that the fifty-fourth cell had millions of bedbugs and cockroaches. They were yellow and black varieties, and had long feelers.

The door had a small opening with a cover. A guard in felt shoes silently marched up and down the corridor every two minutes. He would come to the door, open the cover and look in the cell. This happened regularly. The cover made a grating sound every time the guard moved it. Engineer Rem could not stand this noise after five months, and stopped his ears with cotton. I could stand it, but at times it got on my nerves too.

All my companions were of refined, quiet natures. I liked the German Protestant pastor especially. He looked at everything from the religious point of view. He was unmarried and his niece brought him something every Saturday.

The pastor's situation was tragic. Every Saturday he shortened his belt. Originally he had been a stout man, but was now losing weight rapidly.

"You know, the examining judge told me that he would make me look as thin as a pencil", said the pastor once. "I think that I really will look like a pencil soon", he added with sadness.

Once weekly we were given the newspaper "Pravda". The pastor and I read it but the rest did not want to.

"Read it", advised the pastor. "The government gives it to you with the charitable idea that you hardened counter-revolutionaries will be able to understand your sins and confess them before Kukushkin as soon as possible", he added sarcastically.

"I have nothing to confess", answered Rem with irritation.

"Think it over", said the pastor sternly, imitating the examining judge.

"I have thought it over for eight months."

"Young man, what is eight months in comparison with eternity?"

"I read 'Pravda' with pleasure", continued the pastor. "When I read it I always recall the customs of the old German prisons. In those times the prisoners were not made to build canals, railroads or factories. They were expected to repent, read sacred books and sing psalms. Those who showed the most enthusiasm for these exercises were released from the jail sooner than the others. This caused the whole jail population to fill the neighbourhood with unearthly noises and singing from morning to night Thieves, murderers and the rest of the inmates would try to show their repentance by singing religious songs at the top of their voices.

Not very far from one of these jails lived Immanuel Kant, the famous philosopher. When his nerves couldn't stand any more of this kind of "religious" singing, he attacked the German government, demanding that this method of reforming prisoners should be stopped. In this he was successful. However, as we see, this ancient custom has been called to life again in Soviet Russian prisons, where prisoners are urged to repentance by government newspapers like 'Pravda'."

I always laughed at these historical excursions of the pastor, but he himself remained serious.

"It was in reading the newspaper 'Pravda'," he continued, "that I found the reason for my arrest. The reason is not only in the fact that I am a pastor and therefore 'opium for the people' from the point of view of the Soviet government. It is not because I am a spy. I never was one and never will be. The real reason is altogether different. It is because my way of thinking is radically different from that of Russian Communists."

"Look at what is written here."

The article had the heading "Machines, horses and men".

"Do you understand it?" continued the pastor. "In the first place are machines, in the second place are horses and men are at the end. To me this goes against the grain. All my life I have put men first, animals second, and machines last."

"Quiet, father!" warned the peasant Mykyta.

"Have they brought anything?" inquired the pastor, turning.

"Someone is at the door", said Mykyta. The pastor, as usual came quickly to the door to see who it was, and found a guard with the pail of slops that constituted the food for the "animals".

"What is it today?"

"Fish" answered the pastor.

This 'fish' was warm dirty water with a number of rusted smelly heads from salted herrings. We were given about one pint each. The pastor always asked the guards to give us more of the fishbones. The guard always cursed us, called us gluttons, and, except on very rare occasions, gave us less than was due to us.

When we received less than we expected we all turned against the pastor, calling him an old tactless priest, and he, with a guilty look, would go to his corner.

"I cannot understand it", he said. "Do they grudge us that which no other creature will eat?"

"It is possible that they have orders to refuse it. Their service in the police demands it. I served too and I know the rules", said Mykyta.

At that point Rem could not control himself any longer.

"Rules! Orders!" he shouted. "It does not make any difference to you what kind of order you are under. You will sell one another, eat human flesh, die from starvation, but none of you would ever dare hit the 'citizen governor' on the snout."

"There you are mistaken, for I myself threw a police

inspector from a carriage into a ravine during the revolution", Mykyta defended himself.

"That shows that you were an idiot", Hasting joined the conversation. "If that pre-revolutionary police inspector was still with us, you would sit together with your wife Hapka and would eat curd-dumplings. You would not need to try to run away to Rumania in search of food."

Whenever the conversation took an antagonistic turn, the pastor would say a few pacifying words and we would all sit together around the table to eat from the common pan.

While we ate we watched one another to make sure that everyone dipped his spoon in at the same time as the rest. Everyone was afraid to miss his portion and we all ate as if under command. When we had swallowed the water and chewed the fish bones, we sat around the table as hungry as before. Usually at this time someone would begin to tell stories.

More often than anyone else Hastings would talk about his adventures when he was a commercial traveller. His trade company, with headquarters in the city of Novorossisk, was one of the largest of its kind.

He always spoke with enthusiasm and interest. The expression of his face would change and his voice would rise and fall. The subjects of his stories were always about his meetings with different kinds of people, most often with representatives of large industrial and commercial firms in Europe. He told about sumptuous dinners, where many delicious courses and wines were served; wines that were one hundred or even two hundred years old—that did not pour from bottles but slowly flowed out. There were stories of commercial secrets, and of beautiful chorus girls and their love of money, and the great delights they had with them.

Then there were sweets from the ends of the earth, fruit of all kinds, and cigars whose smoke alone would lull and soothe a person. Rem's eyes shone while Hastings told his stories and everyone listened with attention. For some reason I watched how the yellow and black cockroaches

fought for the smallest bits of bread that fell on the floor from our table as I listened.

Peasant Mykyta always doubted. Every time Hastings finished his stories he would come to me and say, "I do not think they would receive even a Czar that way. By God, he lies, as only a landowner's soul can lie."

Once, during the "blissful" after-dinner time, evidently to revenge himself on Hastings, Mykyta began to tell his story. He showed himself to be a good artist, skilfully imitating the mannerisms of Hastings in story telling.

Mykyta closed his eyes in the same way, raised, lowered, and changed the tone of his voice, in much the same way as Hastings but his subject was different. He told how he and his godfather Trochym had once enticed, killed and eaten the bitch of a local chief of police at Ozeriany. He spoke slowly, describing how hard it was to entice the bitch as she was not hungry.

They were finally lucky enough to lure her into a shed and put a lasso around her neck. Then she was at their mercy. It took only half an hour to kill, skin and dress the carcass. After cutting it in pieces they took the meat to the hut of Trochym to fry. The bitch was fat and the meat was very delicious with salt, pepper, and onion sprinkled on it, described Mykyta with enthusiasm.

Hastings listened to the story with a sour expression on his face. The pastor remarked with a sigh as was his custom, that, as far as they were concerned any kind of bitch — lean or fat — would be welcome for dinner. All of us agreed at that juncture that we would eat anything offered us with the exception of wood. Peasant Mykyta's appetite was stimulated so much by his own story, that he seriously asked us, "If a man ate wood, would he die?"

Being told that such was indeed the case, he looked regretfully at the bars which kept him from an opportunity to steal and eat more police bitches.

So our day passed, monotonous and depressing. Outside the cell someone shouted, someone called, and then suddenly all was quiet. Someone was dragged and as he was dragged

we could hear his death-rattle. Somewhere locks rustled, someone struggled, groaned, and again everything was quiet. Only the guard was there quietly passing the door of the cell, regularly opening and closing the cover of the eye hole.

Then suddenly, "Who is on 'P'?" asked the guard through the hole.

"Pidhainy".

"Get ready".

My first examining judge in the Rostov GPU when I was brought to him, began his conversation with a lecture on the principles of proletarian morality and ethics. He showed me my ill-fated letter to my family as proof of my enmity to the proletariat, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. He talked long about the faithfulness and incorruptibility of GPU personnel.

I listened, but said nothing.

Then he began to speak about the history of the counter-revolution on the Kuban, the motherland of the famous Kuban Cossacks.

The judge then asked me if there was a large Ukrainian population on the Kuban. I told him that it should amount to at least 70% of the whole population.

My answer brought the crisis. The examining judge became red faced, called me all kinds of unprintable names and promised to get even with me. In his rage he hit the table with his fist and demanded that I remember that there were no Ukrainians on the Kuban.

"Kuban", he shouted, "belongs to Russia. There are some saboteurs, bandits, and followers of Petlura there, and you are one of them. You are demoralizing good people. And all this pestilence comes from Ukraine, Kiev and Kharkiv."

It is necessary to say that the examining judge was well informed about the events that took place on Kuban. He personally took part in the devastation of Kuban by the Soviet Russian army in 1922, when tens of thousands of Kuban Cossacks were shot during May and June, in the

time of the so-called "Red terror" which was proclaimed by Moscow.

I did not like this first conversation with the Rostov examiner. I again recalled that my hat had fallen off when I stepped over the threshold of this unforgettable institution at Engels Street.

The questioning continued in the "normal" way. At first I was not allowed to sleep as they called me for questioning all night through. First they called me at half-past eleven. (Our beds were unlocked at ten o'clock and locked up again at 7 in the morning. During the day the guards did not allow anyone to sleep, even in a sitting position).

At the first interview the examining judge would ask, "Are you ready to confess?"

"No" would be my answer.

"Take the prisoner back."

The guards would take me back. But after an hour I was again called up to the examiner. This was kept up through the night.

Or they would use the method (known to me from Kharkiv) of keeping their victim awake all night. The guards changed at certain times, but I was left to stand, till one of the examining wardens would shout, "Take away this scarecrow," and the guards would take me away.

On the whole, the examiners at Rostov were more temperamental and energetic men; men with southern blood. This helped them a great deal to make up a case against the counter-revolutionary organization called the "Union of Ukraine and Kuban". To this organization GPU joined all those arrested in Northern Caucasus, and all that had any connection at all with the question of the Ukrainian National minority in USSR.

However this affair was not developing as fast as was desired by the examining judges, and they became irritated at my obstinacy.

"Why is it so hard for you to do what you are told?" the judge asked me on several occasions.

"Sign the confession and don't play for time. In any

event your case is lost. We are the authority and you are in our hands. We can do anything we please with you. No-one in the whole wide world can help you. Your song is finished. You are in our power and must trust us and do as we tell you."

I kept silent. After these "friendly" conversations I was whipped, beaten and thrown out of the examiner's room. Then the guard would drag me back to my cell.

The more one advances in some matters the more obstacles one has to overcome. After some time I was not able to walk, and two guards, ironically called "archangels", had to drag me to the examiner. The jail physician gave me permission to lie down, not only at night, but during the daytime also. It was impossible not to allow me this, as I could neither sit nor stand.

Most jails are places of suffering. Soviet jails intensified this suffering a hundred times. And while normally the jail serves to protect society from the criminal element, Soviet jails served to protect the ruling criminal clique from any citizens who showed signs of dissatisfaction with their rule, or were suspected of entertaining such feelings.

Cell fifty-four, and millions of other cells throughout the Socialist Fatherland had only one task. That task was to destroy a man morally and spiritually, and if not to kill him outright, at least to make him physically incapable of resistance.

We were all doomed to die, but longed to live. For some time now I had been living on sheer willpower alone. I would say to myself, "Today is the 27th, will I be alive on the 1st of next month?" And I would use all my willpower to remain alive till the 1st. After the 1st, I would concentrate on living another five days. When they were up and I was still alive, I concentrated on the next week, and so on. This was the only idea that ruled my mind and kept me alive.

The questioning continued relentlessly.

On April 30th during a dark and stormy night, when it seemed the wind and rain would shake even our jail, the

guards pushed into our cell, a man with the facial features of a Mongol. I alone was not sleeping as I had a bad toothache. My teeth had began to loosen, and to fall out.

He threw his bag down, came to the centre of the cell, and turned to me asking, "Are you ill?"

I told him that I had a bad toothache but otherwise was not ill.

"Why then, do you look so emaciated?"

I told him that this was the result of starvation. He looked with apprehension at my skeleton Out of his bag he took a loaf of bread and two herrings. These he put in front of me on the bed.

"Eat it", he said, "but not all at once, otherwise you will die. It is all for you."

I looked at the bread — real rye bread, at the herrings, and at this man of Mongolia, whom I had never seen before. I put his gift on the table and thanked him, but remarked that although he appeared to be a very good man, he appeared to be just as naive. I said that he forgot the fact that in a short time he would be reduced to my condition and perhaps worse, and I refused to accept his gift. Then he shook my hand, and we became fast friends.

He was a Calmuck by the name of Kushlinov. In 1920 he had emigrated to Czechoslovakia with his parents, and lived in Prague.

He graduated from college there, and became a teacher in the only Calmuck high school in Czechoslovakia. About a year ago he had returned to USSR with a few students to build an "Independent Calmuck Socialist Republic".

This was my first acquaintance with western Europe. Kushlinov could tell me truthfully and without fear about the life of the European people. He could say whether it was really rotting away, or if it had bright prospects for the future.

Somehow it was easy for us to understand one another. With this Asiatic I had many things in common. We had a common jail. My people, as well as his, were being persecuted and exploited by the Russians. He loved his people

and dreamed of their liberation, of a free life for this small peace-loving nation of shepherds in their steppes. Kushlinov told us about the Calmucks and about Europe. He left Europe, because western Europe always stressed that he, as an Asiatic, belonged to a lower race. When he went to a store, they tried to sell him the worst cuts, and joked that they were sorry they did not have any horse meat for him. When he was buying bread, they would try to sell him stale bread. When he would enter a restaurant, waiters would disregard him. The people would watch how he ate and acted. It was no wonder that he had become easy prey for communist propaganda, and returned to Soviet Russia with a few of his students to form a Calmuck Socialist Republic. Accused of spying for Czechoslovakia, he and his friends were arrested and sent to Leningrad. From the jail in Leningrad, they were sent to Rostov.

Kushlinov did not regret leaving Europe, but he was sorry that his honest and hardworking nation was perishing in Russia because the civilized world had forgotten them as well as other unfortunate nations under the Russian heel, and had consented that they be left for the Russians. He cursed Communists and Russian Imperialists. Often I asked him to tell us about Calmuck customs, religion and life. He was always ready to share with us all his knowledge of the Calmuck people and his eyes would shine, and his voice become tense when he told us about his people. We all listened with great interest to this Asiatic educated in Europe. (Kushlinov was condemned to ten years hard labour in slave camps, as I learned later while serving my term at Solovky Island.)

Everything continued without much change. Brutal examinations and starvation were our daily fate. I was losing strength quickly in spite of the fact that I ate Kushlinov's loaf of bread myself, as he only pretended to eat his share. The guards had to carry me in for questioning. Finally I had the honour to be questioned by the chief representative of the North Caucasian GPU, comrade Yevdokimov.

I noticed that when he saw me he was surprised. Evidently he was expecting to see a very strong and powerful man. Instead he met an emaciated young man about 25 years old, with a beard.

He turned away from me and began talking into space. He said it was necessary that I confess, as my confession was necessary for the welfare of the proletarian revolution, and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and as a Soviet person I should confess.

I answered him, "It is indeed a very sad affair for the proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat if the whole future of the proletarian revolution depends on my confession."

He took my answer as an offence and said, "Our reports that you sucked in counter-revolutionary ideas with your mother's milk are evidently true. The only thing you are good for is to be shot."

I answered that there was no need to shoot me, as I was going to die soon in any case.

Yevdokimov ordered me taken away.

During one whole week I was kept in suspense, expecting the execution. In Rostov GPU, men were taken for execution, not only from the death cells, but from all the cells. It was hard to know who was "mortal" and would be taken to be shot, and who was "immortal" and would be allowed to live for some time longer.

We knew by certain signs when a man was taken to be shot. In such cases the cell was entered at night by Kukushkin himself, and instead of two guards he had four. The prisoner was order to get up quickly and follow him, still undressed and leaving his shoes behind him. This always took place between two and four a.m.

One night I heard the drunken Kukushkin and his retinue of four above my ear. I got up and asked if I was to go "without shoes".

He knew what I meant and said, grinning, "Yes, go without shoes". All my friends immediately got up and sat on their beds.

"Lie down" commanded Kukushkin, and they all lay down again.

"Hurry up, hurry up". I stepped into my rubbers, and throwing a coat over my shoulders, said "goodbye" to my friends in the cell.

For the first time in three months I could walk without the help of the guards. But still, two guards held my arms firmly.

Strength returned to my feet as I walked, and I thought, "This is the end".

Suddenly my heart was filled with a deep grief. With all my being I wanted to live and to pray to God. Why I wanted to pray I do not know, but with great intensity of feeling I began to repeat, "I believe in the only God" . . . It was all I could remember. I had forgotten the rest of the prayer long ago, so I continued to repeat these few words over and over again.

It seemed to me that we walked through all eternity. We passed corridors I had never seen before, went through a basement, climbed up some stairs, then down again, and finally stood in front of a door.

Kukushkin knocked and I was taken into a small room. In a corner sat one of my examining judges. He smiled pleasantly at me, greeted me politely by my first name and that of my father, (as is the custom in the Ukraine), and asked my forgiveness for disturbing me at such a late hour. He asked me to sign a paper stating that I had received the charges the GPU had made against me.

The paper stated that I was hereby informed that I was being accused of taking part in the counter-revolutionary organization "Union of Ukraine and Kuban". After I signed the receipt the examining judge apologised once more, and wishing me good night, ordered me taken back to the cell. Two guards grasped my arms again and I walked back, but Kukushkin and the two other guards remained with the examiner.

When I was pushed into the cell and the door had banged shut, all my friends surrounded me. They shook my

hand, greeted me, and were very happy. They foretold that now I would not be shot. The pastor added that he thought that I would come out of jail alive and well.

I was happy beyond measure and could not sleep, walking the cell all night. My friends tried to persuade me to lie down, but I couldn't till they forced me to. Then I fell asleep and slept all the next day. Awakening I planned to live again by will power, but now I concentrated on keeping alive in stretches of three days at a time and not five.

One morning the guards took Hastings somewhere for examination. Next day they came and took away his belongings. Peasant Mykyta was also taken away with his belongings. This meant that he most likely was transferred somewhere, if not shot.

The pastor, Kushlinov, Rem, and myself were the only ones left in the cell. One day we were surprised by an unexpected event. The small opening in the door through which we received our food, opened, and Kukushkin put his head through and shouted, "This is for Pidhainy". Then he pulled his head back and poured about two pounds of dry bread on the floor from a bag, banging the little door he went away. We were all surprised and myself most of all. We looked at the crumbs of dry bread and did not know what to think. Finally the pastor said that "every gift is a blessing".

I told them to gather the bread and put it on the table, and we all sat around. The bread was not only stale, but covered with mould. There were pieces of bread of all kinds in the pile. Some were made with corn, some with bark, others with rye, coffee leaves, etc.

We wondered what had happened to Kukushkin. Why had this contemptible creature, a real henchman of the Soviet Union, and a brute of the highest order, made such a present and especially to me? Yesterday he was ready to torture and kill me without mercy and today he brings all these pieces of bread, left to the GPU by the labourers and peasants they had shot. These were workers and peasants who had supported the revolution against the Czar, now

had become victims of revolution. We never learned the meaning of Kukushkin's gift and we did not have the time for philosophizing. We asked the guard for some hot water, and with the hot water, the mouldy pieces of bread, and the salt, we started a feast. First we wished eternal peace to those who left the pieces of bread, brought to us by their murderers.

"You know what", said Rem, "When Kukushkin could not get permission to send a bullet through the back of your head, he decided to keep you alive with the thought that this life will become so unbearable to you that you will commit suicide".

"If that is the case", I answered, "Kukushkin will be terribly disappointed as I haven't the slightest intention of dying".

When I went to sleep that night, I thought, "Is it possible that for a moment, that beast can have become a man, or after drinking a quart of vodka, does he regret his moment of weakness in giving these crumbs of bread to a counter-revolutionist who, for some reason, escaped death at his hands?"

This act of Kukushkin remained a mystery for us, just as much a mystery as his dark, drunken, brutal soul.

Two weeks after this incident, the guards came, took my belongings, and dragged me through the corridors. I recalled that this was the very same way I was brought to cell fifty-four. We passed the doors of the ice-room in which I had spent three miserable days, then stepped over the threshold where the hat had fallen off my head.

SPECIAL TAGANROG CORPS OF GPU

I took my hat off, and waved it in farewell to the Rostov GPU Corps and all its horrors. The doors of the "Black Crow" opened and I was dragged inside. Seated on the bench with me were two guards of the GPU. The "Black Crow" moved on. The guards smoked silently till it became stifling. Added to this discomfort was the fact that I didn't know where they were taking me, or why.

In cell thirteen where I was unloaded I found that I was in the special Taganrog Corps of GPU.

The mighty hand of GPU was removing me farther and farther from the centre, and I found that the farther from the centre were the jails of GPU, the more brutal and inhuman were its agents. The condition of the prisons was primitive beyond imagination and the regime as a rule, was wild, cruel, and without restraint.

Cell thirteen and all the dungeons of the Taganrog GPU were situated in deep cellars, where no ray of sun could penetrate. These cellars were built in the time of the Russian Czar Alexander I, whose reign was infamous for the brutalities of police chief Arakcheev. The architects of those days had not planned the buildings for the use of the present day GPU, but the GPU found them perfectly suitable for its purposes.

Taganrog had very few buildings for the GPU, and as a result there was a lack of space. The prisoners could not lie down, and had standing room only in most of the cells.

When I was thrown into the cell, a place to sit was found for me, only because I was not able to stand.

My situation was now improving. I was informed that the investigation of my case had been completed, and my case sent to the Moscow GPU for a decision. All I had to do was wait. In the meantime my wife was able to secure permission to see me. The meeting took place in the presence of the examining judge. We did not know what

would be safe for us to talk about, and the time allowed us was very short. Taking leave of me my wife told me that on May 13, Mykola Khvyliovy, a famous Ukrainian Soviet writer had shot himself, and on the 7th of July, Nicolas Scrypnyk, Minister of Education of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic had also committed suicide.

This news gave me to understand what took place when one was "at liberty". I wanted to live, but lost my interest in that kind of "liberty". Better to be in jail, as an open enemy of Russian Communism, than to be free, and forced to serve them in daily fear and uncertainty.

Cell thirteen was filled with representatives of various minorities in the USSR. There were Kuban Cossacks, Don Cossacks, Greeks and Armenians, but there were no Russians. Most of them were peasants and city labourers. In this cell I alone represented the intelligentsia. Due to this fact, I was the one called to decide any contentions that arose in the cell, and my decisions were considered final.

At times, some of the Cossacks would discuss Lafaki, one of the Greek prisoners.

"How is it that Lafaki is not tired of telling lies?"

At this, Lafaki felt that he was being mortally offended, called the Cossack a "cock", and said that all Cossacks were bandits and horse thieves. He said that it was only due to the Greek population that it was possible to live without danger in such cities as Taganrog or Mariupol. The Cossacks took up the argument and called all Greeks "frog-eaters". The Greeks accused the Cossacks of their ignorance of frogs, fish or anything good in general. Finally an Armenian said that only French people and possibly Calmucks eat frogs. In this way the bantering disagreement would die out.

Lafaki was unperturbed. In a short time he would start another argument. He was persuaded that he was the only one in the jail without reason to be there. All the rest had evidently done something bad for which they had been arrested.

Every morning he would say, "I think I will be released

to-day". He thought a great deal of himself and asserted that a person with his training and ability should not be kept in jail. As an architect he took the credit for all the new buildings in the city of Taganrog. If there was any discussion about Taganrog, he would shout, "Ask Lafaki, ask Lafaki". The other Greeks smiled at Lafaki, and serious Endeka called him a priest's bell-ringer. Lafaki would answer that grandchildren are not responsible for the crimes of their grandfathers. (His grandfather was a priest, and had been defrocked for his revolutionary activities.)

On the whole, Lafaki's talkative nature was the only diversion the prisoners had, and his arguments and complaints kept their minds off the inhuman existance they led, at least for a while

Among the prisoners was an old and emaciated Cossack labourer from a Don Collective state farm.

In the same building but in another cell, two of his sons were imprisoned. Fedko was 13 years old, and Pavlusha was eleven years old. The father was accused by the GPU of poisoning twenty horses which belonged to the state farm, with arsenic.

The two sons witnessed against their father, saying that they had seen him take the capsules given to him for his sick wife, and strew them over the feed for the horses. The father denied everything.

The children were well fed by the examining judge and given candies.

One day the guards unexpectedly pushed both children into our cell. On seeing them the father rushed to them with anger, but was held back and made to sit down. Then he began to cry like a small child.

"My little children, my falcons, my cursed children, why did you betray your father?" he cried hysterically.

The boys wept. They told their father that he need not be afraid. They said that the examining judge himself told them that they would be sent away from the accursed state

farm and that he swore that their father would not be punished at all. All he wanted to know was the truth. The boys then told the judge that they had seen their father strewing something over the feed for the horses.

The father was almost insane. Two hours later he was called to the examining judge. Downcast he pushed his way among the sitting and standing prisoners to the door. There he halted.

"Goodbye, children, I forgive you everything, my sons".

"Hey you! Do not stop for any farewells. Move on quickly." shouted the guard.

At night the father was pushed back into the cell half naked. The sight was so horrible and repulsive that it was hard to describe.

The man stood in underpants alone and with his boots on.

He shouted, "Lice!"

All those who were near the door rushed away from him. The prisoners made space near the pail for the natural necessities.

"Stand here" ordered Endeka. "Help gather the lice off him."

Then with the help of Endeka and two others, the two sons of the unhappy man began to pick the lice from him and throw them into the pail.

"It is impossible! It's ridiculous! Bang on the door! There are millions of lice." shouted Lafaki. Indeed it was impossible to take all the lice off him, and we had to bang on the door and shout.

Everyone stepped back as we saw the shower of lice that fell on the floor from the body of the labourer from the collective farm. He was in agony from bites all over his naked body. Blood flowed freely from open cuts and scratches on his skin.

There was not a spot on him which was not covered by lice stuck firmly to the skin. They were of all sizes and without number. Finally, hearing our noise and banging, the commandant of the jail came with a few guards.

"Idiots!" shouted the jail warden. "Did I not order you to take this scarecrow to the bath, and not to the cell?"

They took the man away. Late at night they brought him back dressed in rags taken from some men who had been shot earlier. All the hair on his body was shaved off, and the body covered with iodine. Moving slowly, he entered the cell and fell down. The prisoners moved to allow him space to lie down.

"Where did he get the lice?" was the question.

This was an exclusive method of questioning at Taganrog GPU. Other Soviet jails did not use this method to extract confession. Taganrog GPU had a special room in the cellar, where they kept a proper temperature and humidity. This room was isolated and filled with lice. The prison, its inmates, guards, and even the examining judges were infested with the parasites. So it was no problem at all to fill the room with millions of lice. The most obstinate prisoners were thrown into that room. Many became insane having been in it only a very short time. Some ended their lives right there by breaking their heads on the walls of the cellar. No one could stay there longer than a day. In that same room, our unfortunate man who kept silent and would not admit the accusation of GPU, suffered untold agonies.

Two days later he was shot. They gave his sons the worn boots of their father and pushed them out of the jail into the streets. It was the year of famine, and the children knew that they would die of starvation. They stood near the prison gates and begged, this time not for their father, but to be allowed to live in the jail. They knew that their father had been shot. In this way they sat near the gates of the jail for three days. Some of the guards allowed the children to come into the jail yard. The man who cleaned the primitive outhouses in the jail yard and who lived in the cellar of the jail, gave them shelter. The children sold their

father's boots to the man in charge of the bath-house for two rations of bread. They were later seen helping the cleaner to empty the pails from the outhouses.

Slowly our cell was emptied of its inmates. The prisoners were sent to their final destinations or shot. Every day men were called forward "with belongings". At the end only three men were left in our cell, Cossack Michailenko, Lafaki and myself. Originally the cell was built for four men, but on my coming it contained about thirty prisoners.

Lafaki was sad and depressed. From time to time he would say "Rabble! Liars! Speculators! I, an enemy? Idiots! I, a poor Greek, an enemy!"

Finally I was transferred also. I was moved to cell ninety-eight. It was a bright and dry cell, located on the third floor. This "comfortable" cell also had its share of vermin.

I was alone. After such a long time in a crowd, with no privacies whatever, I was happy to be alone in this cell. One morning the lock clanged, and a beautiful girl entered my cell. Whether she was in reality beautiful, I do not know. But she seemed to me to be so. I still remember her. She had blue eyes, golden hair and she looked so sympathetic and childish. She kept herself official and businesslike. She was one of the secretaries of the examining section in the jail. She brought to me, as good news, a copy of the decision concerning my case.

It read: "For participation in the Ukrainian Nationalistic organization 'Union of Kuban and Ukraine' which had as its purpose to overthrow, by armed insurrection, the Soviet Government in the Ukraine and North Caucasus, and establish again a Ukrainian People's Republic, Moscow GPU College resolved on 8.VIII.1933 (A description and reference to the corresponding Soviet law followed) to isolate me for eight years in a reform labour camp on Solovky Island."

When I read it I began to count on my fingers when I would finish my term. The girl began to tell me that I was

a lucky man as I was to be sent to Solovky Island where there was a well-established prison camp. I told her that I felt very happy but would like to know when I would be released.

The girl told me that I would not stay the eight years. At the most I would serve three years. After three years the foundations of socialism would be firmly built, the enemy classes would be liquidated, and all who were at that time hindering the building of the socialist state would be freed. They would be persuaded then that all that was done by Joseph Visarionovich Stalin was without a fault. I saw that my beautiful girl was well trained in GPU ideology. I thanked her and she left. I remained with my thoughts.

Now I wished I had some company. I wanted to leave this jail and as soon as possible to go to the Solovky Island or anywhere else, but not to remain in my cell.

Not very long after, I was taken away to the distributive cell in the basement of Taganrog GPU.

"What did you get?" shouted someone as soon as I entered the cell.

"Eight years" I answered.

"Then they left two years to dish out to you later". Everybody laughed. As a rule most prisoners if not shot, were condemned for ten years.

"In our cell there are 148 men altogether" continued the cell "statistician". "Our years of punishment add up to 1371 years. You have eight years. Now the total is 1379 years." He went to a place on the wall where the number of years was written, stroked it out, and wrote in 1379.

I was interested to find out how the prisoners were divided according to their terms of conviction.

"I will gladly give you the information" said the same man. And he read the information on the wall: 119 men condemned for ten years; 13 men, counting you, for eight years; 17 men for five years. Altogether 149 men."

I spent a few days in that cell, during which the "statistician", as we called him, diligently kept the record of years and men.

ON THE WAY TO SOLOVKY

One day, 176 persons representing about 1700 years of imprisonment were taken to the station and loaded in the cattle cars. We were surrounded by guards who held their guns in readiness, while behind them huge growling police dogs waited. Some distance away stood a group of weeping women.

Three bells rang, the conductor blew the whistle and the train began to move. For a short distance behind the train, women, children and aged men ran. At first we could hear the cries. Then it became silent and only the wheels of the train could be heard knocking steadily.

Suddenly from one of the corners a song started, "Wife will find herself another, but mother will never find another son". Our soloist was a hardened young criminal.

"This is the seventh time they have caught me, but I will run away this time also. I will try to escape till they shoot me. In any case a bullet is awaiting me."

He spoke with a heroic air.

Political prisoners and criminals were kept together in the same cars, but the criminal prisoners were antagonistic towards us. We were traitors, spies and enemies, they were real "criminals".

I hoped that our train would go through Kharkiv. And so it happened. When we were unloaded we were sent to a Kharkiv prison for prisoners in transit.

This prison was the same as the rest; a huge building with large cells, and many prisoners of all descriptions. There was a complete absence of order, and therefore more liberty. On the following day I was able to let my family know about my arrival.

During the artificial famine in the Ukraine there were a number of cases of cannibalism. As a rule the "cannibals" were shot by GPU or allowed to die of starvation. These poor people never lived long, as they already were on the

brink of death from starvation, and committed these crimes only after becoming insane from hunger.

The artificial famine was being eased at that time by the communist government. From the year of famine in 1933, only 325 persons from the Ukraine charged with cannibalism remained alive, and were brought to Solovky prison. I will write about them later. The resistance of the Ukrainian peasants was broken at the price of millions who died from hunger. Beginning with September, a ration of 600 grams of bread (about one and a third of a pound) was established. What seems strange, but true, is that thousands of people were saved from death during the year of "famine" only because they were imprisoned in jails. In jail they received up to two hundred grams (6-7 ounces) of ersatz bread every day, while free men could not get anything.

The population of our cell changed, as every day new men were brought in, while others were taken away. The gathering was heterogeneous, but original and interesting. There were Monarchists, Trotskyists, Social-democrats, Ukrainian patriots, Communists, pickpockets, bandits, and members of the Ukrainian underground. There were also criminals of all sorts. All religions were represented there, and men of all races from Gypsies to Japanese. The highest representation was of the Ukrainian people.

A famous Ukrainian scientist, Prof. Semerenko was one of us. He was condemned to ten years hard labour for his opposition to the theories of the Russian scientist Michurin, whose theories were approved by the communist party leaders.

It was here that I got a first hand acquaintance with the "educational" work in Soviet jails. An old jail chapel was converted into a club room. We were brought to this club room and ordered to listen to a lecture. A young man was delivering the lecture in good Ukrainian, on the theme, "Ukrainian Nationalism — a chief danger".

The lecturer criticized Khvyliovy, and Scrypnyk, two outstanding Ukrainian Communists, who had lost their

faith in communism, and committed suicide. He greatly praised the chief Russian henchman in the Ukraine, Postyshev, and above all, Stalin. No one listened to him and no one contradicted him. No discussion was allowed during these lectures but this did not matter because no one ever thought about or took such lectures seriously. We all knew that tomorrow this very same lecturer might turn into a listener like ourselves. Neither his enthusiasm or craftiness would help him during one of the periodical party purges.

"Rabble" was the conclusion of my neighbour, a Trotskyist. "Let Stalin make as many counter-revolutionaries as he can out of us, then we will surprise him."

In this prison I was forced to go to the bath and disinfect my clothing about 27 times during thirty days. The water as a rule was ice cold and they burned my clothing. But it was not deliberate on the part of the jail authorities. It was rather, accidental, as some of the inmates, during the same time, were not sent to the bath even once. The prisoners as a rule were bathed and their clothing disinfected before they were sent away Almost every day they assigned me to go with a group of prisoners. On such occasions we were taken to the bath-house and our clothing was disinfected. But later the authorities would find out that this group was not being sent to the same place as I was, and I was left out. The purpose of the bathing and disinfection was to delouse the prisoners. However, after a whole month of bathing and disinfection, when the guard examined me again before sending me on to my destination, he found that my clothing still had vermin. I was taken again to the bath-house. Finally I was sent away with a group of prisoners. The cold bath and delousing daily had brought me to the verge of collapse, and I was scarcely able to walk to the railroad station.

We were loaded again into cattle cars and sent up north. This trip was a story of human misery and brutality. Some cried, some sang, and someone was robbed, while someone else was beaten. All of us knew that imprisonment and jail was our common lot at the end.

In Moscow we were sent to the Butyrki prison. Again I met hundreds of people, but especially do I remember the "gilders". There was a large number of them. When they were taken for a walk I could see them. Most of them were Jews. They were all suspected of possessing hidden gold and were kept in prison and questioned till they surrendered the gold to GPU. Among them were old men and women. They were dressed very shabbily and were divided into a large number of social groups. Those from small towns were dressed like the rest of the Soviet people. There were dentists, workers in different Soviet co-operative and trade organizations, speculators, black market operators and rabbis.

The "gilders" were poorly fed. They were abused in every way, beaten, questioned and kept in the prison until in despair they had to provide the required sum of money as ransom for a measure of freedom. But there were those who were strong enough to pass all "examinations" without giving in. They were freed after some time, but such cases were rare. Those who had gold with which to pay the "ransom" were glad to do so.

A great number were not able to stand the tortures and died. When a "gilder" died, he was reported dead and was buried. No one worried about such "trifles".

The station at Butyrki which was used as a transferring point for the prisoners was a place of utter confusion. Very often over five hundred prisoners were gathered at the station for deportation to different prisons and slave camps in Siberia and Northern Russia. It was a place filled with sorrow and tragedy. Wives met their husbands who were being sent to different concentration camps. Often old friends met who had not seen one another for a number of years. They would learn that they were condemned for ten years of hard labour as members of some counter-revolutionary organization, to which they both supposedly belonged, and about which neither of them had ever heard. I myself met a few members of a secret society called the "Union of Kuban and Ukraine". I never thought that they

would be arrested. But here no one wondered. Everyone had to accept grim reality and take his place in the cattle car. At such places there are no parting scenes. No one takes leave of another. All are prisoners and all have to go.

We were taken to "Kresty" (a prison at Leningrad) from the station at Kursk, in open trucks. Rain poured down upon us as with great speed we passed palaces, bridges, and monuments. Ice began to cover the Neva River. Finally we arrived at Kresty. Kresty was renowned for its sadistic art of torturing prisoners. If in other places the GPU crucified innocent people, it was here that a slow blood-letting process that turned the strongest men into complete physical and moral wrecks took place.

Once I had tried a dash for freedom, when a group of prisoners was taken to unload lumber from a freight ship. I could have escaped if I had had more experience. But my attempt was cut short by the guard. I was beaten and given three days solitary confinement.

The guards at Kresty had different methods. They did not shout or curse as much as at other places, but instead gave a prisoner unmerciful beatings on any pretext.

The method of re-educating the prisoners practised at Kresty was also different.

In one cell, a prisoner who was condemned for some criminal affair, stole a piece of bread from his comrade who was also being punished for some crime. When the owner of the piece of bread found out the culprit, he took a brick from a stove in the cell and without any show of emotion killed the thief in the presence of all.

The murderer was judged by the common court and condemned to death. Because such murders happened often, our "educators" decided to discuss the death sentence before a gathering of the prisoners.

The chief of the "cultural-education" section made a fiery speech presenting the murderer as one of the worst criminals in existence. At the end of his speech the chief asked the prisoners to give their opinion on the subject. At first he asked everyone generally. Then he asked the

prisoners individually, pointing to one or another. But no one wanted to speak, neither the political nor the criminal prisoners. The chief tried it for half an hour without any success.

"Well, Comrades, if we are unwilling to discuss the crime we will then take a vote", said the chief in a friendly manner. It was prohibited to call the prisoners "comrades" and the chief thought he had made a great concession condescending to do so. Just at that moment a prisoner got up and asked permission to speak.

"If anyone steals a bread ration in prison he is stealing the blood of his comrade, and it is a grave crime", began the prisoner. The face of the chief was lit up with satisfaction.

"But the most tragic thing is that this is not an exceptional case. During the few months of my stay here at Kresty, I found that such thefts and murders were common occurrences. I ask all present, who is to blame for all this? Shall we blame those who kill or those who created such inhuman conditions and made beasts out of men?"

Suddenly, as if from under the ground, hundreds of prison guards with guns ready for action appeared. From the platform on which the chief of the educational section stood, two machine guns shone in the hands of the guards. A command was given to keep complete silence.

A group of guards took the speech maker away. He walked bravely without looking back.

"To your cells", came the order. After that the authorities avoided asking the prisoners to take part in their judgments for prison crimes.

From Kresty we were taken in the "Black Crows" to the local station. We were packed in closed police wagons. Some prisoners lost consciousness before we came to the station and one old man died. The guards cursed his dead body, but as this could not help their problem in any way, they had to take the body back to Kresty.

When the train began to move, all began to speak about Zvanka. Zvanka was the central distributive camp for the

prisoners who were to be sent to different slave camps on Solovky, Kem, Kol, and Murmansk.

If there existed a semblance of some rights, however meagre, that a prisoner had before now, when he came to Zvanka he was at the complete mercy of every GPU official. Even arbitrary Soviet laws ceased to exist. Any insignificant tyrant from the GPU had unlimited authority over the bodies and souls of his prisoners.

Zvanka was notorious for its brutalities, robberies, beatings, and tortures and we were happy beyond measure when Zvanka refused to accept us for some reason, and we were sent to Kem.

When we looked through a small barred opening in our cattle car we saw only snow-covered swamps, dark forests, and stunted trees. Our feelings were of deep anxiety and foreboding.

The only prisoners who felt at home were the criminal who appeared carefree and sang songs.

We were slowly moving into the snowcovered north. From time to time groups of prisoners were taken from our train. At the station of Kem, a GPU slave driver pointed his finger at me and ordered me to get out.

I joined the ranks of about fifty prisoners who were already waiting. I did not know any of them.

Only one guard was assigned to us. When I saw this, I felt free, as I had become used to being guarded by at least two.

The guard looked friendly, smiled occasionally, and did not shout or curse us.

"Straight to the bath-house, fellows, to that big wooden building", commanded our guard. We marched to the bath-house without fear. Our greatest enemy was not the trial at the bath-house but the people who were in charge of it. Veheraksha camp was an improvement upon my other prisons. Now I could go to the outhouse without the guard, and the inconveniences of the public use of the pail for natural necessities could be forgotten. I felt as though I was entering an altogether unfamiliar sphere of life. From

now on I was free from the examining judges and their tortures. Here I began my life as a convict who had escaped death only by chance.

However I was mistaken. The change was not so great after all. The bath-house of Veheraksha was not much different from the bath-house at Kharkiv or Taganrog. It had the same windows with broken glass, the same ice-cold water the same dirt, and the same brutal attendants. In fact, everything was the same, only transferred to the 65th parallel of northern latitude. We were robbed of all our clothing, and given rags called the prisoner's outfit. We were warned that no one was allowed to wear civilian clothing.

Our clothing was immediately appropriated by the attendants. We had known beforehand from others, that, sooner or later, we would be relieved of all meagre belongings, and, to avoid the more brutal method that the guards used to obtain our possessions, we left the articles in the hands of the camp authorities. Although we knew we would never get them back at least we wouldn't be abused for them.

After an ice-cold bath, we were completely shaved. I was able to retain my beard only with great difficulty. Up until then there had been no reason for the GPU to shave it off. If I had been a priest, then the beard would have had a religious meaning, and would have been shaved without mercy. But with me it had no political significance and I was allowed to keep it. After that we were taken to the medical commission.

The medical commission consisted of a physician and a number of suspicious-looking individuals. This commission found all of us in perfect health and put us in the first category of work. This was called the "Tractor" category. There were three divisions of capacity for work, but they existed only in theory. All the prisoners, without exception, who had hands and feet, and no matter how crippled or old, were forced to do the hardest work during the first six months. Only after the hard-work trial, if the prisoner

remained alive, could he get his lawful category of capacity for work. There were three categories: the first gave very hard work, the second was nearly as hard as the first, and the third was a little easier and was granted to men half incapacitated. In this third category the prisoner only had to do 75% of the task in order to obtain a full credit for the job. During my eight years in concentration camps, I was often very seriously ill and near death, but was never granted the third category. Instead, I was given the second or "horse" category.

Finally all the formalities were completed. We became real jail-birds and were taken to the barracks where our home was to be.

THE ORGY

As I entered the barrack, I ruefully recalled the beautiful girl at Taganrog who had praised the old concentration camps at Solovky as being the best.

Our barrack was a small wooden building, rudely constructed. Light shone through gaps between carelessly laid logs. The snow sifted in freely. In the centre of the room stood a small box-stove called a "bourgeois", but besides this there was no furniture at all. At least it was better than being unloaded in the bush in the winter and ordered to build a barrack for ourselves which often happened to other prisoners.

We made a fire in the box-stove and the barrack was soon filled with smoke and a little heat. After we had closed the holes with rubbish, the room became warm and we were able to take off our prison coats which were called "Bushlats".

However, as soon as it became warm enough, we were visited by a great number of new guests. There were thousands of them and they began to fall on us from the ceiling. All who occupied the top platforms had to come down to the lower ones, and finally had to move to the earthen floor which was damp and cold from the snow. In this way the bedbugs won complete victory.

Some of us were so tired that we decided not to pay any attention to the blood-thirsty insects, and, covering our heads and hands, tried to sleep. Other more sensitive men made their beds on the floor, first pouring some water around them. Some remained sitting, and others, not knowing what to do, walked back and forth. I lay on the lower platform and covered myself as well as I could. When the bedbugs reached my skin, I killed them without exposing my hands, otherwise a new batch of them would have attacked me. I resolved that I would have sleep at any price.

Thus we began our first night in the "well-established" concentration camp.

About twelve o'clock at night everyone was ready to go to sleep. We fastened the door of the barrack with a wire to protect ourselves from uninvited guests. Someone blew out our improvised lamp which was made of a wick floating in fat. All was quiet and peaceful.

Suddenly in the middle of the night the door of the barrack shook with violent blows and opened with a great crash. A drunken crowd rushed in, singing profane songs, shouting, and whistling. The prisoners jumped up.

"Do not move!" commanded a large man with a fat face. He held an axe in his right hand and a lantern in his left.

"We have come to greet you with a house-warming party", he said. "Light the wick!" Somone lighted it.

"Put the wood in the stove." The "Bourgeois" began to belch smoke again.

With the light we could now clearly see the merry crowd which had come to "welcome" us with this uproar. There were about twenty well-fed young men and girls, their ages ranging from 13 to 30 years. They called themselves "minors". I recognized one man from the medical commission.

They scattered through the barrack, and each one, selecting a prisoner, demanded a present from the "free life" from him. When a prisoner began to open his bag, the "minor" grabbed whatever he liked or could reach. This was unrestrained robbery. Some prisoners tried to defend themselves while others gave away all they had without resistance. Some even joined our "guests" as if they belonged to the group, and began to help rob their fellow prisoners.

One prisoner threatened that he would complain to the camp warden. He was immediately grabbed by two minors and dragged to their chief, who was called the "Pachan" in prison jargon. He did not take part in the robbery but stood in the centre and supervised the activities of the rest.

"Put your foolish head on the log and I will chop it off. Then you will know that I am the lawful authority here!" he said.

The whole band roared with laughter. Now without any restraint they grabbed suitcases, cut the bags, and dragged everything into a common pile. Three of them, armed with steel bars stood at the door.

In one corner there was a struggle. Two minors were trying to wrest a valise from a prisoner who refused to give it up. Others came to help their comrades. The struggle increased. Then the Pachan came swinging his axe and the rest gave way to him. He took the valise and brought it under the light.

"Bring the key, we must not ruin the valise."

The owner brought the key.

The leader opened the valise. But to the surprise of all, there was nothing of value in it which would justify the fight put up by its owner. The leader took everything out and began to feel the lining.

"Here it is", he cried, and pulled out an envelope.

"Money" shouted some of them. But to their great disappointment the envelope only contained two pictures and a lock of a woman's hair.

"This is a nice looking deshovka (an insulting name for a woman)" said the Pachan to the prisoner, who was a university student. "Is she your woman?"

The student told him that that was the picture of his fiancee. He said that they could take all his possessions if only they would leave the pictures and the lock of hair for him.

The crowd of minors evidently found this funny, and Pachan laughed so much that he had to hold his sides. He looked with contempt at the student.

"You are a hopeless fool" he said. All the minors listened to him attentively.

"You are crazy. You are an idiot. What are you prizing so highly? That red hair and that pretty little snout? I am sure she sold you to the GPU and is now dancing naked

with them like these deshovki that I have with me here."

The student turned pale and rushed furiously at the Pachan. He was knocked down immediately by a skilful blow from the chief.

"Lie there, you nitwit, you woman's rag, or I will order your head to be cut off" threatened the Pachan who had one foot on the student's back. The girls took the valise outside and the chief left the young man after a while.

The student, grasping his head in his hands, lay crying on the floor. His pictures and the lock of hair were left on wooden platform.

"Get up, Brother!" said the Pachan in a friendly tone. "Take your precious treasures, as you call them. At one time I was just as big an idiot as you are, but now I am different."

"Hey! Red-head!" called the Pachan. "Run to the doctor's helper and tell him to give us something to drink. Tell him that he will receive some money for this favour. If he refuses, tell him that I myself will speak with him."

"Let us drink, shpana (the name for the prisoners used by criminals)" shouted one of the girls, as she took off her wadded trousers.

The student got up slowly and came to the Pachan, who returned the pictures and the hair to him.

"Take care of them, brother" he said, "but soon you yourself will want to throw them into the out-house."

"No, she is different. She is not like the rest. She could not be compared with these girls", answered the student to the Pachan, as though he were a friend.

"Oh no! She could not be compared with anyone." The Pachan laughed sarcastically. "My friend, I had hundreds of those 'incomparables'. But I changed after the first one proved to be like the ones I knew later. At first I was just as big an idot as you are now, even though I was not a student. I knew all kinds of them. They were all creatures for sale. It did not matter who they were; wives of engineers, common prostitutes, religious commoners, fat peasant women, Communists, or actresses. All were repul-

sive rabble. They were dishonest and mercenary. Even the women scientists, who seemed to think only about their careers, were all the same, only more repulsive and cynical."

I listened to the Pachan with surprise and interest.

Finding everyone's eye upon him, he grew eloquent. Shopenhauer and Nietzsche were nothing in comparison with the philosophy of this 35 year old syphilitic. He attacked the female sex with a hatred and feeling that I had never seen before. His speech was interrupted by the return of the red-head who set some bottles filled with face lotion, ether, and real spirits in front of him.

"I stole this from him," confessed the red-head, producing a small bottle of Valerian drops from his pocket. Everyone laughed. They came to the Pachan with cups and he filled them with the liquids, drinking the real spirits himself. The girls demanded drinks more than the rest.

"Hey, deshovki!" shouted the Pachan, who had become drunk; "Show me your class." The girls immediately stripped off all their clothing and danced a wild dance before him.

Only the "wife of the Pachan", a girl of about fourteen years of age, did not take part in the revels. Instead, she sat screaming loathsome oaths.

The men played on combs for the girls, made noises with spoons, danced with them, and sang profane songs all the while. The walls of the barrack were shaking from the stamping and banging. The men had no restraint whatsoever, and it is impossible to describe what took place before our eyes. The Pachan praised the boys for their boldness and the girls for their readiness to please. He promised to reward them all. We, the neophytes, watched this orgy with fear and trembling.

At the end, one of the girls came to me, drunk and tired. My head was bent and I was half asleep. She took my beard in her hands, and, trying to smile, asked, "How about you, grandfather? Don't you care for girls?"

I could not help laughing as I said no. Just then one of the men slapped her on the face.

"Deshovka" he hissed. The girl, her nose bleeding from the blow, went into a corner to cry.

"Old man", said the heroic fellow, "give me something that you do not need. We did not touch you to-night." I opened my bag. He took my shirt and socks, then thanked me, tied up my bag, and went away.

The Pachan was the first to leave the barrack with his "wife". Soon after we heard the clanging of the gong that called the prisoners to work in the morning. (The gong was a piece of rail which was struck by an iron pipe.) The remaining "guests" rushed from the barrack.

A guard appeared and ordered us to get up.

"We are up already" said one of the prisoners. "We do not have to get up as we never went to sleep." The guard pretended that he did not understand us and left the barrack.

We prepared ourselves for the first day of labour.

BLAT, MAT AND TUFTA

It was snowing. Carefully we walked in the darkness to the place where we were to work. The yard where logs were loaded into freight cars was lighted by electricity. A man dressed in a new prisoner's coat asked the guard how many prisoners he had.

"Forty-eight" answered the guard.

"Who has worked in concentration camps before?"

Two men said they had. He looked at them and asked one, "Do you know how to load the logs into the cars?"

"Yes" answered the man.

"Then he will be your brigadier" said the foreman. He took down the name of the man and ordered him to supervise the rolling of the logs.

I was staggered. On the left hand side of us were the shining train rails and the box-cars. On our right, stacks of timber stood, almost as big as Egyptian pyramids. There were innumerable logs, that had been brought up by the river, by trucks, and by carts. Hundreds of men were moving the logs to the freight cars and loading them up. This required strength and skill, and I had had no previous experience or knowledge of that type of work.

There were times when I lost my balance, and, not having enough strength to hold the log, endangered not only my own life but those of the other prisoners. The workers in my group cursed me and the next day refused to let me work with them.

The brigade had been divided into groups of six. Each section had to roll and load a certain number of logs into the cars. The brigadier sent me from one group to another until, in the end, he asked the foreman to transfer me somewhere else. I was not feigning inability to work but simply did not have enough strength.

During the first week at the concentration camp, my fellow prisoners cursed and laughed at me because I could

not perform the hard labour. The brigadier was a quiet man, and often defended me, but there was no doubt that I was a burden to them, because, quite often, they had to do my part of the work.

When the brigadier finally sent me to the foreman, the latter sized me up from head to foot, and asked, "What was your work when you were at liberty, old man?"

I told him.

"Oh yes, I understand. It is something educational", he said, with pride, letting me know that he had also partaken of "education" in some way. "But, my friend," he continued, "I do not have any soft work for you here. You will have to become accustomed to it." He turned around and went away. My brigadier also went to his brigade, and I was left alone.

It seemed that the only thing left for me was "Tashkaturka" which was a death camp for the disabled, simulants, and men sent there to be punished. This camp was ruled by a few criminal Pachans. The inmates were allowed about ten ounces of bread a day, and a prison soup made from the stale heads of herring. Other prisoners had warned me about this camp and I was afraid that in my condition I would be sent there to die a slow death. For a whole hour I walked from place to place as it was very cold. Finally I ran into the foreman.

"Oh, it is you again. Well, wait for me", he said. He went away. In this way I spent a whole day, until at night the brigadier took me back to the camp with the rest of the men. On the way, he met the foreman and asked him about me again.

"Assign this old man to clear the tracks and give him full credit for his work", was the answer.

I thus learned that it was possible to escape work at the concentration camp and still have the regular portion of bread. In prison jargon this deception was called "Tufta", and was used everywhere in the concentration camps.

It worked like this. When the prisoners moved the logs to the freight cars, they tried to get credit for the logs pre-

viously brought, or else they tried to get their work registered twice. If they had to move logs 50 yards, they tried to show them as moved 100 yards. When cars were loaded with short logs, they masked the empty space behind the front logs so well that they often got credit for 40 cubic yards, while actually the load was only 20 cubic yards. The work was so skilfully done that no one suspected that tufta had been used. Very often the same cut wood, although only delivered once, gave the prisoners two credit marks. This was achieved by the removal of the overseer's marks, which showed that the work had been already counted.

Varieties of "tufta" were without end and showed great imagination on the part of the prisoners At times, loading tufta took more time and work than the actual task, but the prisoners preferred the hard way. Some of them were so skilful that they did it in the presence of overseers, and remained undetected.

However, the overseers and the foremen themselves were first-rate experts in the loading of tufta for the higher authorities. In turn, the administrative bodies of the concentration camps and important GPU officials used tufta in the work given to the head GPU offices of the USSR or corresponding national departments.

Tufta was a spell-bound circle. Its existence was well known and the heads of national planning departments always allowed a certain percentage for it in their calculations. This was the "method of production" that reigned not only in the concentration camps but everywhere in the USSR.

There are three pillars on which all the concentration camps stand; they are "blat," "mat," and "tufta".

I was not brought up in sheltered surroundings, yet in my past life I had never heard such repulsive and blasphemous swearing or "mat" as was cultivated by the GPU in the concentration camps. At times when I was eating, these extreme forms of "mat" struck my ear with hammer-like force. At such times I had to go away to a quieter spot. The worst swearers at the camps were the girl minors.

I was worried about Tashkaturka and my future. I had become used to the barrack, to the smoking stove, and to the stench of the coats and felt boots hanging on the wall. I had become used to the bedbugs and the swearing. I could even tolerate the criminal element, the minors, who were friendly towards me, thinking, on account of my beard, that I might be an old priest who had been persecuted because of his faith.

The minors visited our barrack and brought herrings to us in exchange for belongings that we had been able to hide. They also sold their cheap tobacco or exchanged it for bread.

One night the stove was burning and everyone was sitting or reclining on the bunks after the twelve hours of hard work. Someone asked me to tell them a story. They thought I would have some interesting tales to tell as I was considered a man of some education.

This was not new to me. In prisons and in distributing cells I had heard volumes of adventures and stories. They were told mostly by the urki (criminal prisoners) who loved this form of art above everything. They would listen to the stories all night long.

Others joined in, asking me to tell them something of interest. I wondered about what I could tell them. Finally I decided to tell them about the country of the rising sun — Japan. I had read much about this eastern country and had remembered some of its legends.

I told my fellow prisoners about the 47 Japanese samurais, the geishas, their religions, festivals, and customs, and the legend about the creation of their island. In telling the story I forgot my surroundings and became lost in my own recollections as I tried to make the tale interesting and original. I talked for about two hours and everyone in the barrack listened attentively. I notice that some minors had come into the barrack and were listening quietly.

When I finished, all thanked me heartily, especially the minors. To them, I became a man of great learning. One of them came to me afterward and told me that it was

necessary to bribe the foreman so that he would not send me to Tashkaturka and instead would give me some "blat" work. When I lay down to sleep the brigadier came to me and he also advised me to bribe the foreman immediately because he had already said that he would send me away.

"But what will I give him?" I asked.

"Your coat from 'freedom'. In any case it will be stolen from you, if not to-day, then to-morrow. They have already tried it once."

This was good advice.

The next morning I went to work with the company. The brigadier asked the foreman, in my presence, if he needed a good winter coat with a persian lamb collar. He also told him that I would like to sell it to him. The foreman looked at me and said, "All right, at night".

I then went away with the brigadier to join the labourers. No one cursed or shouted at me. I either sat quietly or assisted in the work if my help was needed.

This was my first experience with "blat". "Blat", or bribing is a universal, unwritten law of the USSR. It is practised from the very top to the bottom of the Soviet structure, and it helps many to withstand the rigours of the communist system.

The next day I was sent to work as a driver of the cart transport. My winter coat had helped, and from then on I was assigned to blat work which, as I thought, was not as hard as loading the logs.

I went to a large barn where all the drivers were gathered. A former university student and member of the Union of Communist Youth was in charge of us. He had been expelled from his first year in the university and had been condemned to three years hard labour for hooliganism, which must have been something unusual, having in mind communist behaviour in general.

The youngster cursed all the drivers with profane oaths. He struck one of the sleigh drivers with a "knut", probably for some misdemeanour, and ordered him away, threatening that he would send him to Tashkaturka. I was told to take

his place and was sent to the jail storage to cart potatoes, and was also given a helper.

However this "blat" was not easy, as I was unable to carry or even move the big bags. The men and young women who worked at the store cursed me and called me "old man". I kept silent. My long beard and worn out appearance made them think that I was well on in my years. This misunderstanding helped me a great deal, as the people did not expect much from a grandfather. However my troubles increased the next day, as I did not know how to harness horses in the Russian way.

I had grown up among Cossacks in Kuban. Kuban Cossacks never used the Russian arc and harness. I could easily harness two or four horses in the Cossack way, but I did not know how to fix even one horse with a Russian harness. Adding to my difficulty, I was so weak that I could not fasten the tongs of the horse's collar. My ignorance in these matters became apparent the next morning, and the overseer cursed me violently. Threatening to throw me out, he taught me how to harness the animal. The next day one of the drivers helped me. The overseer cursed me again but still did not send me away.

When the other men helped me after that, they made me very down-hearted by saying, "You will never make a good driver". I listened to them with great concern. In future I was often helped with the work, but my life there became worse than Tashkaturka could have made it.

However, one morning everything changed. I did not expect that my fame as a story teller would reach the ears of the overseer. As a rule my education never did anything good for me and caused me a great deal of trouble, but finally it came to my rescue in this situation.

When I reported to the overseer, he abruptly said to me, "To-day you will not go anywhere". This startled me, but I was ready for anything. When all the drivers had left, followed by select curses, I stood near the barn and thought about Tashkaturka. Then the overseer called me to his cabin which he used as a combination office and bedroom.

When I entered, he closed the door, looking around to see if anyone was nearby. He then apologized to me for his cruel treatment. He told me that he himself had been a student, and had always treated his professors with great respect. He had thought that I was a common "snout", a wild "kurkul" (well-to-do peasant). Such people, according to him, had to be cursed and beaten, otherwise they would not work.

Finally he told me to sit down, and asked me to be his helper and companion. He wished to talk with me on intellectual subjects. I looked at this demoralised young communist hooligan and did not know what to do. Should I accept the offer or should I tell him what I thought about him? Tashkaturka appeared before my eyes and I decided to accept his proposition. He brutally called an orderly, and told him to serve breakfast. The orderly, an old man, soon brought us some potatoes and cutlets made from horse meat. After this substantial meal we drank tea with sugar, and I began to copy some papers for him. However there was very little work to do, and so we sat and talked about different subjects.

As I talked with this young hooligan, I wondered if I could teach him to treat the peasants who worked under him in a more humane way. But the following days persuaded me that he was beyond any possibility of improvement. My talks with him revealed that he would never understand who the real enemy was. He was a perfect product of the so-called "golden communist youth", a victim of the anti-democratic education of the Soviet.

At times I told him of evil practices in prison by guards. He never contradicted me, as he felt flattered that an educated man talked with him as with an equal.

However, he never took any of my advice to heart.

I do not know how long this kind of life would have continued, but one morning the warden of the camp entered our barrack. He was excited and had a guard with him. He shouted my name. When I answered I noticed that he felt relieved. The guard came to me and ordered me to follow

him with my belongings. A few minutes later, I boarded a one-horse sleigh. Two guards sat in it with me. As the sleigh moved away, someone said, "They are taking the old man to the isolation camp". I wondered if I was being taken to Tashkaturka or to some other place.

We drove very slowly. The horse was so exhausted that it refused to do more than plod along the road.

"Get up, devil", shouted the driver. But the horse still continued wearily on its way, paying no attention to anybody. I did not care how fast or slow we went. I just sat and looked at the land around me. We were in Karelia. The country was covered with snow and looked dismal. Here and there, villages dotted the country-side. They appeared small and dirty among the white wastes of snow. I saw huge piles of wood cut by the prisoners, barbed wires, watch towers with machine guns, police dogs, and famished people in rags, all experiencing the horrors of this unearthly existence. Every square yard of this swampy land had witnessed the tragedy and destruction of human dignity. I felt sad. In this desert of brutal force and fear, I felt all alone, and the will to live in me began to weaken.

Finally we arrived. At the gates of the concentration camp the guards stopped us. They took me to a small building at the gate. After ascertaining that I was the person expected, the guards took me into the camp. The warden received me and soon I was climbing onto the second tier of sleeping platforms in a warm cell. I was alone. It is true that there were a great number of bedbugs, and they were not very good company but I had ceased paying attention to them long ago. I realised that they were an unavoidable part of all Russian buildings, and represented the spirit of the GPU. For some reason I was kept in this cell for five days. After that I was taken to a large two-storey barrack.

This concentration camp was of a different type. It had a large number of watch towers, with projectors and great number of strong electric lamps. There were a few rows of barbed wire and about five yards in front of them were signs reading, "Forbidden Zone".

This was the distribution camp for prisoners who were to be sent to Solovky.

In the barrack I was asked about my training and then sent to the second company of the second floor. The majority of the men in this company were Ukrainians. There were also Caucasians, national intelligentsia from the middle east countries under Russia, and White Russians, who are not to be mistaken for a political group.

About one thousand men in this barrack were from among different nationalities under Russia. There were very few Russians in the camp, just a few priests, artists, and professors of the reactionary type. They were the remnants of the old regime who somehow had been able to hide themselves for a while in scientific, religious, or art institutions. The prisoners of other nationalities were mostly those educated in Soviet Russian schools. A large percentage of the members were of the Communist party or other socialist parties which the bolshevicks had disapproved of.

However the largest group was made of professionals who did not belong to any party. They had no choice but to fulfil their tasks under the communist government, expecting to be arrested at any moment. I now met many men whom I had known when free and I felt far better. We talked about our past life, laughed and sang together.

The isolation camp differed from other concentration camps in strictness. No prisoner was taken outside for work even accompanied by guards.

Inside the camp, shops were built, which produced window sashes, musical instruments, guitars, balalaikas, and other things. My friends found suitable work for me. I had to bore holes in the necks of the musical instruments. The work was easy and I mastered it without difficulty. We worked from morning till night. At night we sat together in groups, talking and even singing songs under the leadership of a White Russian, an amateur choir master.

The food ration we received daily was about 21 ounces

of bread. We also had "balanda" which was prison soup cooked from the heads of rusty herrings.

The authorities of the camp treated the prisoners better than at any other place I had yet seen.

All the prisoners were expected to learn a new trade and the warden, and the commandant of the camp were especially pleased with the progress of our barrack. In other barracks the "Christ's followers" were kept, and another barrack was occupied by the camp attendants. These were a small band of criminals who worked in the stores and kitchens. These criminals were considered by the communists as being "socially related" to their group, and were treated with consideration.

Beyond the wires of the camp was the building of the third section with accommodations for men and dogs. The offices were situated nearby, together with the barrack for the camp attendants.

In this isolation camp I received a letter from my wife for the first time, and, sometime later, a food parcel. The parcel contained some real cigarettes. Those were the days when I felt that I would get through all my troubles, and would live and return to my sunny Ukraine.

At night, when we all sat together, Alexander Ivanovitch Navrotsky produced my cigarettes, which he had previously confiscated from me to prevent me from giving them away indiscriminately. He offered them to the members of our group who were all very glad to take one. Everyone told jokes and stories and for a while we forgot that we were in prison.

Those were happy moments.

Later, the shop producing musical instruments was closed, and I was appointed to plane the boards for the window sashes. This was hard work for me. I tried in vain to fulfil the task so as not to burden my comrades with additional work. But all my efforts were of no avail. In three days I accomplished only one day's work. To the camp authorities this would be scandalous. The chief of my group, Navrotsky told me about my failure privately.

"You are neither a musician, a shoe maker, nor a carpenter, so I will make you just a helper to carry boards to the carpenters." The next day I was carrying heavy boards for a brigade made up of "national minorities".

Colonel Yashvili had been fulfilling the duties of a wood carrier for this brigade before me. He was a very disillusioned man. He had returned from abroad hoping that in some way he would be able to serve his people even under the communist rule. However, instead of being sent to Georgia where he had previously lived, he was sent to this northern waste to pay penance for his foolish trust in the Soviet's promises to political emigrants.

When Navrotsky recommended me to the brigade, the men did not show any enthusiasm about it.

"Russian dog!" said someone behind my back. I turned around and saw that it was an Osset from the Caucasus who had expressed his opinion about me. I did not say anything, but I knew that I was among friends.

My brigade was made up of Georgians, Armenians, Turkomen, Tadzhiks, Uzbeks, inhabitants of Kabarda, Karachai, Adyge, Assetia, and Tartars from Crimea and Kazan. Some of them could not speak Russian at all, while those who could, knew very little of it. Only Volga Tartars, Armenians and Georgians could speak Russian and even they had a strong accent.

My first task was to explain to the brigade that I was not a Russian, and that I hated the Russians just as much as they did. I told them that I had been sent there because I was one of the many Ukrainians who had not wanted to have the Russians as overlords. The Georgians, Tartars, and Armenians quickly understood me, but the rest remained suspicious. However, I was able to overcome all mistrust in the end. I did it, not so much with explanations, as with my knowledge of the communist production methods. My duty was to bring the material to the prisoners, receive the finished products from them and report their efficiency. The norm, as a rule, was very high. It was necessary to plane 250 feet during one shift for one person.

The tools were in frightful condition and no one thought about using machines. Everything was done by hand. I decided to better the records of production of my brigade by employing tufta.

I tried my best to cheat the receiver at the store and used all ways and means available to get a greater credit for the work than was actually due. My operation tufta was successful, and every day I had about five extra norms gained in that manner. These norms I would apportion to the members of our brigade who were far behind with their production and were in danger of losing their ration of bread for inefficiency. In this way I was able to help those who needed assistance most of all. After a week every member of the brigade understood that I was their friend. The Osset who had called me a Russian dog also changed his mind about me and they treated me as their brother. These men, who were always exploited and downtrodden by the Russian imperialists now treated me with great friendliness and respect. They began to see the difference between Ukrainians and Russians.

Once I asked Colonel Yashvili, who was now serving as a watchman for the finished window sashes, to visit our brigade. When the colonel and I appeared in the door of our shop, all the men greeted us with applause and salaams. They thanked Yashvili for sending a worthy successor in his place.

A month later the brigade wanted my name to be placed on the red board of workers, who had reached top efficiency. My name was put up in spite of the fact that I was only a helper and objected to this distinction.

A tall old man from Karachai came to me and explained that I should not refuse.

"They all understand that the black and red boards are for fools", he said. "But why should we care? Let the communist idiots think that we are fools. We have no other choice. We are helpless, surrounded by machine guns. Let us help one another to survive. Some day we will even the

score. When that day comes we will know how to deal with these snakes."

He turned around.

"Is that you, Achmet?" he asked.

Near us stood a young handsome-looking man from Kabarda.

"Did you hear what I said?"

"Yes, father, I heard you. What you say is true. I too believe that we will even the score with them. If only I could have my mountains and my faithful horse, Kazbek, then I would lead half of Kabarba against them" enthusiastically cried the youth, his eyes burning with hatred.

We shook hands and parted.

MY DEPARTURE TO THE ISLANDS OF DEATH

The first ship sailed to sea. The navigation had started. We felt anxious. It was bad enough here. What was awaiting us? Before us were the islands of death. The prisoners made fantastic guesses. All were afraid of the Solovky Islands but we all had to go there whether we wished to or not.

"Uncle Ivan" tried to cheer us up.

"Don't be afraid, little brothers! Siberia is also Russian land and the Solovky Islands are the most 'attractive' piece of it," was his sarcastic comment.

One day the order came. Everyone had to be ready at seven a.m for transport. All the prisoners left their shops. When the authorities ordered the prisoners to clean the shops it was interesting to watch how suddenly all production ceased. The hatred of the men for this slave-driving organization showed itself in the neglect and even the destruction of tools. Everything was left in terrible condition.

About five o'clock that night we noticed a lot of movement outside the camp. The watch was increased, there were more police dogs, and new posts were established on the prohibited zone.

"They are preparing a pleasant departure for us" remarked one of the prisoners.

"We are being sent to a summer resort" added another, with an oath.

The whole night was passed in conversation. Very few slept. At eight o'clock in the morning all the prisoners stood in ranks in the camp yard.

Well-armed guards suddenly appeared. The warden shouted, "If anyone makes a step to the right or the left he will be shot".

"Forward march!"

Swinging our bags, we marched to the port. At the

harbour, from the gates to the ship, lines of well-armed guards stood. One by one we boarded the ship and were directed to the hold. The ship had been used previously to carry coal. When the prisoners entered the hold, a cloud of coal dust rose immediately. In the semi-darkness of the hold we all looked like coal miners. Our faces were covered with the black dust and only our teeth could be seen. In a few minutes the hold was packed with men. Some began to shout, "There is no more space. We cannot breathe."

"Stop talking!" said the guard, turning his machine gun on the prisoners.

"What a friendly reptile he is! He probably came from Solovky."

"One more word and I will shoot."

"Shoot, you ————!" cursed the prisoner.

The guard fired a round into the ceiling of the hold. The commander of the guards appeared.

"I am warning you for the last time. Do not make any more noise." Turning to the guard, he said, "Shoot without warning if they continue to talk."

All became quiet. It was as though we were in a grave.

This was our new Solovky; not that of 1929, but one with different methods, people, and manners.