

This is a strictly humanitarian and not a political labour. The sole object of the compiler of these letters was to make an appeal to the conscience of the civilized world on behalf of the prisoners.

The letters included in this volume are exclusively from political prisoners belonging to revolutionary parties, the social-revolutionists, the right socialist-revolutionists, the left socialist-revolutionists, and the anarchists. The lives of the authors of these letters have been devoted to the Revolution. Many of them shared prison and exile with the present rulers of Russia before 1917.

LETTERS

These letters are not confused with the numerous miscellaneous pieces of impressions and of interpretation written about Soviet Russia.

from

This compilation is not impressionistic. Since the days when George Kennan's "Siberia and the Exile System" appeared, world public opinion has changed considerably. In our day everybody is believed and nobody is believed. The issue of veracity seems to be the touchstone of present-day journalism.

BOLSHEVIST PRISON AND EXILE.

The writer visited Soviet Russia 6 times in the years 1919-1922 as correspondent for the American Press, and has consistently fought against intervention, the blockade, the White Terror, and for the recognition of the Soviet Government.

Upon learning while in Moscow last winter from Ben-Peter Krasnaya of the bloody tragedy on the Solovets Islands and later of the suicide of Sergei Kharov in prison, and finding himself unable to transmit the news abroad to the press because of the censorship, the writer decided that a way must be found to convey to the outside world the facts about the political prisoners in Soviet Russia. This book is a realization of that decision.

All the proceeds from the sales of this book in all countries will be turned over by the publishers to the "Political Prisoners' Relief Fund."

Part One of this book contains the letters of the political prisoners of the Solovets Islands, dated from December 19, 1922. The special attention of the publishers is directed to the fact that the letters are being published in the order in which they were received by the publishers.

The compiler has spent much time and labour in collecting and translating these letters and in securing and providing the illustrations. He will be amply rewarded when the proceeds derived from the sales of this book, which is to be published in English, French and German, largely aid for the relief of the prisoners.

You are earnestly invited to devote a few hours to the study of these letters, and to keep in mind that their readers will be the most suffering and the most needy.

If after a study of these letters, you have any suggestions for the disappearing intelligentsia, should feel impelled to do something, please write a few lines expressing your willingness to be listed as a contributor to this book.

Address: 1000, Berlin, Germany.

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A FEW REMARKS .

1. This is a strictly humanitarian and not a political labour. The sole object of the compiler of these letters was to make an appeal to the conscience of the civilized world on behalf of the prisoners.
2. The letters included in this volume are exclusively from political prisoners belonging to revolutionary parties, the social-democrats, the right socialist-revolutionists, the left socialist-revolutionists, and the anarchists. The lives of the authors of these letters have been devoted to the Revolution. Many of them shared prison and exile with the present rulers of Russia before 1917.
3. The compiler emphatically desires that these original letters from prison and exile should not be confused with the numerous sensational books of impressions and of interpretation written about Soviet Russia.
4. This compilation is documentary and not impressionistic. Since the days when George Kennan's "Siberia and the Exile System" appeared, world public opinion has changed considerably. In our own days everybody is believed and nobody is believed. The issue of veracity seems to be the touchstone of present-day civilization.
5. To avoid the dangerous waters of veracity, the writer decided to achieve his object by compiling a volume of information rather than by writing a book which would be attacked as propaganda.
6. The writer visited Soviet Russia 5 times in the years 1919-1924 as correspondent for the American Press, and has consistently fought against intervention, the blockade, the White Terror, and for the recognition of the Soviet Government.
7. Upon learning while in Moscow last winter from Mrs. Peter Kropotkin of the bloody tragedy on the Solovetz Islands and later of the suicide of Sergei Merozov in prison, and finding himself unable to transmit the news abroad to the press because of the censorship, the writer decided that a way must be found to convey to the outside world the facts about the political prisoners in Soviet Russia. This book is a realization of that decision.
8. Part One of the present volume deals exclusively with the Solovetz Islands, and particularly with the events of December 19, 1923. The prisoners' camps on these arctic islands merit the special attention of all humanity.
9. Part Two of this book consists of letters from various prisons and places of exile. No attempt has been made to arrange them chronologically. About one hundred more pages of similar letters are being translated and transcribed, and will be added to this part when completed.
10. The compiler has spent much time and labour in collecting and translating these letters and in securing and providing the illustrations. He will be amply rewarded when the revenue derived from the sales of this book, which is to be published in English, French and German, is applied for the relief of the prisoners.
11. You are earnestly invited to devote a few hours to the study of these letters, and to keep in mind that their nervous and impassioned tone is often due to the acute suffering endured by their authors.
12. If after a study of these letters, you - whose word might save this disappearing intelligentsia - should feel impelled to do something, please write a few lines expressing your sentiments for publication as a prefatory note to this book.

January, 1925, Berlin,
Prinzregentenstr. 93

Isaac Don Levine.

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**BOLSHEVIST PRISON CAMPS AND
CENTERS OF EXILE IN THE FAR NORTH.**

(Indicated by Black Circles)

LETTER ONE¹⁾

"Somewhere at the end of the white world, on the shores of the icebound sea, where eight months in the year winter reigns, where for months the sun does not appear, there stands the God-protected Convent of Zosimo-Savvatievo."

Thus begins one of the numerous accounts published by the monks of the ancient Solovetz Monastery which has existed for nearly five centuries - it was founded in 1429 - and was turned in the summer of this year into a bolshevist penal labor colony, into a modernized soviet Sakhalin

The first political prisoners - anarchists - appeared in Kholmogory²⁾ in February, 1922. This group, transferred in the spring of 1923, after a stay of one year in the camp, to Pertominsk²⁾ and later together with the rest to Solovki²⁾, has already run the whole gamut of all that the regime has to offer. It was necessary to wage a struggle for the most elementary things, such as conceding to the socialists and anarchists the ordinary rights of political prisoners. In this struggle

1) This letter from the Solovetz Islands was written by a representative socialist exile in the first half of December, 1923, several days before the bloody event of December 19. It is a comprehensive review of the life of the political prisoners in the so-called northern concentration camps, and was first published in March, 1924, in the "Socialist Vestnik", the central organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party.

2) See the map on the opposite page. "Solovki" in the term commonly used to designate the Solovetz Islands.

they were subjected to all the known punishments, such as solitary confinement, beating, starving, throwing on the wire, organized firing by the military detachment at the building, etc.etc. It will suffice to say that at the end of the year the majority of the Kholmogory inmates could boast, in addition to their past records, of hunger strikes totalling thirty to thirty-five days, a third of which were "dry" strikes.

urgency The struggle of the Pertominsk inmates, - the first political prisoners had been sent there in December, 1922, - was of shorter duration. The "regime of Batchuilis" was broken towards the end of February. Locked cells; bare bunks; the shutting off of light, water, and heat; rations of common criminals; the ban on open-air exercises; firing at windows; the endless ringing of the alarm-bell, with the training of machine-guns on the quarters of the political prisoners; the attacks by Commandant Batchuilis, armed with a dagger, on individual prisoners; - all of this was at that time "a closed page" of history. Part of the old administration, including the eminent Batchuilis, was removed. But it was quite clear to every-body that another struggle was ahead, the struggle for the abolition of the Pertominsk camp itself. This camp had an extremely insufficient number of buildings fit even for half-human habitation. The locality, like Kholmogory, is especially infected with malaria. All the former inmates of Kholmogory transferred to Pertominsk were suffering without exception from malaria.

locked Our community¹⁾ contemplated beginning the new struggle

----- such as barbed wire, mattresses, etc., poured kerosene
1) The political prisoners are organized in communities according to their various parties. Here the reference is to the social-democratic group of exiles.

in the spring when it would be hard for the administration to isolate us completely from the rest of the world. However, the anarchists at the beginning of March commenced an independent struggle for their transfer from Pertominsk, which the remaining members of our community, thought somewhat premature. On March 7, they sent telegrams to Archangelsk and Moscow demanding urgently to be transferred to Archangelsk. The urgency was dictated by the approach of the season of impassable roads, by the inability to secure medical treatment in Pertominsk for those seriously ill, and by similar reasons.

By March 18, the time-limit fixed in the telegrams, no answer having been received, the anarchists declared a hunger strike. Three days later there arrived in the camp three more anarchist prisoners, each of whom had just undergone in Moscow a hunger-strike of fifteen days' duration, and they immediately joined the strike here. In a week the hunger began to show results. Already on the sixth and seventh days several people were in a semi-conscious state. The question arose as to swifter and more effective methods of combat. On March 22, about 11 o'clock in the morning, the sound of smashed glass was heard, the alarm bells began to ring. The clicking of muzzle-stoppers raised by the soldiers and guards surrounding the building reached our ears. The machine-guns menacingly lifted their snouts.

There was a smell of smoke from the corridor. It appeared that a number of hunger-striking anarchists, all men, locked themselves in a cell and piling up at the doors all kinds of junk such as berths, mattresses, etc., poured kerosene over it and set it on fire. The officials who came running in a hurry completely lost themselves. The commandant was

altogether absent, - he was hunting at this critical time. The acting commandant, the right hand of Batchuillis, Michelsen, who had won distinction in the Crimean executions and who in spite of having been sentenced to capital punishment in some manner emerged in the capacity of the unofficial master of the destinies of the camp, broke open the door of the burning cell. The fire leaped into the corridor and began to attack the cells on the opposite side. The committee of elders issued an order to the prisoners to leave the burning building. The corridors were already so full of smoke that it was almost impossible to make one's way through them. Half an hour later there would have been nothing left of the building which was old, wooden and very dry. It is hardly necessary to describe the psychological condition of the political prisoners who had to assume the functions of officials and prevent their fellow prisoners from carrying to the probably horrible end the struggle they had initiated, but who could not look on with indifference at the burning of their imprisoned comrades. And when one of one elders¹⁾ ordered the fire put out, somehow everybody without argument formed instantaneously a chain which reached to the wall, while some rushed to the building with buckets of water.

The anarchists who remained in the cells were carried out. Towards the end the commandant appeared. At his order, all the anarchists were transferred to the hospital. Several hours later the hospital was completely isolated from the building occupied by the political prisoners. Nobody knew what was going on in the hospital. It was only known that the

1) Each organized community of political prisoners has its own elected "starosta" or elder. These authorized spokesmen of the several communities form a Committee of Elders.

hunger-strike was being continued, that some of the strikers were in a rather grave condition. This state of affairs lasted for several more days.

From Archangelsk some kind of a commission, composed of the associate chief of the Department of the northern camps, Nogtev, of the procurator of the province and representatives of the Soviet, deigned to pay us a visit. The arrival of the commission contributed nothing new. The tension grew constantly. For hours people clung to the windows, trying to gather from the different indirect signs of the camp-life something about the character of the events which in their opinion might be occurring in the hospital. Finally, on the 20th, the sixteenth day of the hunger-strike, there arrived from Moscow a commission consisting of a representative of the "G.P.U."¹⁾ and a representative of the procuratorship, Kondurushkin, who modestly presented himself as "the Procurator of the Republic." In the morning of the 31st several guards and soldiers appeared at the bunk of each hunger-striker. All of them were bound and some were carried off for artificial feeding. Seventeen days of hunger exhausted the anarchists physically to such a degree and the experiences of those days strained their nerves to such a state of fatigue that the hunger-strike was automatically suspended. Thus the strike ended in failure. There could be no talk of abolishing the Bertominsk camp in the near future. Life again began to enter, slowly, it is true, into the ordinary routine. About the same time the external "blockade" ended, too. In the first months neither letters from the camp

1) The "G.P.U." pronounced "ge-pe-ou", is the present name of the old Tcheka, and is formed of the initials of the Russian words meaning the Political Department of the State. It is a kind of gendarmery with executive powers.

nor letters addressed to the camp arrived, getting stuck somewhere in the office of the "G.P.U."

April, May and the first half of June passed in comparative peace. It is true, there were individual conflicts, as on May 1, because of a flag displayed from the window as part of the struggle for permission to keep the windows open, but nevertheless they disturbed little the general mode of life. There came a drift of warm weather. The last snow fell on May 31, Navigation opened, new parties of prisoners began to arrive. The number of political prisoners was doubled in a very short time. We were extremely crowded. The additional buildings put at the disposal of the prisoners did not help much. The administration began to speak of the forthcoming transfer of the criminals to the Solovki and of the transformation of Pertominsk into a camp for politicals exclusively. About the middle of June the transfer of the common criminals to the Solovki actually began. The administration made an effort incidentally to remove as common criminals a number of comrades of the socialist community who were classified officially as non-partisan. But no one attributed any serious import to the rumors we heard concerning the transfer of the political prisoners to the Solovki. About this time Pertominsk had already acquired a notorious reputation everywhere, and it seemed that it could not be surpassed.

On June 23 the bells again began to sound alarmingly, the muzzle-stoppers clicked once more, again the machine-guns stared in our faces. The alarm, it soon appeared, was caused by the discovery of a forced opening from the building in the vacant basement and of footprints in the direction of the bay. It was found that two anarchists, Vladimir Krassovsky

and Tatiana Romanova, had escaped the previous night. Part of the community learned of the disappearance only early in the morning. The most superficial investigation of the circumstances of the escape and of a number of preceding incidents (a couple of days before the event, the administration had removed the two outside sentinels posted in the most important place, at the wall facing the bay), left no doubt as to the role of the administration in the "escape". It was further established that the "fugitives" were released by Commandant Loginov himself. It was also established that Krassovsky and Romanova were in the employ of the "G.P.U." (Later, at Solovki, the administration did not even deny these facts.) Some people considered the "escape" as a preliminary military diversion, intended to make it easier for the administration to accomplish the transfer of the political prisoners to Solovki.

On June 29, Nogtov again appeared on the horizon. The committee of elders was called before him, and he announced that Pertominsk would be abolished, that according to orders from Moscow all the political prisoners would be sent by a steamer which was due that night to Solovki, where the best cloister had been set aside for them and where they would enjoy a regime of greater freedom. If the prisoners should refuse voluntarily to leave, he would transfer them by force and carry out his orders from above.

Special meetings of the groups were called. The social-democrats by an insignificant majority expressed themselves against leaving and for resistance to the transfer, regardless of the consequences. The remaining factions, the socialist-revolutionists, the left socialists-revolutionists, and the anarchists decided by majorities that it was necessary

for various reasons to leave without resistance. The consent of the community to the transfer to the Solovki was communicated to Nogtev.

The following day we hurriedly collected our belongings, embarked on the steamer and after a trip of about 16 or 17 hours across a rarely calm sea, one hundred and fifty Pertominsk political prisoners on July 1 ~~leaved~~ ^{left} to the "sacred" shores of the green Solovetz Island, at the landing-place of which are numerous picturesquely scattered monastic churches and buildings. Part of these, including the cathedrals and some other structures, had but very recently been devastated by fire.

Upon landing on the Solovetz soil we all felt that we were entering a new and strange phase of life. From conversations with common criminals we learned of the shocking regime which the administration is applying to them. There is no limit to their hours of servitude. They receive a real starvation ration, being fed largely with stinking codfish. Beating is practiced at every step upon the slightest pretext. Every keeper, barrack-warden, every petty official supervising the penal labor has the "right to the stick", i.e., the right to beat. The high officials do not even need such a right. They can beat whenever they like and with anything they please. For any insignificant offense punishments are employed hardly known even to the representatives of the exotic countries belonging to the Communist International: scores of criminals are stripped nude and put for a period of four to six hours, towards evening, when the mosquitoes are especially numerous, "under the mosquitoes". Alongside, a special sentinel is placed whose duty it is to "observe" that the victims should not in one way or another drive the mosquitoes away. At the same time

other "civilized" punishments were resurrected: the stone "bags" which have existed here almost since the days of Ivan the Terrible. The criminals are put for a week and sometimes for two weeks into the "bags" - narrow and deep pits in the stone walls, altogether without light, into which a man can be put only "at an angle".

After spending several hours at the landing-place, our baggage was piled on carts and towards evening, (which is a relative term, as this happened during the period of the white nights,) we found ourselves at Savvatievo, situated at a distance of twelve versts from the station.

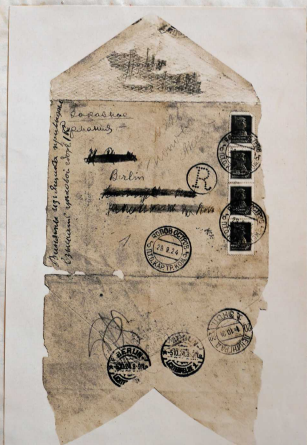
After the many harrowing experiences of prison life in Kholmogory and Pertominsk, upon our arrival at Savvatievo, our new place, we were all filled with the same wish: to utilize the short northern summer for recuperation; to gather strength for the coming hard winter of complete isolation during seven months from the outside world; to accumulate self-restraint in order to bear all the hardships, all the prison tragedies which, it seems to us, may occur when we are left here during the winter all alone with the local little czars, composed of white guards, tchekists¹⁾ with criminal records, and various criminal and bandit elements form nine-tenths of the local administration and the so-called staff of keepers, and who are all corrupted with the feeling that they are responsible to no one.

Among the very numerous officials of the central department of the camps, which is located here at Solovki, and of the individual camps and cloisters, there are not more than

1) Agents of the Tcheka, the old name of the "C.P.U."

half a dozen "free" men; all the others are exclusively prisoners of the aforementioned categories. Many of the middle and lower officials who had but recently received sentences of capital punishment which were commuted to ten years in prison, found themselves at the Solovki and here immediately became "person-ages". But even the "free" high officials are essentially not very much different from the others: they are tchekists and of course all communists, who had sinned in one way or another and whom the Communist Party or their respective departments disciplined by sending them to Solovki for correction and improvement. It is obvious that one could not make a successful career in dealing with the common criminals, of whom there are four thousand here. There remain the politicals, on whose heads it is possible to earn redemption for one's sins. (The local official term "criminals" signifies all categories of prisoners, except socialists and anarchists, such as common criminals, condemned tchekists, speculators, peasants, etc. The prison in which they are kept is known at the "Kremlin")

We all arrived here, as I indicated above, under the acute need and desire of recuperating, even for a short while, one's body and soul. The summer weather, the lake, the evergreen woods surrounding the cloister seemed to create the necessary atmosphere. Before his departure from Pertominsk, Nogtev assured the committee of elders that we would have at our disposal the lake and part of the woods, and a sufficiently comfortable and spacious building. According to him, the Savvatievo cloister could freely accomodate three hundred persons. In reality it was quite different. The building assigned to us, even according to the standards fixed by the administration, (some kind of a commission examined the house



ENVELOPE OF LETTER FROM SOLOVETZ EXILE

The Russian Post-Office Stamp Shows the Letter Was Mailed from Popov Island of the Solovetz Group. The Lower Part of the Envelope Bears the Stamp of the "G.P.U." and the Initials of the Censor.

before our arrival and set these standards), had room for about 100 or 110 people. It turned out to be as bad with the lake and woods. A tiny section of the lake-front was fenced off for us and the first attempt, the day following our arrival, to cross the little bridge into the woods ended with direct shots at one of the political prisoners. Only the tremendous selfcontrol of the comrade who was the target, the left socialist-revolutionist Groshev, and of another comrade who cried to the sentinel: "Aim at the feet!" averted a bloody event on the second day of our stay at Solovki. At night the administration removed the little bridge which entered into the history of the cloister as "Groshev's bridge fortification". As to the woods, they were real woods, but beyond our reach. A part of the court, in area about one and a half desiatins, with a score of birches, was assigned to us, as well as an additional bit of the lake.

The very first day we had to fight already for the legalization of the right to walk about freely during all of the twenty-four hours of the day within the confines of our tiny domain. We had been promised it at Pertominsk yet. After several days of bargaining with Nogtev, we secured for our accommodations another wooden structure, with room for about 30 persons, and the administration "owed" us eighteen or twenty more places until the repair and adaptation for living purposes of various nocks and closets. A week later we settled in our cells, arranged things and entered upon a peaceful phase of life. We restored the school we had established at Pertominsk yet, the studies were resumed, whether in school or otherwise, we started to bathe, fish, row, play games, etc. We tried to forget the winter for the time being.

But this peaceful "idyllic" life did not last long. As in the first period at Pertominsk, there began a "blockade" of our incoming and outgoing mail. No move was made in the direction of solving a number of housekeeping problems which arose because of our new quarters. Every visit of Nogtev to the cloister ended with some spiteful ruling. It seemed as if Nogtev was trying to incite our community to such a state of exasperation that some incident would arise of itself which would afford him the opportunity of "taming" the prisoners. In the hospital at the Kremlin, some twelve versts from us, a regime of such petty cruel mockeries was introduced that even those patients who were seriously ill were compelled to return in a day or two to the cloister.

New batches of prisoners began to arrive. The first small groups were somehow accommodated. But there were still some months of navigation ahead of us and at the rate at which the "G.P.U." was working, we expected such an influx of guests that we could not possibly make room for them. All our anticipations were however surpassed. The number of political prisoners at Solovki was almost doubled during these months. Nogtev was informed that until the assignment of additional buildings we could not find space to accommodate the new arrivals. He then temporarily put in the Kremlin a large batch of Siberian socialist-revolutionists and a group of social-democrats, about 35 people, placing them under a semi-prison regime. All the efforts to obtain permission for a meeting of the elder of the new group with the committee of elders of the Savvatievo community, in order to work out jointly some scheme of accommodation, were futile. Any intercourse between the arrivals and the Savvatievo inmates was resolutely stopped.

A couple of weeks later Nogtev invited the Kremlin inmates to move to the newly organized Muksolm cloister, about 22 versts from Savvatievo. The tactics of Nogtev, calculated to isolate the Kremlin and Savvatievo prisoners from each other, surcharged the atmosphere more and more every day in both camps. The Savvatievo community was raging, the Kremlin group was foaming. More than once it came close to the outbreak of a hunger-strike of 200 persons. The nerves and passions were strained to the bursting-point. Nogtev not only refused the sole demand raised by the Kremlin prisoners, who agreed to go to Muksolm, for permission to hold periodical meetings of the elders to settle common economical matters, to distribute the parcels arriving from the mainland, to exchange books, etc., but refused even permission for one such meeting at which a solution could be outlined for some of the questions which are of enormous importance to the prisoners because of the complete isolation of Solovki from the rest of the world.

On August 22, Nogtev declared to the committee of elders of the Kremlin prisoners that if they should not move voluntarily to Muksolm, they would be transferred by force, and once there they might declare "a little hunger-strike". It was to the same group that Nogtev had offered to supply "a little rope" when they went on a hunger-strike at the Archangelsk Preliminary Prison. The same night the Kremlin prisoners were bound and in that condition transferred to the Muksolm cloister. The procedure did not of course come off without slapping, blows, blue marks, etc. And in the morning Nogtev left for Moscow.

About two weeks later a special commission of the "G.P.U.", headed by Feldman, arrived from Moscow. The commiss-

question of the seriously ill, regarding whose transfer application had been made in March and in July, has not even been discussed. The main reason for this was that the Commission came for the ostensible purpose of removing all the ugly conditions and of directing the life of the political prisoners into more calm channels. A joint meeting of the committees of elders of the two cloisters was arranged and nearly all the questions raised by them were settled in a positive manner. (Only the first question - about the abolition of the camp at Solovki and the transfer of the prisoners to the mainland - was negatived.) The blockade of the mail was lifted, although it had already been weakened beforehand. Relatives began to arrive and according to the new "charta", they were permitted to stay with us, whereas before they were allowed, after a long and arduous trip, but three meetings of two hours each, in the presence of the officials. We breathed a little easier. The thought of the inevitable winter was shoved into the background, although it was still causing anxiety as before. Thus things drifted until the middle of October, when a new commission headed by Bokyi arrived. But this was already a commission for altogether different purposes, a commission for "the interpretation of the reforms." Together with Bokyi came Nogtev too.

Bokyi himself "interpreted" nothing, he only modestly declared that Feldman did not take everything "into account" and therefore it was now impossible to carry out all his promises. It appeared that in spite of "the assistance of Comrade Semashko",¹⁾ not a single physician would agree to come "voluntarily" to Slovki. It appeared that the policy of peace introduced in September by Feldman.

----- Just at the time when Bokyi's commission was here.

1) Semashko - Commissar of Health in the Soviet Government.

Sandokis, a left socialist-revolutionist, committed suicide.

question of the seriously ill, regarding whose transfer application had been made in March and in July, has not even been discussed yet in the "G.P.U." The advisability of the new system of the visits of relatives was also raised again. But the most important of the "interpretations" was the arrival of Nogtev. The committee of elders, after Bokyi declared that Nogtev was present in his capacity of Chief of the Department of Concentration Camps, pointed out that leaving us in the hands of Nogtev for the winter inspires us with the former sense of alarm, that we again and again insist on our transfer to some point on the mainland, and that we beforehand put all responsibility on the leading organs of the Soviet Government for anything that might happen here. Bokyi calmed the committee of elders, stating that he had brought with him a whole staff of orderly and courteous officials. At this we parted, after solving a number of minor questions. Some "interpretations" were apparently made by the new commission as to the findings of the previous commission. (There were endless rumors in the camp about embezzlements and dark deeds connected with the confiscation of church valuables. Nogtev had executed in August two monks, and this was the cause of the rumors.)

Again one began to hear talk of the stone "bags", and of similar things. But nevertheless the "policy of courtesy" remained externally in force. With the tacit consent from above, Eichmans, the recently appointed associate of Nogtev, came to conduct various negotiations, since Nogtev is virtually boycotted by us, and he tried to maintain the policy of peace introduced in September by Feldman.

Just at the time when Bokyi's commission was here, a painful event occurred in the Muksolm cloister; the youth Sandomir, a left socialist-revolutionist, committed suicide,

Bokyi prohibited any intercourse between the cloisters intended to ascertain the details of the suicide. There followed an order forbidding the community as a whole from participating in the funeral and burying him on the grounds of the camp, near the fence. Only thanks to the efforts of the commandant of the cloister who realized the state of mind of the political prisoners was it possible to avert a disaster in Muksdm. The refusal to give the Savvatievo prisoners an opportunity to learn what was going on in Muksdm again inflamed our community to the highest degree. (The memory of Aronovitch's suicide was still fresh in every mind.) Nogtev left for Kem, to accompany Bokyi. A short telephogram sent by Eichmans concerning the Muksdm tragedy somewhat relieved the tension and averted a hunger-strike which was scheduled to commence that day.

Now our life is once more following a peaceful course. Winter is here. We expect any day the closing of navigation. During the next six or seven months we will be completely severed from the outside world. These are possibly the last lines you will have from us until next June. We must arm ourselves with courage and self-control. We are all studying hard and have inaugurated a series of lectures and talks on diverse topics, and are preparing another series for a later period. But we do not know whether we shall be permitted to continue our studies in peace. The "war" of Eichmans, who had gone to Moscow with an ultimatum, "either I or Nogtev", ended with Nogtev's remaining. (In Pertominsk, Nogtev boasted incidentally, that he had himself signed a death sentence for his own brother! He is generally an absolutely abnormal person, a maniac, which does not prevent him from being the "czar and god" over 5000 prisoners.)

At the same time it became known that the "G.P.U." in Moscow is again dissatisfied with the "liberal policy" introduced at Solovki. Only part of the sick ones, Egorov, Helfgott, Arkabina and Trofimova, were taken away from here, the applications of the rest were refused, although the woman-physician that was recently sent here, the communist Feldman, drew up a list of comrades, altogether about ten names, that should be removed from Solovki.

Altogether we have a sufficient percentage of sick persons. Our own physicians recently examined the entire Savvatievo community. Fifty-two percent of the prisoners are ill. Especially numerous are the lung ailments, 14 percent, including 11 percent of tubercular cases. The rest are suffering with diseases of the intestinal organs, nerves, malaria, etc. The winter here will be injurious to many.

Enough for the present. We bid you farewell. We want to be cheerful. To you, whose "freedom" differs so little from prison-life, we send our best wishes and our comradely gratitude for all your cares about us.

Solovki, December, 1923.

(Signature)

1) This is the text of the official letter, telegraphed by the committee representing the political prisoners of the Solovki Islands to the Soviet Government immediately after the shooting on the fateful December 12. This document, as well as the following five official letters, appeared on November 10, 1924, in No. 11 of the "Socialist Vestnik", the central organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, and in the November issue of "Revolutionary Russia", the central organ of the Party of Socialists-Revolutionists.

Other documents pertaining to the tragedy of December 12 will be found in the Appendix to Part One of the book.

2) This organization is a kind of a semi-legal Red Cross for political prisoners directed by Peshkova, formerly Mrs. Maria Goral. The Soviet Government does not recognize this organization, since officially there are no political prisoners in Soviet Russia.

L E T T E R T W O ¹⁾

To the Central Executive Committee
of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics:

On December 19, at 5.30 in the evening, for refusing to obey the sudden order to stop walking in the open air, the peacefully promenading political prisoners of the Savvatievo Concentration Camp were fired upon repeatedly from three sides.

K i l l e d: The socialists Natalia Bauer, Elizabeth Kotova, George Katchorovsky, Gavril Bilima, Meyer, Gorelik.

W o u n d e d: The socialists George Shik, Vsevolod Popov, and the anarchist Leonid Lebedev.

Holding the "G.P.U.", in the person of its central organs or its local agents, guilty of the committed crime, we demand the urgent appointment of a special commission, without representation in it of the "G.P.U.", and with the participation of the "Relief for Political Prisoners"²⁾, for the purpose of investigating the occurrence.

(Signed) COMMITTEE OF ELDERS
OF THE SAVVATIEVO
CONCENTRATION CAMP

December 19, 1923.

1) This is the text of the official message telegraphed by the committee representing the political prisoners of the Solovets Islands to the Soviet Government immediately after the shooting on the fateful December 19. This document, as well as the following five official letters, appeared on November 10, 1924, in No. 21 of the "Socialist Vestnik", the central organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, and in the November issue of "Revolutionary Russia", the central organ of the Party of Socialists-Revolutionists.

Other documents pertaining to the tragedy of December 19 will be found in the Appendix to Part One of the book.

2) This organization is a kind of a semi-legal Red Cross for political prisoners directed by Peshkova, formerly Mrs. Maxim Gorki. The Soviet Government does not recognize this organization, since officially there are no political prisoners in Soviet Russia.

No, we know the real 1919 line of that comedy "of unbiased investigation" which the commission of inquiry is now staging. The all-powerful czar and god of the Bolsheviks, the worthy offspring of the tsarist ranks, the chief of the department, Nogtev, has himself again threatened us with bloody punishment.

LETTER THREE.

where he received the blessings of his superiors at the To the Commission of Inquiry into the Events of December 19,

Appointed by the Department of the Northern

Camps of the "G.P.U."¹⁾

In reply to your proposal that we furnish evidence of regarding the shooting of our comrades, the political prisoners which took place at Savvatievo on December 19, the anarchist community declares the following:

At this time we have not the least desire to enter into deliberations and clarifications of such formalities as may be of interest to the commission of inquiry appointed by the Department of the Northern camps. Just now we are absolutely indifferent to questions seeking to establish the identity of the soldiers or keepers who did the shooting, the exact points from which the firing came, the nature of the guns and the size of cartridges employed in shooting at us. All these matters are to us small details not deserving our attention. And let not the commission of inquiry think that it will succeed in laying the guilt for the nightmare of yesterday's murder of our comrades on the heads of a few petty irresponsible minions, who supposedly disobeyed orders from above.

1) This letter, in the form of a declaration, was written the day following the shooting when the dead were still unburied.

No, we know the real value of that comedy "of unbiased investigation" which the commission of inquiry is now staging. The all-powerful czar and god of the Solovetz satrapy, the worthy offspring of the tchekist ranks, the chief of the department, Nogtev, has time and again threatened us with bloody punishment, especially after his return from Moscow where he received the blessings of his superiors at the Lubianka.¹⁾

Shortly before the shooting yesterday Nogtev deigned to call at Savvatievo, and the red army detachment was properly trained for the event. Any wonder that the nefarious act of firing whole volleys into people peacefully promenading in the yard, was carried out in an orderly, planned, and well organized manner?

The scoundrel commanding the military detachment, who refused to give his name, issued orders in a terse voice: "Straight at the targets!" And from all sides there came a shower of loaded cartridges, sharply and at close range aimed at us - the living targets.

When a momentary calm arrived, after hundreds of bullets had been fired at us, and we realized that there were wounded among us, we all turned towards the red building, carrying our wounded, but we failed to reach the building when a second order rang out: "Streight at the targets! Fire!" Again wholesale shooting, and one after another our comrades, mowed down, fell to the ground.

Yes, we were bold enough to insist on preserving the right, which we had won through a long struggle, to promenade

1) The seat of the headquarters in Moscow of the "G.P.U."

unhindered within the enclosure surrounded on all sides by barbed wire. We were bold enough to oppose¹⁾ the attempt to encroach upon this right of ours, and for this we were treated to a bloodbath. Of the eight who were struck, five were shot to death,- five fresh sacrifices to the insatiable appetite of the bloodthirsty beast whose name is Power and who reigns on the throne of Russia shamming to represent the workers and peasants.

The real murderers are not^{to} be found neither in the barracks and the commandant's offices of the Savvatievo camp, nor in the midst of the soldiers and the tchekist keepers from among the criminal prisoners who did the shooting. No, these are only contemptible, stupid executioners. The real murderers are, first, the henchman Nogtev himself; next his superior, Andreeva; and finally the persons at the Lubyanka and the Kremlin guiding the whole punitive policy of the Russian Communist Party.

As we stand, with gnashing teeth, over the lifeless bodies of our comrades, we fully realise what we may expect in the future. The murderers have especially arranged the slaughter at a time when we are deprived of any communication with the outside world and shall be entirely cut off in the course of the next 6 or 7 months.

Of this, however, we are firmly confident even if you permit no one of us to come out alive from here: It matters not,- the horrors which are being perpetrated by you upon

1) This opposition, it is needless to add, was entirely passive, and expressed itself exclusively in a supreme moral defiance of brutal force.

your defenceless captives, the socialist and anarchist prisoners, will sooner or later become the common knowledge of the workingmen in Russia and abroad, and then no comedy of a trial of the petty miniens who executed your will, shall avail you. Then the very highest heroes and inspirers of yesterday's slaughter shall not avoid punishment.

On Behalf of the Anarchist

Community

(Signature)

December 20, 1923.



Alexandre Izmailovitch



Irina Kachovskaya



Maria Spiridonova



Ekaterina Bulatova



Lia Gottman

MARIA SPIRIDONOVA; See page 154.

ALEXANDRA IZMAILOVITCH; See page 172.

IRENA KACHOVSKAYA; Grand-daughter of Decembrist Kachovsky
Executed in 1825. Left Socialist-Revolutionist.
Condemned in 1908 to 15 years' Penal Servitude.
In exile since 1923.

LIA GOTTMAN; Anarchist, now on Solovets Islands.
Arrested while on Relief Mission to
Northern Concentration Camps.

EKATERINA BULATOVA; Left Socialist-Revolutionist.
Committed Suicide in Prison, May 18, 1924.

In reply to 11-23 - 1923 - 1923, the committee of
elders declared that regulating the promenade hours was
unacceptable to the political prisoners, when it was the
first step in the introduction of a prison regime. After the
conversation with Eichmans the political prisoners of the
Savvatievo camp

L E T T E R F O U R .

the daytime as well as late in the evening, on December 18.

To the Commission of Inquiry into the Events of December 19, 1923.

In reply to the proposal made by the assistant
chief of the department of the northern concentration camps
that we furnish the commission appointed by this department
evidence regarding the shooting which took place on December
19, we declare the following:

We are of the opinion that a real inquiry into
this case can be conducted only by persons who are in no way
connected either with the direct or with the indirect initia-
tors of the shooting. The membership of the aforementioned
commission unquestionably fails to satisfy this condition, for
which reason we refuse to assist in the investigation which
it will conduct and are resorting to the present declaration.

On December 18, 1923, the assistant chief of the
northern camps, Mr. Eichmans, while at Savvatievo, announced
in the course of personal conversations with the committee of
elders that political prisoners, according to the orders of
the "G.P.U.", would be permitted to promenade only during the
day, i.e., from daybreak to sunset. He further stated that
the department of the northern camps, taking as the duration
of a day the standard of the Moscow and Petrograd zone; limited
the time for being out in the open air from 9 in the morning
to 6 in the evening. He said that this order would be executed
with the utmost rigor.

In reply to this announcement, the committee of elders declared that regulating the promenading hours was unacceptable to the political prisoners, since it was the first step in the introduction of a prison regime. After the conversation with Eichmans the political prisoners of the Savvatievo camp continued to promenade at diverse hours, in the daytime as well as late in the evening. On December 19, at the beginning of the sixth hour in the afternoon, the keeper then on duty at the camp came into the room of the elder of the socialist-revolutionist group, Ivanitzky, and brought him an order, or more correctly a copy of an order to sign, bearing no signature except that of the clerk.

The elder Ivanitzky, after acquainting himself with the contents of the order, from the text of which it was difficult to establish who had issued it, declared to the keeper on duty that one of the elders would go to the commandant to examine the question both of the nature of the order and of its author, but in the meantime, for the reasons stated above, the elder Ivanitzky refused to attach his signature to it. Two or three minutes later the keeper on duty came back, carrying the same order¹⁾ which however was now signed by Commandant Rosenthal. In Ivanitzky's room there were at the time the elder of the social-democratic group, Bogdanov, and the political prisoner Muchin. Both elders signed the order, again pointing out to the keeper on duty that the elder Bogdanov would go to the commandant to discuss the order.

As regards the order itself, it dealt with, first, the regulation of the electric light and, second, the question

1) The text of the order is reproduced in the Appendix to Part One.

of promenading, in the same manner as Richmans treated it, in his last conversation. Also, there was further reference to the effect that the order, dated December 19, must be announced at the roll-call, therefore, at 8 the same evening, to inform the political prisoners of it and to settle with them the questions of promenading and of the electric light.

Thus it is obvious from the text of the order itself, that the prohibition to promenade after 6 in the evening could not refer to December 19, for according to the meaning of the order it should have been announced at roll-call, i.e. at 8 o'clock. Several minutes after the departure of the keeper on duty, single shots were heard. The elder Ivanitzky went out into the court; just then the shooting stopped and soon a chain of soldiers started from the gates of the building occupied by the anarchists and spread out

along the fence. The elder Ivanitzky attempted to get through to the commandant, but those who stood at the doors leading to the commandant's headquarters held him up with the words, "You can't see the commandant." In this way, in spite of the repeated warning to the keeper on duty that one of the elders of the socialist community would come to the commandant to discuss the issued order, the administration of the camp took measures not to permit negotiations between the elder and the commandant. This furnished ground for the assertion that the shooting of the unarmed political prisoners was premeditated and prepared by someone. The following fact strengthens us in this assertion: on the day of the shooting, at the order of the commandant, the hours were struck from the belfry.

About two hours before the shooting, the commandant, conversing with the elders Ivanitzky and Broverman, said that he now had a spare man whom he commissioned, as he expressed it, "to gong the time." Nevertheless, in spite of the availability of this spare man, the belfry remained silent both at five and at six o'clock. The shooting proper commenced before six o'clock, which fact we ascertained from the testimony of those comrades who carried watches. We have no other way of knowing the time, as the clock at the commandant's headquarters is either an hour slow or an hour fast, which is the reason why the elders would usually arrange with the commandant, whenever a definite schedule was set, that the agreed hour would be struck from the belfry.

The general outline of the shooting proper of December 19, presents itself as follows: The first shots were fired at the group of political prisoners promenading alongside the stone building, on its northern side. These shots came from the watch-tower nearest to the entrance to the camp. There were six or eight shots. Soon afterwards a chain of soldiers was formed along the hedge between the gates leading to the building occupied by the anarchists and the gates leading to the Issakovo road. The main body of promenading political prisoners was at this moment on a line running from the chapel down, and also on the adjacent paths among the trees. Nowhere, however, did the political prisoners approach the chain of soldiers closely. After some lapse of time the voice of the commanding officer of the squad was heard: "Political prisoners. Go to your quarters!" Two minutes later the warning was repeated, and then it was repeated for the third time; however, not one of the warnings was accompanied

by a threat to employ arms. During the intervals between the warnings, several political prisoners who were nearer than the others to the chain of soldiers, which by that time had spread out even along the bake, heard some persons instructing the soldiers with the following phrases: "Hit them between the eyes!" "Don't allow yourselves to be beaten!" "If they should attack, use the bayonets!" "Don't stand on ceremonies, it's time to begin!" After the third warning, about two minutes later, the order was heard: "Straight at the targets! Fire!" which was followed by a volley and then scattered firing. The first shots killed the socialists Meyer Gorelik and Bilima-Pasternak and wounded the socialist Shik and the anarchist Lebodev. The shots were fired when the majority of the political prisoners was retreating from the chain of soldiers, which is the reason why most of the wounds were in the backs of the victims. During the firing many lay down in the snow. The shooting, however, continued at those lying down.

When the firing stopped, voices were heard from several directions: "There are wounded!" The voices were sufficiently numerous and loud so that they could not but be heard by the men who were shooting as well as by those who were in charge of it. Simultaneously the political prisoners began to pick up the comrades who were hit, and to carry them into the building. In spite of all this a new order was heard: "Load for a second round!" and then came the order: "Straight at the targets! Fire!" There followed a second volley, after which some scattered firing, so that the men who carried the wounded were forced to put them down on the ground and to lie down themselves. These shots killed the socialists Katchorovsky, Kotova, Bauer, and wounded the socialist Veevoled Popov. Katchorovsky was hit by five bullets. The firing covered the

entire square on which the political prisoners were found and although most of the victims were in the main alley, there were also killed and wounded in other places, particularly near the chapel which is situated a few feet away from the building. There are bullet marks near the doors of the building itself. The firing was conducted from three sides: from the gates to the building occupied by the anarchists, from the gates to the Issakovo road, and from the ice-bound lake. Some shots were taken at the building proper. Thus, one of the bullets fired from the watch-tower nearest to the bath-house lodged in the kitchen; in addition, there are bullet marks on the building at other places, and most of these marks are at a level below a man's height. After the second round of shots there followed a third round, aimed at the prisoners returning to the building.

All of the foregoing convinces us that we have here a case not only of preparation for the shooting, but of a desire to bring about that end. That explains the extraordinary haste in carrying out the order to limit the promenading hours, which was utterly unexpected to the political prisoners. That is the reason why the committee of elders was deprived of the opportunity of averting in one way or another the event. That is the reason why the shooting commenced before six o'clock in the evening. And it was for that very reason that the administration itself took no measures at all to avoid the bloody outrage, without even trying to achieve its goal by other means. And, finally, it was for that very reason that the entire operation was executed with exceptional cruelty

shown by the facts that several of our comrades were killed by the first shots, that the shooting was conducted from three sides, that shots were fired at the backs of retreating people, at persons lying on the ground, at the wounded, and at those who were carrying them.

(Signatures)

December 20, 1923¹⁾

- 1) In the Russian copy of this letter sent from Solovetz by the prisoners, the date was omitted, but it is probable that it was written by the socialists simultaneously with the preceding letter of the anarchist group.

1) The Russian text of this letter bears the title "Reply to the Socialist Committee of the Revolutionary Army and the Commission of the Soviet Executive Committee of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics." For the sake of clarity in the form, "Central Executive Committee of the Union" is employed throughout the text instead of the full title.

which is now entering a new phase, that of direct murder as regards the socialists and anarchists who had been confined in jails without trial for a period of years.

Not wishing to LETTER FIVE.

To the Assistant Chief of the Department of the Northern Camps, Mr. Eichmans, to be submitted to the Central Executive Committee of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics: 1)

In reply to your proposal that we send representatives for the purpose of furnishing evidence to the Commission of Inquiry of the Central Executive Committee of the Union regarding the shooting of socialists and anarchists which took place at the Savvatievo cloister on December 19, 1923, we the imprisoned socialists, declare:

The appointment of a bureaucratic commission from among representatives of the Central Executive Committee of the Union, of the Central Control Commission of the Russian Communist Party, and of the Commissariat of Justice does in no way guarantee to any degree an impartial investigation of the events of December 19. The work of the Commission itself will be carried on in conditions of secrecy and of a complete absence of publicity. This Commission is composed exclusively of representatives of the ruling party that is entirely responsible for the unexampled regime of terror which is systematically being perpetrated by the Government throughout the country and

1) The Russian text of this letter bears the title, "Reply of the Socialist Community of the Savvatievo Camp to the Commission of the Central Executive Committee of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics." For the sake of brevity the form, "Central Executive Committee of the Union" is employed throughout the book instead of the full title.

which is now entering a new phase, that of direct murder as regards the socialists and anarchists who had been confined in jails without trial for a period of years.

Not wishing to lend an appearance of unbiased investigation by assisting in such an inquiry, we refuse to send our representatives for the purpose of furnishing evidence to this Commission. On account of the wrecking of the workers' organisations in Russia and of the abolition of any legal public opinion, we demand a public inquiry and the inclusion in the Commission of Inquiry of representatives of the "Relief of Political Prisoners." We categorically demand also the admission to the inquiry of representatives of the Workers' Socialist International and the Amsterdam Federation of Trade Unions, for the purpose of an impartial investigation and for the information of all the revolutionary socialist organizations of Western Europe. Only such a commission can provide the minimum guarantees of a broad and all-sided investigation. Only such a commission can bring into relief the full picture of the events of December 19 and of their connection with the general condition of the socialists and anarchists under the existing regime of terror, as well as the responsibility of the entire Bolshevik Party and the Central Government for these events. To such a commission we shall send our representatives to furnish evidence. In the event of the acceptance of this condition, we declare that in spite of the fact that the Solovetz Islands are cut off from the mainland during the entire winter, our representatives will proceed to Moscow, even if they have to cross the sea on

rowboats, so as to shed light through their participation in the Commission on the crime of December 19.

On Behalf of the Socialist Community of the

Savvatievo Cloister : Executive Committee of
the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

A. Ivanitzky, for the Socialist- Revolutionists,
S. Zeitlin, for the Social- Democrats, Maksim Cloister of
Samokhvalon, for the Left Socialist-Revolutionists. make the
following statement:

The Solovets Islands, serving as they do as a place
January 18, 124, of socialists and anarchists, are by the very
Solovetz Islands, topography completely cut off from the mainland
Savvatievo Cloister. part of the year, and therefore satisfy
all the requirements of isolation in the most perfect manner.
But the leading organs of the Soviet Government and of the
Russian Communist Party are apparently not satisfied with
our mere isolation from the outside world. The authorities are
now promulgating a state of mutual isolation among the already
isolated socialists, limiting communication between the
cloisters, and limiting by means of barbed wire the walking
grounds.

Certain members of the administrative and the entire
staff of keepers consist of agents of the "G.P.U." who are
serving sentences for criminal acts. The policy of the Soviet
Government towards the socialists on the Solovets Islands is
characterized by the chief of the Department of the northern
camps, Mr. Bogiev, who himself expressed the essence of this
policy in the following sentence which he addressed to a group

LETTER SIX .

To the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of
the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics!

The political prisoners of the Muksolm Cloister of
the Solovetz concentration camp deem it necessary to make the
following statement:

The Solovetz Islands, serving as they do as a place
for the isolation of socialists and anarchists, are by the very
nature of their topography completely cut off ^{from} the mainland
during the greater part of the year, and therefore satisfy
all the requirements of isolation in the most perfect manner.
But the leading organs of the Soviet Government and of the
Russian Communist Party are apparently not satisfied with
our mere isolation from the outside world. The authorities are
now promulgating a state of mutual isolation among the already
isolated socialists, limiting communication between the
cloisters, and limiting by means of barbed wire the walking
grounds.

Certain members of the administration and the entire
staff of keepers consist of agents of the "G.P.U." who are
serving sentences for criminal acts. The policy of the Soviet
Government towards the socialists on the Solovetz Islands is
personified by the chief of the department of the northern
camps, Mr. Nogtev, who himself expressed the essence of this
policy in the following sentence which he addressed to a group

of socialists-revolutionists sent from Siberia to Archangelsk:

"I cannot understand why you declare a hunger - strike. If you wish to end your lives by suicide, better take a rope and hang yourselves."

Several months of living on the Solovetz Islands, spent in an atmosphere of violence, provocation, arbitrary and arrogant rule, have made it obvious to us that the Soviet Government had set before itself as an actual aim the physical extermination of the socialists and anarchists, and not their isolation. We had declared this to the commission under the chairmanship of Feldman which arrived after the provocative forcible transfer of our bound prisoners from the Solovetz Kremlin to the Muksolm cloister. We warned, in his person, the Government that the continuation of the provocative policy, in spite of our restraint, will inevitably result in blood. Events have justified our declarations. The socialist revolutionist Sandomir, committed suicide in the Muksolm cloister. During the funeral already it almost came to a bloody conflict which was fortunately averted thanks to the self-restraint of the socialist community, in spite of the openly provocative conduct of the "G.P.U.", the responsible representative of which, Mr. Bokyi, was at the time on the Solovetz Islands.

Later, in the same Muksolm cloister, the social-democrat Yegorov went insane. Finally, in the Savvatievo cloister, as a result of an order to the "G.P.U." limiting the promenading hours,- an order anticipating the inevitability of a conflict arising from its application,- a bloody event

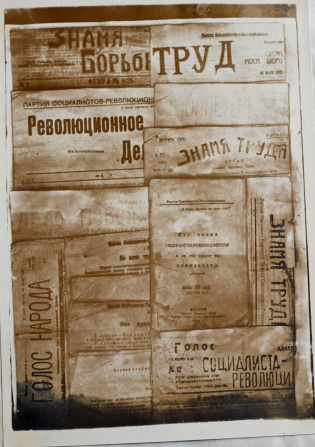
occurred. The troops of the "G.P.U." and the keepers shot at socialist and anarchist prisoners who were peacefully promenading. The shooting was done in volleys, wholesale, shots being fired at those who fell to the ground as well as at those who were carrying off the wounded. We know that the conduct of the "G.P.U." towards the socialists and anarchists imprisoned on the Solovetz Islands is an inevitable result of the entire policy of terror applied by the Soviet Government to socialists and anarchists. And we therefore have no doubts that new sacrifices are in store for us. Calmly looking into the future which is awaiting us, we declare:

For all the occurrences of the past and present on the Solovetz Islands, for all the victims fallen and yet to fall, for the extermination of socialists and anarchists,- the responsibility rests solely with the guiding minds of the Soviet Government, and never will you divest yourselves of this responsibility by shifting it on to your agents. The de facto murderers of the socialists and anarchists are on the Solovetz Islands, their vicarious murderers are - you !

(Signatures)

1) ~~DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES IN 1924~~
January, 1924.

1) It would seem that this statement was addressed to the Central Executive Committee at the same as the preceding letter. about January 18.



•UNDERGROUND• SOCIALIST-REVOLUTIONIST PUBLICATIONS IN SOVIET RUSSIA

LETTER SEVEN.

To the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee
of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics:

The Political Prisoners, socialists and anarchists,
confined in the Kremlin of the Solovetz Concentration Camp
declare: from the continent during a period of six months.

The fatal shooting of five and the wounding of three
of the political prisoners, socialists and anarchists, perpetrated on December 19, 1923, by the keepers and guards of the Savvatievo cloister of the Solovetz concentration camp, cannot but evoke the most profound indignation and protest of all the political prisoners confined in the Kremlin of the same camp, whose signatures appear below.

The arbitrary slaughter of our comrades who were peacefully promenading within the limits of the fence surrounding their cloister is a natural consequence of the unexampled cruel terror which the Government has been systematically employing against socialists and anarchists during the last few years. Only on such a soil could have been born that sense of utter nonresponsibility which guided those who carried out the killing. Having delivered us, political prisoners, socialists and anarchists, to the arbitrary rule of the keepers consisting of elements who had committed certain criminal acts while in the service of

the "G.P.U.", the Government thereby doomed us from the very outset to bloody horrors.

The further tightening of the regime recently undertaken by the "G.P.U.", which is being put into effect by the above-mentioned keepers and guards, must naturally bring things to bloody consequences. The "G.P.U." which is issuing the orders for the increase in the severity of the regime cannot fail to know to whom it has entrusted the lives of several hundred socialists and anarchists, banned to an island cut off from the continent during a period of six months.

We therefore declare that the terror now being applied to us must, when further developed, inevitably lead to bloodbaths similar to the one of December 19. We assert that it is apparently not enough for the Government to inflict physical and moral suffering upon the imprisoned socialists and anarchists, and that it does not recoil from measures leading to their direct physical extermination. All the responsibility for the shedding of our blood we place on the Government.

(Signatures)

January, 1924.¹⁾

1) This letter too was apparently written simultaneously with letter six, about January 18.

1) The appeal, signed by 233 political prisoners, was addressed to the Socialist Workers' (Second) International, London, and to the International Federation of Trade Unions.

L E T T E R E I G H T .

Dear Comrades! ¹⁾ We, socialists, prisoners of the Bolshevik Government, thrown without trial into the Solovetz concentration camp, on the Solovetz Islands, cut off by the ice floes of the White Sea from the living world,- appeal to you, socialists and leaders of the world's labor movement. We address ourselves to you in order to convey through you to the workers and socialists of the whole world the story of the unexampled bloody tragedy which was enacted on December 19, 1923, on the Solovetz Islands, and the truth of which the Bolshevik Government should like to conceal but shall not conceal from the workers of Russia, Europe, and America.

It was not by accident that the northern camps were turned into prisons for socialists and anarchists. The past of these camps was well known to Moscow. They acquired their tradition in the circumstances of the civil war in the North, in the days of wholesale executions and the arbitrary rule of unbridled punitive expeditions despatched especially to establish the communist power in the North. Here the Government sent thousands of prisoners condemned to inhuman torture, bloody punishment, and shooting en masse. Thousands of Tambov peasants and Kronstadt sailors were exiled here for extermination

1) The appeal, signed by 233 political prisoners, was addressed to the Socialist Workers' (Second) International, London, and to the International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam.

And it was here, to the northern concentration camps, that the Government began to exile its most dangerous enemies - the socialists and anarchists.

Alongside of us are thousands of criminals, condemned to compulsory servitude, exhausted by hard, unbearable labor, subjected continuously to cruel torture, beating, and even murder at the hands of the uncontrolled, all-powerful administration which is afraid of nothing and no one.

We are under an administration composed, from the bottom to the top, with rare exceptions, of criminal elements who were sent to the Solovetz Islands to serve sentences for crime and who became here the masters of the lives and deaths of thousands of people, explaining their old crimes and winning pardon for themselves at the price of cruelty, inhumanity, and new crimes.

To complete the picture - in the hands of this administration is a detachment of the Red Army serving as "guards", into whose hands systematically, persistently the commanders are daily hammering the "simple" thought: "Socialists are the enemies of the 'Workers' and 'Peasants' Government", and they must be treated rough."

Such is the condition which the Bolshevik Government created for the socialists in the Solovetz concentration camp. It was very obvious from the outset that in such circumstances bloodshed was inevitable. We repeatedly wrote about it to Moscow, to the highest organs of the Government. We declared it to the representatives of the Government who came to the Solovetz Islands to inspect the concentration camp. We warned. In answer we received false promises, hypocritical assurances that everything would be all right.

But blood flowed. The "G.P.U." provided the immediate pretext for the massacre. Not being satisfied with throwing us into the distant, lurid North, hundreds of versts from a central city, away from our relatives and dear ones, the "G.P.U.", having cut us off from the whole world and having deprived us of the right of regular communication by letter, conceived the idea of turning the Solovetz concentration camp into a real jail with the ordinary prison regime.

This pretext was found at the very moment when the navigation between the Solovetz Islands and the continent was closed, and we were facing a long northern winter, long months of complete isolation from the outside world.

For a beginning it was decided to deprive us of the freedom to promenade in the prison yard,- that small slot of land surrounded by barbed wire which was assigned for our use and which was carefully guarded by sentinels from several watch-towers. We were not permitted to promenade outside our yard even when conveyed by soldiers, but our promenading hours were not limited. And it was this "license" which seemed terrible to the "G.P.U."

We were warned by the administration on December 18 that it is contemplated to limit our promenading hours from 9 in the morning to 6 in the evening. The committee of elders declared a decisive protest. In the course of three days afterwards we promenaded as of old and the conversations with the administration on the subject were not renewed. Suddenly, on December 19, after five o'clock in the evening, the political prisoners of the Savvatievo cloister were handed a written order: Promenading is permitted in the future from

9 o'clock in the morning until 6 in the evening. The order is to be announced at the roll-call.

Since the roll-call is usually taken after 8 o'clock in the evening, it was the clear sense of the order that it would take effect the following day, December 20. Nevertheless, at half past five the sentinels began to request the comrades who were out in the open to return into the building, and as they continued to promenade, the sentinels fired from the watch-towers several shots, apparently, into the air. The promenading continued. Then a chain of soldiers and prison officials, numbering about fifty men, spread out along the fence surrounding the prison yard, covering the building from three sides. The commander of the squad turned to the absolutely peaceable promenaders with the request to enter the building, without warning once that in the event of disobedience he would fire. The promenading comrades formed the definite impression that in the worst event it was planned to push them back towards the building, almost nobody conceiving of the possibility of shooting. But after the third request to enter the building, the order suddenly rang out: "Straight at the targets! Fire! And immediately afterwards followed a volley and deafening continuous shooting from separate sections.

The promenading comrades failed to comprehend at first what had happened. They were convinced that the shots were made into the air to terrify them, so wild, senseless, improbable seemed the shooting of peaceful promenaders. But the first victims, the groans of the wounded, the warning cries from all sides, "There are wounded!" left no doubts as to what has occurred. The murderers heard these cries, they saw

how the comrades picked up these who fell and carried them in the direction of the building, but they had not had enough bloodshed yet and after the first volley came a second and then a third volley. The fire was aimed not only at those who remained in the yard but also at those comrades who were carrying the wounded and at those returning to the building. The unanimous testimony of our comrades bears witness to it, the marks of bullets around the entrance to the building unequivocally point to it, some of these marks being at the level of a man's height, others a little above. After the third volley, the yard was emptied and the firing stopped.

It was before six o'clock when the wounded were carried into the building and we were able to count the victims. The terrible tragedy was enacted with insane cinematographic speed. Somebody's evil will had consciously driven it, without a breathing spell, to its bloody climax. The order was to be announced at the roll-call. It was announced three hours previously. Even according to the order, the promenading was permitted until six o'clock. The killing began at half past *five* and only the blood in the snow remained to tell of what had happened. Not the slightest attempt was made on the part of the administration to forestall the catastrophe. The elder of the political prisoners who tried to make his way into the headquarters of the commandant was not admitted by the guards, in accordance with orders. How can one define all this except as conscious, cold-blooded, premeditated murder of peaceful and defenseless people? Even the higher administration that he departed from the district not more than

ion itself in the person of the acting chief of the administration of the northern camps, was compelled to admit in a conversation with the committee of elders of the political prisoners that the latter by their conduct offered not the slightest pretext for a bloody punishment. According to the acting chief of the administration of the camps, all that happened was a deplorable misunderstanding for which only the lower officials were culpable. The soldiers are supposed to have received an order to fire into the air. The shooting of the political prisoners was supposed to come as a complete surprise to the higher administration of the camp.

We unconditionally reject this explanation. Neither the local commandant nor, moreover, the prison guards would have fired at the imprisoned socialists if they had not previously received assurances of their complete inviolability for the consequences. Of course, most of the soldiers fired into the air, otherwise the shooting would have become a wholesale massacre of the promenaders and the victims would have been counted by the score, but it is beyond any doubt that part of the soldiers and guards received orders to fire at the prisoners and that in one form or another corresponding instructions were given to the administration of the camp and the commanding officers. Just before the shooting there came to the Sevvatievo cloister the chief of the department of the northern camps, Nogtev. He knew of the order to limit the promenading hours, he knew of all the preparations for the slaughter. We do not know what his orders were to the commandant, but we do know that he departed from the cloister not more than a

quarter of an hour before the shooting, - as his acting associate later explained naively, - so that he could not be charged with the guilt of what was to take place subsequently. It indicates that having prepared the murder, he hastened to wash his hands of it.

Moreover, Nogtev himself, in spite of all his conceit, would not have risked the shooting if he had not felt that Moscow would stand by him. The order to "twist the necks" of the political prisoners came from the "G.P.U." We do not know whether Nogtev was told exactly how far to go in tightening the prison regime, and what these limits were. But it is absolutely clear that the Moscow "G.P.U." inspired the higher officials of the Solovetz Islands with confidence in their non-responsibility and inviolability.

The entire character of the subsequent investigation of the events of December 19 fully confirms our belief that the root of these events must be sought neither among the Savvatievo soldiers nor among the criminals of the Savvatievo guards. The "investigation" began with the order of the chief of the department of the northern camps that the commandant of the cloister, the commanding officer of the military detachment, and the political agent, as the would-be real culprits, be sent back to Moscow by the last departing steamer - the navigation was just then closing. (It was the political agent who, day in day out, conducted the agitation against socialists among the soldiers). Such were the results of the "impartial" investigation made by the inspirers of the crime, in so far as it affected its immediate authors.

We of course refused to furnish any evidence to the local commission of investigation. We sent a telegram to the All-Russian Central-Executive Committee of the Soviets, in which we categorically accused the higher administration of the Solovetz concentration camp and the "G.P.U." of the events of December 19, and demanded the urgent appointment of a special commission of investigation without the participation of the G.P.U." which would lead the investigation to the tracks of

About a month passed from the time of the shooting. Telegrams were sent from Solovetz to Moscow and from Moscow to Solovetz. The first telegram about the occurrence was despatched from Solovetz on the night of the murder, but days passed after days, weeks after weeks, and the entire higher administration of the northern camps remained undisturbed in its place. The chief of the department, Nogtev, retained his full authority. Moscow kept silent. and of the Red Cross for Polit

Finally, about the middle of January, we were informed that a commission was formed in Moscow, composed of representatives of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and of the Commissariat of Justice. at participated could provide us

Apparently, the fact of the shooting in Solovetz became public and it became impossible to conceal it. That, in all probability, explains the invitation we received to send to Moscow delegates to testify before the commission of investigation. In the circumstances of interrupted navigation, when communication with the continent is maintained by row-boats, which accidentally make their way through the ice-floes, we considered this invitation a mockery. We considered that the Government had at its disposal all the means, whether

it be an airplane, an ice-cutter, or something else, to convey the commission to the place where the crime was committed in order to investigate the unheard of act. We considered that only here in the very place where the blood of our comrades was shed, where all the witnesses and all the direct participants of the shooting could be examined, only here the threads are to be found which would lead the investigation to the tracks of the real culprits. And above all, we did not for a minute believe in the impartiality of a commission composed of representatives of the Bolshevist Government only, which is fit in this case, according to our profound conviction, to act the role of a defendant more than that of a judge. And we answered Moscow by demanding the admission into the commission of representatives of the Amsterdam Federation of Trade Unions, of the Socialist Workers' International, and of the Red Cross for Political Prisoners.

We agreed, under these conditions, to send to Moscow our delegates even by row-boats, to testify before the investigating commission. Only a commission in which the representatives of the international proletariat participated could provide us with a minimum guarantee that the truth about December 19 would be disclosed.

Half a year passed since then. Moscow sent us no answer. It is more than a month now since navigation has opened, more than one steamer has already arrived from the continent, but Moscow still continues to maintain silence, as if the crime of December 19 has never been committed.

And everything remains as it was in the past on the Solovets Islands! The same rule of criminal elements in the

administration, the same servitude for the criminal prisoners, the same eternal, constant menace to the human dignity and life of the politicals.

However, there is an innovation. A special correction prison has been established on the Sekirn Hill, where criminal prisoners are kept for small offences in such inhuman conditions that the men, as a sign of protest, rip open their own abdomens. The regime of penal servitude is winning new victims: hitherto it was applied only to criminals, now it has been extended to a group of Kronstadt sailors sentenced for participation in the Kronstadt revolt of 1921, as well as to students of both sexes who are exiled by the score to Solovetz for participation in the students' mass movement. They are kept like common criminals under the same regime as all the criminal prisoners, they are driven together with the latter to do hard labor, and those who are fined are thrown into the prison on the Sekirn Hill. And at the very moment I am writing these lines, the Kronstadt sailors are out on a hungerstrike declared several days ago, trying to win for themselves the regime of the political prisoners.

Moreover, gradually an effort is being made to extend the regime of penal servitude to us, socialists, too. A score of socialists, bound together by force, were brought from the continent to Solovetz and placed on a criminal regime on the pretext that there was no indication in their cases of their belonging to socialist parties. Only a hungerstrike on their part and the interference of the socialist communities saved them from penal servitude. But an effort is being made to thrust even upon us, the "recognized"

socialists who have spent a year here on a socialist regime, compulsory labor under the guise of innocent "self-service". We have been deprived of the heating-service, of the bath-house, of the laundry. We are being placed in a position unknown to the political prisoners in the jails of the czars.

And to cap all this, we are deprived of the elementary rights possessed by the inmates of any prison, the right of visits from our relatives. In spite of the fact that the navigation has again opened, our relatives are persistently refused permission to visit us, "until special orders are issued."

This is how Moscow reacted to the events of December 19.

It is true, a month after the shooting, the chief of the department, Nogtev, was finally called to Moscow, we do not know whether in the capacity of a defendant or a witness. But several weeks later he returned to Solovetz, in his capacity of chief of the department, with his former rights and powers, as if nothing had happened. Moscow would not betray "her man". She supported "the prestige of the Government". She exonerated Nogtev. She pronounced her own sentence: "Not guilty", assuming herself all the guilt of the bloodshed.

But recently the Government hesitated to shed the blood of socialists. It was not long ago that the unanimous cry of indignation of the workers of the whole world stopped, the hand of the henchman raised over the heads of the leaders of the socialist-revolutionist party. On December 19 a new

page was opened in the history of the Bolshevik terror against the socialists of Russia. The blood shed at Solovetz swept away the last barrier. From now on the blood and the corpses of imprisoned socialists mark the shameful path of Russian Communism...

We have told you, comrades, the truth about December 19. We told it in order to expose before the workers of the whole world in the name of the real socialism for which we are fighting together with you, those who disgrace, who stamp in the mud, who stain with the blood of socialists the banner of socialism.

In the name of socialism, we protest before the world proletariat against the policy of bloody terror being perpetrated on the socialists of Russia.

And we know, our protest will find a fraternal response in the heart of every honest workingman, of every socialist.

June, 1924.

(Signed) Socialist Community of the Savvatievo Cloister:

1. Group of Socialiast-Revolutionists.
2. Group of Social- Democrats.
3. Group of Left Socialist-Revolutionists.

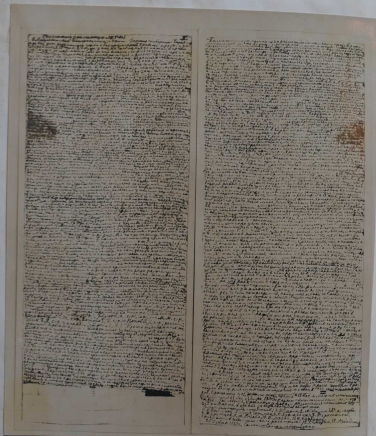
(Added signatures)

1. Social-Democratic Community of the Muksolm Cloister.
2. Group of Socialist-Revolutionists.
3. Group of Left Socialist-Revolutionists.
4. Group of Social-Democrats in the Solovetz Kremlin.

(Signatures of prisoners follow. All the names ending with "a", excepting Poletika and Adamushka, are those of women. Editor's note.)

1. Feldman
2. Rubinstein
3. Filippov
4. Melinovski
5. Belkin
6. Keropian
7. Tehotkin
8. Gold
9. Skripnitchenko
10. Pavlotzki
11. Popov
12. Bogatov
13. Shik
14. Konogov
15. Iliassov
16. Kassatkin
17. Fedossejev
18. Tugarin
19. Filippovski
20. Wassilenko
21. Golodkov
22. Ivanitzki
23. Muchin
24. Popov, A.
25. Tarabukin
26. Sizyeh
27. Muranova
28. Yuditcheva
29. Chastnevskaja
30. Buchter
31. Derkotovskaja
32. Afabassiev
33. Kiné
34. Wasserman
35. Brédova
36. Kondratiev
37. Podbielski
38. Kondratenko
39. Yakovlev
40. Dobrovolski
41. Dobrovolskaja
42. Bortz
43. Tarassov
44. Yerevin
45. Patrushev
46. Schestakov
47. Landé
48. Riumin
49. Kotov
50. Veltechanski
51. Radin
52. Gnedov
53. Stern
54. Ivanov
55. Rudakov
56. Metropolski
57. Lande, M.
58. Heimbuch
59. Zarin
60. Menschikov
61. Maurin
62. Michailov
63. Puzyrev
64. Sevastianov
65. Kerepulov
66. Vercholski
67. Enseld
68. Solovieva
69. Ketassonova
70. Studenetzki
71. Volski
72. Sauerbrei
73. Primak
74. Wolk-Istotzki
75. Charachinova
76. Zeitlin
77. Medvedev
78. Gubin
79. Udalov
80. Bukarev
81. Shmelev
82. Poletika
83. Nikolaev
84. Gabriels
85. Merchalev, D.
86. Merchalev, V.
87. Nadezhin
88. Greisser
89. Chommer
90. Yutzi
91. Reisner
92. Predit
93. Pamfilov
94. Libythin
95. Krintchik
96. Adamushka
97. Furman
98. Svirskaja
99. Leontieva
100. Andreiewskaja
101. Sarianski
102. Feinberg
103. Shepshelévitch
104. Yevdokimov
105. Prokofiev
106. Flegontov
107. Dubinski
108. Helfgott
109. Bogdanov
110. Malkin, A.
111. Malkin, S.
112. Korobkov
113. Trachtenberg, V.
114. Trachtenberg, D.
115. Diuzhakova
116. Sapir

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 117. Zimin | 175. Itselitz |
| 118. Treiger | 176. Treiger, U. |
| 119. Asnis | 177. Hershevitch, M.V. |
| 120. Gurvitch | 178. Stackelberg, I. |
| 121. Kuprimova | 179. Baryshpolski |
| 122. Yakubson, L. | 180. Heyman |
| 123. Yakubson, I. | 181. Eliasberg |
| 124. Rubinstein, V. | 182. Safonov |
| 125. Zaitchik | 183. Kofman-Petrovski |
| 126. Liubimov | 184. Kapell |
| 127. Rozhkovski | 185. Braude, S. |
| 128. Babin | 186. Selderychin |
| 129. Yudev | 187. Shapiro |
| 130. Yudin | 188. Breitman |
| 131. Frolov | 189. Rosen |
| 132. Yunkerov | 190. Kompaneyetz |
| 133. Kotcharovski | 191. Pekerskaia |
| 134. Kokin | 192. Choroshin |
| 135. Rapiport | 193. Yelnik, V.I. |
| 136. Bloch | 194. Konstantinovski, A. |
| 137. Himmelfarb | 195. Samarin-Spitzyn, A.I. |
| 138. Stern, L. | 196. Schneider, I.A. |
| 139. Tolpareva | 197. Kupin |
| 140. Kogan | 198. Kranichfeld, A. |
| 141. Elman | 199. Salnikov, V. |
| 142. Eisenberg | 200. Sandomirskaia, M. |
| 143. Berezin | 201. Vitkup, L. |
| 144. Auslander | 202. Troyanski, S.F. |
| 145. Opekina | 203. Tiunina |
| 146. Rabkina | 204. Weinzwieg |
| 147. Kohn | 205. Sternberg |
| 148. Fleishmacher | 206. Zhdanov, A.P. |
| 149. Keilis | 207. Huberman |
| 150. Alymova | 208. Roganis, M.O. |
| 151. Spivak | 209. Massover |
| 152. Zeitlin, S. | 210. Chaimovitch |
| 153. Bialovski | 211. Popov |
| 154. Shimshellevitch | 212. Volkov |
| 155. Poplak | 213. Samokhvalov |
| 156. Beliaev | 214. Panov |
| 157. Dmitrieva | 215. Filatov |
| 158. Lazareva | 216. Groshev |
| 159. Strunskaya | 217. Skvortsov |
| 160. Ossovski | 218. Eruchimovitch |
| 161. Eghis | 219. Abakshin |
| 162. Kritchevski, E.G. | 220. Ivanov |
| 163. Lurie, P.E. | 221. Gussev |
| 164. Bernstein, I. | 222. Beinarovitch |
| 165. Skeghich, M. | 223. Golovina |
| 166. Meierov, M.S. | 224. Markman |
| 167. Skolonenko, M.S. | 225. Riabinin |
| 168. Kushin, I.A. | 226. Baron |
| 169. Kushina, M.A. | 227. Broverman |
| 170. Gorelik, S. | 228. Vladimirov |
| 171. Kantarovitch, M. | 229. Ganshina |
| 172. Zammel, M.G. | 230. Kevrik |
| 173. Mash | 231. Lebedev |
| 174. Zolotarev | 232. Veger (Mrs.) |
| | 233. Stepnava |



ORIGINAL TEXT AND SIZE OF LETTER NINE
SECRETLY MAILED FROM THE SOLOVETZ ISLANDS.
TOP LINE SAYS, "READ WITH MAGNIFYING GLASS."

We want to present our statement of what happened,
to appraise this bloody outrage on the defenceless prisoners,
the captives of the

L E T T E R N I N E.

premeditation and its calculated murder, by the environment
conditions and chaos.

1)
Dear comrades! Rumours have probably already
reached you concerning the unprecedented and bloody tragedy
which was enacted on December 19, 1923, here on the Solovetz
Islands, in one of the concentration camps organized by the
Soviet Government for the socialists and anarchists of Russia.
The official bolshevist press - the only one from which you
could obtain the first news about the event - will in all
likelihood try to represent everything that has happened
here (as it has already succeeded in doing in an obscure notice
in the "Izvestia" of February 10, 1924), as a "misunderst-
anding", "an unfortunate incident", or ... as a conflict (!)
between the prisoners and the tchekists and soldiers who were
shooting at us at close range.

The Bolshevik Government will attempt "to cover up
the tracas", to distort the facts, but it will not succeed -
the truth about December 19 will sooner or later become the
property of the workers of the entire world. We, anarchists
of the Savvatievo cloister who served as targets for the
"red" bullets, cut off by the ice-fields of the White Sea
from the rest of the world, through the lines of bayonets
and the barbed tchekist, appeal to you and through you to all
the workers and peasants of Russia, Europe, and America.
with the mainland, for the purpose of the next attack

1) This letter, a facsimile of which is to be found on page
32, was addressed to the "Anarchist International-Berlin".
It was four months on the way from Russia to Germany.

We want to present our statement of what happened, to appraise this bloody outrage on the defenceless prisoners, the captives of the Government. By its cold-blooded premeditation and its calculated murder, by the environment conditions and chain of circumstances leading to it, by the absence even of supposed, i.e. "legitimate" reasons for it, - this bloody "socialist" outrage has no equal in the entire history of the Russian revolutionary movement against the autocracy, in the annals of that lugubrious and heroic fight which the Russian revolutionists waged in the prisons in the darkest years of the czarist reaction.

Six years of the bolshevist dictatorship, a dictatorship over the workers and peasants, six years of the cruellest terrorization of the people and its voice by means of bullets, torture and strangulation, have made it so that every person thinking differently from the bolsheviks, whether socialist or anarchist, that every worker and peasant who dares be dissatisfied and not in agreement with the Soviet Government, is subject to "elimination" and can enjoy his "freedom" only when dead or alive in prison, in concentration camp, in the obscure and wild regions of the Far North and Siberia which had formerly served as the exile territories of the czar.

Such a prison camp was organized in the summer of last year by the Soviet Government on the Solovetz Islands cut off in the course of six months from any intercourse with the mainland, for the purpose of the most extreme isolation, so as to be further away from the eyes of the workers and peasants. Already the first few months passed

not without individual episodes of provocation, shooting, binding prisoners, and of the systematic breaking of a whole series of promises. But nevertheless we enjoyed as yet a few "privileges", which we had succeeded in wresting from our jailers during several years of incredible suffering in soviet prisons, through a number of hunger strikes, and at the price of great sacrifices, privations and self-destruction by fire! ...

With the approach of the end of the navigation season,- left in a condition of severed intercourse with the continent, and at the mercy of the power-intoxicated "little czars" among the higher local officials, with a staff of keepers consisting almost entirely of criminal tchekists, of leading professional henchmen and sadists,- it became clear to us that the winter would not be "favorable", that horrors were inevitable... Moscow was not satisfied with having us on an island completely cut off from the rest of the world. That is not enough! Our petty "liberties", gained at the expense of such sacrifices, gave Moscow no rest and the "G.P.U." decided to transform the Solovetz Camp into a real jail, to cow the political prisoners at all costs. However, so long as communication with the mainland existed, the "general staff" at the Lubianka hesitated to open a direct campaign against us through its obedient Solovetz agents impatient for battle: It would not pay, it was too early as yet

At last, navigation was closing. The chief of the department of the northern camps, Nogtev, the Solovetz autocrat and satrap, the "socialist"sadist, returned from Moscow, apparently with the necessary instructions and

authority. The momentum of events was increasing. The campaign is opened. "Operations have begun." As a beginning, as a pretext, it was decided to deprive us of the right of free promenading! On December 16, the assistant of Nogtev, Richmans, (who had also returned from Moscow), declared to us in the course of a formal conversation that Moscow was dissatisfied with the local regime, that a series of measures was under consideration for the purpose of changing it. At the same time he informed us of the proposed limitation of the hour of our open-air exercises.

Three days passed,- everything remained as before. Finally, the now memorable December 19 arrived. Soon after five o'clock a written order was delivered to us to the effect that promenading from now on would be permitted from 9 in the morning until 6 in the evening and that the order is to be announced at the roll-call, which ordinarily takes place at 8 in the evening. It was the clear sense of the order that it was to take effect the following day, December 20. Nevertheless, after it was issued, about fifty "red warriors", consisting in part of members of the military detachment and in part of the aforementioned tchekist keepers who hoped, and as it appeared not in vain, to gain over the dead bodies of our comrades amnesty and better administrative posts for themselves,- were marched into our little court surrounded by barbed wire to perpetrate the bloody outrage on the peacefully promenading "disobedient" political prisoners.

We found ourselves surrounded on three sides, three rows of "red" bayonets pointing at us - living targets. Then came a quick thrice-repeated request of the commander of the

punitive detachment to return to the building ...

"Squad! Straight at the targets! Fire!" The first volley is fired, followed by deafening scattered shooting. Groans of wounded and warning cries of comrades: "Down, there are wounded!" But the shooting continues even at those who are lying down ... A moment of calm - the first blood has been shed. We quickly seize the victims and make for the main building. But the foul murderers would not stop! They are not satisfied with two or three victims. A new order to load: "Squad - fire!" Then another volley and some scattered firing at those still in the court and at those carrying the wounded and returning to the building. (At the autopsy some were found to have been struck by several bullets).

Fresh victims ... another quota of comrades if falling, hit by bullets sharply aimed at their backs. Of the eight victims, six were mortally wounded ...¹⁾ Six lifeless comrades. The bloodthirsty and insatiate monster whose name is Power is triumphant, celebrating its victory over unarmed, defenceless prisoners, let the cannibals triumph! But they shall not escape their deserts at the hands of the very workers and peasants in whose pretended name they now rule from the Russian throne.

Several hours after the shooting, the department of the northern camps appointed a commission of inquiry to which we, anarchists, addressed on the following day, December 20, a written refusal to furnish evidence, containing a short estimate of the true inner meaning of the whole occurrence,

1) Names of victims are enumerated. See Appendix.

occurrence, of the open and hidden causes of the foul, senseless affair of December 19. Among other things, we said there...¹⁾

About the middle of January, apparently because of rumors which seeped through and reached the continent, under the pressure of the alarmed relatives, (there are about 300 socialists and anarchists in the Solovki,) there was created in Moscow a special commission of inquiry into the events of December 19, composed of ... whom would you think? ... of notorious tchekists, the ringleaders of Soviet justice, members of the Central Control Commission of the Russian communist Party, of the Commissariat of Inspection and others, the very people who directly or indirectly took part in formulating the plans of "taming" us and who inspired the loyal executioners. We of course again refused to participate in this second act of the comedy of inquiry staged now by the highest organ, the Central Executive Committee of the Union. The henchman Nogtev was then invited to come to Moscow, we do not know whether in the capacity of a culprit or of a witness, or perhaps to receive his reward for the operation he magnificently executed. We only know that Moscow did not go back on "her own" man, but took him under her lofty protection, and the hero of December 19 returned to Solovki with all his former rights and powers. Everything remained as of old, as if the foul shooting of the political prisoners had never taken place. The Soviet Government is the last word in "revolution", in the vocabulary of state ideology. This government of "Workers and Peasants", in order to uphold its prestige, its regime, and to maintain itself in

1) Here parts of the preceding Letter Three are quoted.

power, thought it compatible with its character to continue in his former position the immediate murderer of our comrades, the initiator of the bloodbath.

This act of exoneration and sanction from above proved to us once more that the bloody attack of December 19 had been prepared beforehand, and was rigidly thought out and cold-bloodedly calculated to achieve a "Special" purpose: to strangle and twist the political prisoners into a passive body, to inaugurate a policy of physical extermination of the "disobedient" socialists and anarchists. The return of Nogtev, evidently with blessings for new, studiously prepared bloody "strategic manoeuvres" in accord with the general task of extermination and the continued policy of oppression and provocation on the part of the administration, is a guarantee that this policy will be firmly and unalterably put into effect in the future. It was far from being the last time that blood was shed. More than once yet will our camp serve as a target for "special" purpose, as a field of battle between the bayonet on the one hand and chained, forced impotency on the other. (It is not for nothing that the Solovki is a camp controlled by the special Section of the "G.P.U.") More than one of us will yet fall victim to the triumphant reaction clothed in a red toga and intransigent revolutionary phraseology, to the restored pre-revolutionary regime of bondage and exploitation of the Third Section¹⁾, of Djerjinsky²⁾ and of the Kremlin-rule of the days of Jvan the Terrible and his mercenaries, now operating under a new shield. But we are not of those who will

1) The notorious department of the Czar's "Okhrana".

2) The director general of the "G.P.U."

adapt themselves and bear it! We, anarchists, exiled and persecuted by all governments and regimes, are always prepared for the worst. There are no surprises for us. We know not whether any of us will yet have the opportunity of fighting shoulder to shoulder in the same ranks with you, for the workers and peasants against Power and world capital. We do not know, but there is one thing that we passionately desire: that the foul, cold-blooded, senseless shooting of December 18 should deliver that sobering blow of bloody facts which would arouse the consciousness of the labor masses of the whole world... We desire that the blood shed should finally tear off the mask from the face of the genuine culprits of this shooting,- the Russian Communist Party and its obedient internal tool, the Soviet Government, and of its world instrument, the Communist International. The veil must be removed from the eyes of the international proletariat. In the seventh year of the bolchevist rule, it is time to put an end to the illusions and perverted views entertained by the workers' and peasants' masses of Europe and America which regard the Soviet Government, the Russian Communist Party and the Third International as the "shock troops of the world revolution", as something of their own flesh and bone. No, their cause is not the cause of the proletariat, not the cause of the world social revolution. It is reaction in a new form, disguised, triggered out in red, and therefore more dangerous for the world labor movement.

We understand how strange and paradoxical our words will sound to the workers of Europe, when the very same communists, (German, French, Italian, etc.) persecuted and exiled abroad by the various bourgeois and democratic governments,

are there the martyrs, the glorious heroes and fighters of "the workers' cause". But it is high time to learn from the bloody lessons of the class struggle of recent years that the communist parties of the West, even as the Russian Communist Party which was once persecuted and battled on the same side of the barricade together with us, as soon as they seize the helm of state in their hands, apply terror and dictatorship over the workers and peasants, just as all other governing parties do, whether czarist, republican or ultra-democratic.

They put The idealist leaders and mentors of this party, the Rykovs and Djerjinskys, the Zinovievs and Trotskys, for the purpose of retaining power and presserving "order", will if necessary undertake any bloody adventure such as the shooting of hundreds, thousands of imprisoned workers and peasants, as it is done and must unavoidably be done in the future by all parties and political groups, "right" or "left", as soon as they cease being persecuted and ascend to power. Let every honest worker and revolutionary belonging to the Communist International and the "Red" International of Trade Unions remember that he is sitting side by side with murderers and is doing their foul work, that he is sanctioning, perhaps without being aware of it, the senseless execution of December 19....

Dear comrades! We have told you the truth about December 19, the truth about the bolshevist dictatorship, about the role of the communists before and after their seizure of power, we have told you what is true of any government. Perhaps none of us will come out alive from this island, for our present and the nearest future are too dark, but the bolsheviks shall not be able to conceal the true significance of all that has

happened here! The truth about December 19 will become yours, a strong weapon and standard in your hands, an ominous warning in the unequal struggle of the oppressed. The only historical value which could redeem the Solovetz execution and the other victims of the Soviet or any state system is that the workers and peasants of the whole world should finally learn from the blood-sealed Solovetz lesson that by bringing any party to political power in present or future revolutionary struggles, they put a sword in the hands of new Nogtevs and build for themselves a new yoke, preparing a bloody bath for many and many of their own ranks.

Farewell, then, dear comrades. Let December 19 be to you and to millions of workers the world over a memorable day of portentous warning, a bloody lesson in differentiating genuine friends from enemies, in the struggle for a society not based in power.

Members of the Anarchist Community:

(Signatures:)

1. G.I. Tcharin
2. A. Shilin
3. Z.E. Tchekmassova
4. A. Voltchonok
5. Lia Gottmann
6. P. Kurganskaya
7. F. Krasavtchikov
8. F. Kuznetsov
9. A. Sozova
10. V. Mochov
11. N. Kirbunov

(Brought to Savvatievo after the shooting)

12. S. Modin
13. A. Dvoitchenko.

April, 25, 1924. Solovki, Savvatievo Cloister.

L E T T E R T E N .

Our colony of political prisoners contains at present about 300 persons. There are 137 social-democrats, 14 left socialist-revolutionists, 109 socialist revolutionists, and 35 anarchists. They occupy the three cloisters of the old Solovetz Monastery. Our cloister, Savvatievo, is the largest one and now holds 180 socialists and anarchists.

Savvatievo is built on the main island, on which are located the headquarters of the department of the northern concentration Camps. Here is also imprisoned the main contingent of the common criminals.

The second cloister - Muksolm - is connected with our island by a dam. The third, Golgotha, is on the Anzerski Island, separated by four versts of water from the main island.

During the long winter, when the sea is heaped with ice floes, connection between the islands can be kept up only by occasional boats, such an undertaking involving great risk. We had all the time refused to occupy the Anzerski Island, for we feared to be cut off not only from the mainland but also from the main island, on which we depend for our food supply and medical aid. We also did not want to be placed at the mercy of the local administration and under a regime of common criminals.

But because of the increasing number of new arrivals we have at last been compelled to move to the Anzerski Island

"G.P.U." now sends to the Solovki large numbers of non-political on condition that we be guaranteed food and medical aid. Now all the cloisters are filled and we are too crowded to accommodate new groups of prisoners. The administration, having no more room to spare, has demanded that no more prisoners be exiled to Solovki. Still numbers of politicals continue coming. The administration, surely not without the knowledge of Moscow, is now clearly exerting its efforts to force us into a regime of common criminals. Thus the last party of socialists that arrived here has for a long time not been recognised as political. In Kem they were placed in dungeons, compelled to do hard labor, and in every way treated like ordinary criminals. Here in the Solovki we have with difficulty succeeded in securing for them recognition as politicals. The two last parties to arrive are still fighting for such recognition, meanwhile living under impossible conditions. They contain 18 persons, among them 6 left socialist-revolutionists, 7 social-democrats, 3 right socialist-revolutionists and 2 anarchists. They are all well known to us, as well as to the "G.P.U.", as some of them have previously been more than once in bolshevik prisons. Among them are: the well-known left socialist-revolutionist Riabinin, from the Far Eastern Republic; three comrades from Voronezh, Liapin, Razdebuev, and Kaliuzhnyi, and the students Voit and Beloglasov. In spite of our protests and telegrams to the Central Executive Committee in Moscow, they are being kept isolated in the Kremlin under a regime threatening any moment to become criminal. Their condition may cause them to declare a hunger strike, in which we also would become involved. Besides socialist members of various parties, the

"G.P.U." now sends to the Solovki large numbers of non-politicals of seocialist tendencies having some relation to the revolutionary movement. The greatest proportion of them are students. You are aware that of late the student movement has grown considerably. After the comb-out in the universities of Petrograd, Moscow and other cities, many of the discharged students were arrested, axiled to emote provincial places or sent to Solovetz, where there have also been brought some "komsomoltsi" (members of the "Young Men's Communist Association")

The Solovetz authorities have refused to consider the students as politicals. Boys and girls of 18, 20 and 22 years of age - hardly any of them have reached 25 - are kept together with thieves, murderers and prostitutes, forced to do hard labor and subject to the vilest insults of the officials and common- criminal keepers. Especially hard is the lot of the young student girls: they live in the general dormitories with the old female criminals and are constantly exposed to the brutal attentions of their keepers. A case of this kind took place in the prison of Kem where the student girl Efimova had the misfortune of pleasing the eye of the eternally intoxicated prison commandant. He decided to keep her in Kem "for work". It required our interference and protests to the administration to cause the transfer of Efimova from Kem to Solovki where the rest of her comrades are confined.

Among the other politicals here who are kept on a common criminal regime are many rebel peasants from various parts of the country, as well as numbers of workers arrested for strikes. We want to call our attention especially to the group of Kronstadt sailors imprisoned here by the administrative order of the "G.P.U.", in connection with the Kronstadt uprising

of 1921. For some time they lived in the Muksolm cloister as politicals. When that cloister became too crowded, they were transferred to the Kremlin prison where they had a formal conference with our elders. We aided them with food, books, newspapers, etc. One day the administration called out the committee of elders of the Kronstadt sailors and informed it that in accordance with orders from Moscow, the Kronstadt men were to be placed on a regime of common criminals, deprived of their rations as politicals, and put to such work as the authorities will assign them. The Kronstadt spokesmen refused to accept the order, whereupon they were bound. Then the armed guards broke into the building where the Kronstadt men were confined. The prisoners refused to obey the new orders from Moscow, and were all bound hand and foot and dragged into the dungeons where they declared a hunger-strike, which lasted 9 days. The strike ended in failure. Then they decided temporarily to submit, in expectation of a commission which was soon to arrive from Moscow and before which they were to lay the matter for decision.

The administration realised that the matter is not settled, and strove continually to aggravate the Kronstadt men and to provoke them into untimely action. With this purpose in view, the authorities on the 20th of July suddenly transferred three Kronstadt prisoners to the Sekirn Hill, placing them for no reason (but under the pretext of demoralising the criminal regime and insulting the keepers) in the punitive jail. They declared a hunger strike. Their transfer was accompanied by violence and beating. The remaining seven men joined the strike. They were removed to the cellar. It was a hard strike and lasted 14 days. We expected a tragedy at any moment. One of the

men, Yudin, twice attempted suicide, two others began to cough blood on the eleventh day. The administration remained indifferent and only on the fourteenth day the elder of the Kronstadt group was called out for negotiations, as a result of which the three men were released from the dungeon on the Sekirn Hill. The common criminal regime, however, remained in force. The community of the Kronstadt men was recognised, and they were promised that they would not be separated and would be assigned to tasks according to their skill.

All the hunger strikers - Yermolaev, Eveltis, Andreitchenko, Defétov, Kulishev, Kurkesh, Belov, Yudin, Saharov, Raskasov - were taken to the hospital in an awful condition. Some of them may yet pay with their lives for that hunger strike. This whole group consists exclusively of honest, good fellows, Kronstadt sailors and workers, loyal to the Revolution. According to their party sympathies, they are divided into 2 left socialist-revolutionists, 4 anarchists, 1 social-democrat, the rest are non-partisan but recognise the November (Soviet) Revolution. They form the remaining small band of Kronstadt revolutionists who have not yet perished and who preserved their political consciousness in spite of the systematic executions by the Soviet government. Our community of the Savvatievo cloister protested and in a telegram to the Central Executive Committee of the Union we demanded the urgent ending of the hunger strike declared by the Kronstadt men. We demanded that an end be put to the cruelties perpetrated on them, and that they should be recognised as political prisoners. But without avail. There is no doubt that their struggle is not yet over, that the administration will not leave them alone and will again try to provoke them into some action in order to exterminate

them. In 1922, when we were in exile in Archangelsk, we were told that the Kronstadt men were being tortured and shot by the thousands in the northern camps, in Pertominsk, Kholmogory, etc. Only these who succeeded in escaping are still among the living.

Now about us, the recognized socialists. I have already mentioned the fact that the administration of the camps and Moscow are pursuing a policy of abolition of the political regime. This expresses itself not only in offers to refuse recognition to new parties of political prisoners, but also in many other matters directly affecting us. Thus, the question of "self-service" is now in an extraordinarily acute phase. The plan is to force us to do compulsory labor and for a beginning efforts are made to have us cut timber for our needs, to heat the bath-house, to cart out the refuse, etc.... Up to the present time we never yet did compulsory work even for our own needs in any of the prisons. In Pertominsk and, in the course of a year, in Solovki we voluntarily attended to certain things, for instance, we cleaned the building, heated it, cooked our food, cleaned the yard, washed the laundry. The harder labor, such as the cutting of timber in the forest and the carting of the refuse, was provided by the administration. Suddenly in the spring we were requested to take over these burdensome tasks too. We have no guarantees that this would not be followed by compulsion to provide service for the entire camp, including the administration. This we cannot accept, just as we cannot accept any kind of forced labor even for our own needs. We have been exiled administratively, and the administration must provide us with all the necessities.

Voluntarily, it is true, we would attend to certain jobs, but we cannot agree to take them over as forced duties, since we perceive in this an attempt to introduce gradually penal servitude for socialists. Besides, there are many other reasons why compulsory labor is impossible for us. Half of our prisoners are sick. We have many women ... We therefore refused to accept "self-service".

We were deprived of the bath-house early in the spring, our supply of fuel was discontinued when there was still snow on the ground, and we were kept in cold and damp cells. We had to reduce our ration of hot water and warm food because there was not wood and the administration supplied none. And now we are still without wood, and it looks as if we are to have very soon only dry rations - bread and water. All this in spite of the fact that many of us are sick with scurvy and many are suffering from other diseases. We have been waiting a long time for a commission from Moscow, but so far it has not arrived. We mean to put before it, when it arrives, all the questions of our prison life here which has become extraordinarily complicated recently. During the winter it has become clear that Solovki is not supplied with sufficient food, and under the system existing here, it is hardly possible to be assured of supplies. We had explained the matter to Feldman and Bokyi of the commission that came here from Moscow in the fall of 1923. They assured us that there were sufficient provisions. In spite of that, the rations fixed by them were shortened already in December, and in February the number of hospital rations was automatically reduced by the Department to 15 percent, i.e., 27 rations for 130 people. We have many

more sick persons now. In accordance with the prescriptions of the prison physician, we were receiving about 50 rations before the reduction. In reality, however, we did not get even the 15 percent, since it appeared that many articles of first necessity, such as butter, white flour, etc. were entirely lacking in Solovki. The result is scurvy, wholesale cases of it....

The medical aid we receive here is below criticism. The prison physicians show little interest in the sick. There are no socialist doctors. As a general rule, few get treatment in the hospital, as there are no medical supplies. Towards spring we did not even have any iodine. The attitude towards the patients is disgusting. There have been frequent occasions when the doctor turned our sick comrades out of the hospital, without even examining them, after they had made the trip of 12 versts from the cloister. Just now a number of our prisoners needs special medical attention. For the last three months we have demanded their transfer to the mainland. So far we have succeeded in getting across only four of them: Markman, a left socialist-revolutionist, Martsinkevitch, connected with the case of the left socialist-revolutionists, and two anarchists, Siutevitch and Veger (almost at the point of death). About the others application had been made to Moscow, but no reply has been received. The general policy of Moscow is "to put the screws tight" on us. The entire "constitution" designed by the commission of Feldman in 1923, was abolished from the day of the shooting on December 10. One paragraph after another is gradually being nullified. First the promenading hours and the supply of light were limited, then the conferences with the committee of elders of Muksolm were suspended, afterwards

the food ration was reduced, new efforts are being made to introduce "self-service" and to force us to a common criminal regime, (as in the case of the Kremlin prisoners), and finally at this moment the visits of relatives have been prohibited in our building. Those of them who came were permitted to see their folks at the headquarters, in the presence of the keepers. They travelled a thousand versts to the Solovki, spending the last penny in order to see us, but it is impossible to talk in such circumstances. After a lapse of 8 or 9 months, during which we had neither visitors nor even regular correspondence, this is the last drop of cruelty. We are waiting for the commission in order to raise before it the question of our transfer altogether from the Solovki. We feel that we could not survive another winter like the past one...

(Signature)

1)

August, 1924.

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- 1) The Russian text of this letter bore no date, but from the contents it would appear that it was written three months after the opening of navigation, approximately in August. It was published in the October 1924, issue of "Znanya Borby", the organ of the left socialist-revolutionists and maximalists.

of Lenin, Trotsky and Marx were drawn, and instead of texts from the bible the notices of the Russian Communist Party appeared. Instead of vespers, the old bells now sound prison signals. The old LETTER ELEVEN. ~~atrocious prison~~

In 1923 over three thousand prisoners were brought to the Solovetz concentration camp. The socialists and anarchists, numbering about 300, were placed in the Savvatievo and Muksolm cloisters, 12 versts away from the main monastery. The bulk of the prisoners, the common criminals, the counter-revolutionists and profiteers were left in the Kremlin. Together with the criminals were also imprisoned rebel peasants, workers arrested for strikes, and others. In the Kremlin and the adjacent houses and hostelries, which were preserved after the fire, the administration, the keepers, the red army detachment and the various government departments and bureaus were quartered. In utter darkness, one almost on top of the other, 2500 prisoners were jammed together. Large bunks were installed in the big church and more than a hundred convicts were wallowing there. Even in the worst czarist prisons there existed definite population limits for every cell; otherwise life in prison could not last long. Here the authorities did not even think of any such standards.

The spirit of old asiatic Muscovy reigned here from the very beginning, restored, it is true, from the opposite end of the pole, amid altogether different surroundings. But it is the same spirit. The crosses were removed from the church steeples, the walls of the churches were denuded, the ikons were painted over, in place of the saints - portraits

of Lenin, Trotzky and Marx were drawn, and instead of texts from the bible the mottos of the Russian Communist Party appeared. Instead of vespers, the old bells now sound prison signals. The old Monastery, which served as an atrocious prison in former days, has now become altogether an inferno. The prisoners live in the most intolerable conditions, amidst terrible crowding, hunger, cold, and are forced to do hard labor. Exposed in the summer to the constant winds and the mosquitoes and in the winter to icy storms and frost, the half-naked, ragged, miserable prisoners, whose bodies are visible through the holes in their tattered clothes, are compelled to cut wood, to pull stumps, to make pich, to go fishing, and to do the chores of the bath-house, the laundry, the cattle-yard, etc.

The task system established by the authorities imposes on each person an amount of labor which not even a healthy, well-clothed and well-nourished man could manage to do in a day. It is clear that the emaciated, exhausted, half-starved men are unable to complete their tasks. Then their rations are cut down and they are punished in other ways, transferred to the penal squad and there permitted neither work nor open-air exercises, being kept on a half-ration, condemned to slow death from exhaustion.

At the end of 1923 the church on the Sekirn Hill was converted into a special prison for delinquents. Even here, in the Solovki, the Sekirn prison is an object of terror.

Downtrodden, crushed by fear, the prisoners sent to the Sekirn Hill would usually resist the transfer desperately and generally would be taken there bound hand and foot.

In the Sekirn jail, we are informed, all the convicts are kept in the church which is almost never heated. Once a day they receive warm food, twice - hot water, and one pound of bread. And nothing else. Life on Sekirn Hill became so insufferable that two or three months after its establishment an epidemic of suicides broke out among the prisoners, and one after another men were brought to the hospital with their abdomens ripped open with a knife.

In the Kremlin itself the remnants of the old prison preserved since times immemorial were also being put to full use. In the cellars of the thick, enormous wall surrounding the monastery there still exist the dungeons of the days of Ivan the Terrible. These dungeons, known here as stone "bags", are nothing but deep pits in the wall. The entrance into them is so small that one can effect it only sidewise. The "bag" itself is narrow, short, low. The inmate of such a "bag" can move with difficulty, sometimes he cannot even stretch himself fully. Into these dungeons were put prisoners guilty of some violation of prison discipline. The term of confinement there was long, sometimes two to three weeks. Frequently the prisoner was forced to strip almost naked, remaining, only in his underwear. The "bags" are infested with swarms of lice, roaches, bugs, etc.

In September, 1923, a commission headed by the tchekist Feldman came to inspect the camp. It is being told here that while on his tour of examination Feldman also examined the "bags". Neither he nor any other member of the commission entered any of the "bags" - so strong was the stench emanating from them. By way of a test a rag was thrown into one of them, and when pulled out it was entirely covered with

vermin. The torture-chambers set up by Ivan the Terrible justified their tradition. It is true, Feldman, a former revolutionist, was according to report upset but very little. However, he ordered the "bags" abolished as punitive instruments, but the resurrectors and imitators of the period of Ivan the Terrible remained in their positions - masters of the lives and deaths of hundred of prisoners. Instead of being confined a comparatively short term in the stone "bags", the prisoners are doomed to much longer terms in the Sokirn prison...

More than once the political prisoners heard the cries and moans of beaten men compelled to labor not only in the daytime but also at night. Summer and winter all the prisoners are lined up for control in the Kremlin yard. Exhausted by long and hard toil, they have to stand in line, sometimes awaiting for several hours the arrival of the keeper in charge or the commandant to count them. This standing in line, while exposed to wind and rain, was frequently arranged solely for the purpose of mockery and torture. No one would dare raise his voice in protest, as that meant the stone "bag", a beating or exposure nude to the mosquitoes under the large signal bell.

To cap it all, capital punishment is being practiced widely. In 1923 and 1924 the administration has executed without trial a number of convicts for attempts to escape and for intercourse with the political prisoners. Very few successful escapes from the Solovki have taken place. Almost in every case the runaways are caught. In 1924 an order was issued punishing with death any attempt to escape. Every such execution is announced beforehand to all the criminal prisoners at the roll-call. The part of executioner would often be played by the

higher officials, out of sheer love for the "art". The chief of the department, Nogtev, with his own hands shot to death a free resident of Solovki who was hiring out to do different jobs. Subsequently the assistant commandant of the first section, Sukis, an unusually dull Lett, did all the executions himself and boasted of his "work" before the prisoners and the overseers. The guards, the office force, the majority even

of the There are many women prisoners in Solovetz, both political and criminal. They form as variegated a body as that of the male prison, comprising professional thieves, crooks and prostitutes alongside of victims of the revolution imprisoned for political "crimes" or even merely "on suspicion". The group contains persons guilty of "bourgeois origin" and numerous students who took part in political protests. All these women were huddled together in the so-called "female barrack". They are completely in the power of the Solovetz administration. They are forced to become the concubines - first, of the higher officials, then of the chief inspectors, and gradually lower down to the pettiest officer. By degrees they are bereft of all human semblance, are infected with venereal diseases, - and the "female barrack" is turned into a veritable inferno. The tears, hysterics of the worn-out victims of the Solovetz system mingle with the coarse language and vulgar oaths of the old-time criminals and prostitutes... Even some of the prison keepers consider guard duty in the barrack as most trying. Among the women there is much insanity and all forms of disease. Those that struggle and seek to defend their chastity are harnessed with hard labor; punished with the dungeon, and so forth. Last winter, when a woman

confined in the dunge on became hysterical and not being able to bear any longer the torments, began to cry, weep, break window-panes, the soldier on guard simply shot her.

Characteristic is the personnel of the administration of Solovetz, as well as of the other northern camps and prisons. With a few exceptions, all the officials are themselves prisoners. The guards, the office force, the majority even of the higher officials are selected from the inmates. The outside posts are held by a special detachment of the red army. Simple peasant youths could not practice that system of continuous human torture, such as has been established in Solovetz and the other northern camps. For this purpose are needed special men, deprived of all that is human, men without consciousness and without mercy. Such a body is recruited by the administration from among the convicts. The keepers and overseers are preferably selected from the tchekists sent to Solovki to serve sentences. These criminals are given special privileges, they serve in the Solovki more as officials than convicts. Frequently their jail terms are reduced and special favors conferred upon them. In return for this it is their duty to watch closely the other prisoners.

Summer, 1924.¹⁾

1) The Russian text of this letter was received by the left socialists-revolutionists and published in October, 1924, in the "Znamya Borby", the organ of the left socialist-revolutionists and maximalists.

I want to tell you of the main and decisive factor concealed behind the concrete details, which forms at present the "core" of the Solovetz problem.

This "main factor" is the harsh and bitter consciousness of one's moral isolation - a sense of some frightful airless space surrounding the Solovetz Islands

LETTER TWELVE.

especially, and this just at a period when the Government has

1)

Dear friend! "words to deeds", from the political destruction

I wanted to write you this letter 6 or 7 months ago, as soon as the first news of the December events on the Solovetz Islands reached me. I did not write because it is painful to speak of that subject and because it is somehow not customary to occupy the attention of one's comrades with prison affairs.

But months have passed already, - extraordinary, unforgettable "Solovetz" months, - and I feel that I must violate the old prison traditions and write to you - cry out! - about Solovki, to you personally, intimately, as I would write to no "organ" or "organization" ... I must do this because I feel almost with my physical senses the inevitability of a repetition of "December 19", which is being intensively prepared by the "G.P.U." and which will unavoidably occur upon the closing of navigation if ... if the Solovki continue to exist and our socialist, workers' Europe does not raise its powerful voice in regard to the fate of its hostages.

The Solovki are now in a tragic impasse. I will not tell you of concrete and private details, since you have probably already received exhaustive information of that kind.

1) This private letter from a well-known socialist leader now in prison in Russia was addressed to V. Zenzinov, a socialist-revolutionist writer and editor living in Berlin.

I want to tell you of the main and decisive factor concealed behind the concrete details, which forms at present the "soul" of the Solovetz problem. *Are laughing. They are laughing wildly.*

This "main factor" is the hard and bitter consciousness of one's moral isolation, - a sense of some frightful airless space surrounding the Russian prisons and the Solovetz Islands especially, - and this just at a period when the Government has passed from "words to deeds", from the political destruction of our parties to the physical annihilation of the socialists.

"Save!" This complete isolation of the "hostages of the Second International" is felt with equal keenness by both sides, and it determines the basic character of their tactics: on the one side - the tactics of the last line of defence, marked by tragic episodes; on the other side - the cynical and cruel tactics of the triumphant conquerors sure of themselves. Without taking into account this "main factor", it is difficult to understand the hopeless Solovetz tangle.

It is difficult to understand how "December 19" could altogether have occurred; how this cruel physical blow could have been followed by a shower of moral blows; how it was possible to ignore this slaughter, abstaining even from the comedy of an "inquiry"; how, with the graves hardly closed, there could have appeared signs of a further administrative offensive, of an effort to introduce penal servitude, a starvation ration and a multitude of limitations, humiliations, and cruel mockeries. *Behind the bars. And it is of that that I am driven.* When the events of December 19 occurred, it seemed subjectively to all of us that the "world would be convulsed", - our socialist "world". But it appeared that it ... did not notice the Solovetz events, and then a ring of laughter entered

the tragedy ...

The bolsheviks are laughing. They are laughing cynically, confidently, and aggressively, in big and small deeds. In this lies the murderousness of the Solovetz problem. In this impudent and provocation laughter I sense the inevitability of a new tragedy.

Dear friend! I would be very sorry for myself and my comrades if you understood my letter simply as a human cry, "Save!" Such sounds do not exist in my soul; neither do they rise in the hearts of our friends. If it were only a question of human lives - this letter of mine would not be written. You know as well as I that the prisoners will firmly, under all circumstances, drink their cup to the end. Somehow they will get over their personal suffering; somehow they will bear the pain of their individual losses and they will not drop the banner ...

But what about the political side of our consciousness? How is it possible to drive out of one's mind the fact that the Solovetz tragedy is not a tragedy of individual, private persons, that it concerns an integral part of the most powerful Workers' International in the world? And why does this International keep silent when it dare not politically be silent?

It is this political, not personal, isolation that evokes the laughter of our enemies, poisoning with a bitter venom those who are behind the bars. And it is of that that I am driven to write to you ...

How much lighter one could bear the sacrifices and how easy the road of our destiny, objectively speaking, would seem if during difficult moments we could know that every

humiliation and every fresh victim would serve as a new weapon in the hands of the working class ! ...

Dear friend! It is especially difficult for me to write in this manner to you. I should not like you or any of our friends to find in my words a personal rebuke for "inactivity". That was not my intention, and I would have no right to it.

Let this letter of mine, written to you personally, be a "spiritual commentary" to those data which have been sent to you from the Solovki. And no more. Without it, you might not have realized the new misfortunes that are threatening which I, knowing but too closely the technique of the internal relations existing there, can see.

In these very days perhaps the last forced struggle for the abolition of the Solovki as a place of exile has already begun there...¹⁾

But I will end here.

Let my deep fear for the fate of our common friends, let my bitterness over the non-existing "international solidarity" and my deep friendship for and great confidence in you personally, dear friend, serve as justification for this letter.

(Signature)

September 8, 1924.

1) The writer's premonition came true. Three weeks later, October 3, 1924, a hunger-strike of more than 200 political prisoners broke out on the Solovetz Islands. The strike lasted 14 days, bringing many almost to the point of death. Even in the history of Russia, so rich with political precedent. Of course not a word of the event was permitted to be published in Russia. Public opinion in Western Europe and America was hardly aware of the heroic struggle going on near the Arctic Circle.

A P P E N D I X .

EDITOR'S NOTE

The reader should bear in mind the following points in connection with the tragedy of December 19:

1. Before moving to the Solovetz Islands, the exiles were assured full freedom within their camps.
2. Under the Czarist regime, exiles were never limited in their movements within the confines of the territory assigned to them.
3. Escape from the Solovetz Islands during the winter is impossible.
4. The passive resistance offered by the exiles to the attempts to suspend promenading in the evening was caused by their fear that their exile was being converted into a prison regime.
5. The massacre occurred before the fatal order of the commandant was announced to the exiles.

SOLOVETZ DOCUMENTS .
=====

I.

ORDER OF THE COMMANDANT OF SECTION TWO.¹⁾

2. Open-air exercises of any kind in the evening as well as at night, such as it has been practiced heretofore, is to be stopped for political prisoners, and is permitted by me from 9 o'clock in the morning to 6 in the evening, after which hour being out in the open is prohibited, with the exception of individuals passing from one building to another because of personal reasons. This paragraph is to be punctiliously and unalterably carried out, and is to be announced at the roll-call to the committee of elders of the political prisoners for communication to the political prisoners and for the regulation of this question with them. In the event of any conflicts arising from the non-execution and violation of this order by the political prisoners, and of all possible consequences of the execution by the administration of the present order, all the responsibility rests with the committee of elders.

Authority: The order of the Central "G.P.U." and of the Department of the Northern Concentration Camps of the "G.P.U.", of December 13, 1923, No.257.

(signed) Commandant of Section Two

ROSENTHAL

December 19, 1923.

1) Paragraph 1 of this order dealt with the question of turning off the electric light in the camp at midnight.

II.

ACT No.5. RECORD OF AUTOPSY OF THE KILLED AND WOUNDED.

On December 10, I, the director of the sanitary section of the Department of the Northern Concentration Camps of the "G.P.U." was invited by the Chief of the Department of the Northern Camps to come to Section Two (Savvatievo) for the purpose of examining the killed and wounded political prisoners. The examination was performed in the presence of the assistant-physician of Section Two, Kriutchkov, and of A.Popov, a physician from among the political prisoners, our findings being: Five persons killed, as follows:

1. The political prisoner George Trifonovitch Katchorovsky, aged 27, a resident of the town of Kamenetz-Podolsk, a member of the former gentry, had a wound in the right hand, four fingers being torn off, of which the index-finger was completely severed and the remaining three dangling from the tendons. There was a bullet-hole in the upper part of the pelvis-bone on the right and a hole through which the bullet passed out in the region of the loins about three centimeters to the right of the spine, with ragged edges five centimeters in circumference. There was a blind bullet-hole in the middle of the left buttock. There was a bullet-hole in the upper third section of the thigh-bone of the left limb and a hole through which the bullet passed out in the front part of the upper third section, seven centimeters large externally. The edges of the wound were ragged. Death followed half an hour after the wounding from loss of blood and internal hemorrhage.

2. The political prisoner Gavril Andreievitch Bilima-Pasternak, aged 27, a native of the city of Warsaw, a student, had a bullet-hole in the rear under the right shoulder-blade, three centimeters wide. The bullet passed out from the front, between the third and fourth ribs on the right side, on the line of the nipple, making a hole of four centimeters, the edges of the wound being ragged. Death followed forty minutes after the wounding, from hemorrhage of the lungs.

3. The political prisoner Meyer Moisseievitch Gorelik, aged 26, from the city of Berdiansk, the province of Taurida, the son of a farmer, had a bullet-hole in the rear of the right side of the external end of the shoulder-blade and a hole through which the bullet passed out from the front, under the collar-bone, at the level of the first and second ribs, near the shoulder, with ragged edges four centimeters wide. Death followed two minutes after the wounding from the hemorrhage of an artery below the skin.

4. The political prisoner Elisabeth Ivanovna Kotova, aged 25, had a bullet-hole in the right side of the neck, in the rear, and a hole through which the bullet passed out, in the left side of the neck, four centimeters wide. There was an open wound under the left collar-bone and in the region of the left joint of the shoulder, the shoulder-bone being injured. Death followed instantaneously from injury to the "sleeping" artery.

5. The political prisoner Natalia Arnoldovna Bauer, aged 32, from the city of Moscow, the daughter of a physician, had a bullet-hole on the left axillary line, between the ninth and tenth ribs, and a hole through which the bullet passed out from the front, below the breathing region, four centimeters

wide, pieces of the liver protruding from the wound. Death followed half an hour after the wounding from internal hemorrhage and injury to the liver.

Three persons were wounded. At the dressing of the wounds it was found:

1. The political prisoner George Emanuilovitch Shik, aged 31, a citizen of the town of Eisk, of the Kuban Territory, had a bullet-hole in the rear, in the lower third section of the right rib and a hole through which the bullet passed out in the front of the same section of the rib. The latter hole was ragged, ten centimeters wide.

2. The political prisoner Vsevolod Ivanovitch Popov, aged 26, the son of a priest, from the province of Voronezh, had a bullet-hole in the middle third part of the right fore-shoulder, three centimeters in size, and a hole through which the bullet passed out from the internal side of the fore-shoulder, in the rear, twelve centimeters in size. In the front of the lower third part of the foreshoulder, on a line from the thumb to the elbow, the bones of the elbow and of the radius, were broken.

3. The political prisoner Leonid Yakovlevitch Lebedev, aged 24, a peasant of the Nizhne-Dnieprovsky County, the province of Yekaterinoslav, had a blind bullet-wound in the right shoulder, in the front, nearer to the exterior. It is impossible to feel the bullet.

Whereof the present act is promulgated in three copies.

December 20, 1923.

(Signed) Director of the Sanitary
Section
Dr. Feldman.

Witnesses: Dr. A. Popov and Assistant-
Physician Kriutchkov.



5.



3.



4.



1.



7.



2.



6.



7.



8.

IN THE CENTER: SERGEI MOROZOV, born in prison, spent 9 years in prison and penal servitude under Czar. Kept under death sentence together with 11 comrades by Soviet Government after trial of Socialist-Revolutionists in 1922. Committed suicide in Moscow prison by severing veins with piece of glass December 21, 1923. After his death Soviet Government commuted the death sentences of his comrades to 5 years imprisonment.

1. BORIS ZEITLIN & Batursky, social-democratic leader, died of typhus in the Vitebsk prison. His sister, Natalia Bauer, killed at the Solovetz Islands on December 19, 1923. His two brothers still in soviet exile.

2. DAVID KOGAN, known as the "Little Christ", editor of Anarchist publications. arrested in 1921. Mysteriously lost in the Bolshevik prison.

3. BORIS KAMKOV, leader of left socialist Revolutionists, intimate friend of Maria Spiridonova, in prison and exile since 1921.

4. VICTOR KOROBEKOV, Odessa labour leader, spent 8 years in penal servitude under Czar, Has tuberculosis. Now at Solovetz Islands. Social democrat.

5. BORIS SAPER, student, social-democrat, now on Solovetz Islands. 23 years old.

6. ANNA KRASNIAANSKAYA, social-democrat since 1901, has tuberculosis. Confined in so-called Suzdal Bastille.

7. LEO YAKUBSON, student, social-democrat, now on Solovetz Islands.

8. ROSA ELMAN, student, social-democrat, 23 years old, now on Solovetz Islands.

III.

Peshkova, Kuznetzky 16, Moscow.¹⁾

Communicate guardedly to relatives names of five killed: George Katchorovsky Elizabeth Kotova, Natalia Bauer, Meyer Gorelik, Gavrill Bilima-Pasternak and of wounded - none mortally: Vsevolod Popov, George Shik, Leonid Lebedev, Remaining are well.

December 21, 1923

Committee of Elders: IVANITZKY, KUSHIN.

IV.

Peshkova, Kuznetzky 16, Moscow.

Wounded Vsevolod Popov expired the fourth. Communicate guardedly to relatives.

January 13, 1923.

Elder IVANITZKY.

V.

Telephonogram No. 61/s. To the Commandant of Section Two, Savvatievo, for Delivery to the Committee of Elders.

In accordance with a communication from Moscow, a commission has been appointed by the Central Executive Committee of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, consisting of representatives of the Presidium of the Central Control Committee of the Russian Communist Party and of the Commissariat of

¹⁾ This is the text of the first news of the event sent by telegraph to the "Red Cross for Politicals". Mme Peshkova (formerly Mrs. Maxim Gorky) is in charge of this semi-recognized organization, which is sometimes referred to as the "Political Prisoners' Relief Society". Note the word "guardedly" in the telegram, meaning that the news should be handled confidentially so as not to provoke the authorities.

justice, to inquire into the events of December 19, 1923. The commission has decided to invite for examination two representatives of the political prisoners for the purpose of the complete clarification of the event. In connection with the departure tomorrow of a rowboat carrying mail, I must be urgently informed if the community of the political prisoners, after taking into consideration the natural difficulties of despatching their representatives by rowboat, agree to do so, in order to enable me to dispose in time of the mail baggage ready for shipment. I expect a reply by six o'clock.

January 17, 1924. 3.40 p.m. Acting Chief of the Department

EICHMANS.

Delivered by Bazmachov.

Received by Ivanov, of Section Two.

Supply Department.

VI.

Telephonogram To the Commandant of Section Two, Comrade Bashmakov.

You are invited to inform the Committee of Elders of Section Two, in connection with the permission received from Moscow for me or for the Chief of the Department to proceed to Moscow for a report, that the boat will definitely leave early tomorrow if no positive answer is received from the Committee of Elders by 2 a.m. of January 18 or if their answer should be negative. In the event of the representatives of the political prisoners consenting to go to Moscow, in accordance with the order of the Commission of the Central Executive Committee of the Union, the boat can be detained twenty-four hours and will be put exclusively at the disposal of the representatives

of the political prisoners, since it cannot accomodate more than two passengers.

January, 17, 9.50 p.m.

Acting Chief of the Department,
EICHMANS.

VII.

Telegram. To the Presidium of the Central Executive
Committee of the Union M o s c o w.

Agree sending (representatives) to Moscow on condition
representatives of Prisoners' Relief and of Socialist International be admitted to participate in inquiry. Reasons stated in
mailed declaration.

For the Socialist prisoners,

A. IVANITZKY

V. BOGDANOV

M. SAMOKHVALOV

VIII.

Reply of the Anarchist Community to
the Central Executive Committee of the Union of Socialist
Spviet Republics.

Replying to your proposal, delivered to us on January
17, 1924, that we send two representatives of the political
prisoners to Moscow for a hearing, we declare that the attitude
of the Anarchist Community to the Inquiry has already been
stated in our communication to the Commission of Inquiry of
the Department of the Northern Concentration Camps, of December
20, 1923. Since then our attitude has undergone no changes,

and remains the same towards the second act of the comedy of investigation now staged by the Commission of the Central Executive Committee of the Union. On the contrary, the short interval dividing us from the date of the aforementioned communication has been replete with acts of provocation, with the aggressive expansion of the Nogtev regime, and with such acts of power-intoxication as threats to discontinue official relations between the administration of the northern camps and our community, and can only serve to confirm more than ever the correctness of our view of the past event and of its overt and covert causes.

Enclosure: Copy of declaration of December 20, 1923, to the Commission of Inquiry into the Events of December 19. Appointed by the Department of the Northern Concentration Camps.

1)

IX.

To the Acting Chief of the Department of the Northern Concentration Camps, Mr. Richmans.

In reply to your verbal proposal that we name two soldiers of the Red Army detachment to be sent to Moscow as witnesses in connection with the case of the shooting of December 19, we declare that we do not know the identities of any of the soldiers and are therefore unable to indicate any of them as witnesses.

For the Socialist Community,

January 18, 1924.

S. ZEITLIN

A. IVANITZKY

S. POPOV

1) See Letter three.

1)
L E N I N I N E X I L E .

The occasions when most of the social- democratic exiles of the Minusinski district, including Vladimir Ilyitch Ulianov, would gather at a fixed place were great holidays for us. Usually these gatherings would be held either at Minusinsk... or in the village of Shushinskoe, the place of exile of V.I. Ulianov, where his bride, N.K. Krupskaya, who later became his wife, was visiting him...

I saw Vladimir Ilyitch for the first time at the end of 1898, in Minusinsk, where we met to spend gaily a few days in a intimate comradely circle and to welcome the New Year....

I shall not enter into details as to how we spent the time in Minusinsk, but I do want to call the attention of the reader to the character of V.I. Ulianov whom I was able to appraise sufficiently even then - during the few days of living with him under the same roof. All my conceptions of him as a "general", as a supercilious, arrogant and harsh person, vanished after the first moments of our acquaintance...

It seems to me that in addition to the ideological motives of his aggressive, revolutionary activity. Vladimir Ilyitch was by nature a tireless sportsman ... In his younger days, when he was in exile, he would engage with extraordinary zeal and passion in all kinds of sports.

1) This account of how Lenin (Vladimir Ilyitch Ulianov) lived in his Siberian exile under the Romanov regime is taken from P.N.Lepeshinsky's book "Na Povorote", published in Petrograd in 1922 by the "Commission on the History of the November Revolution and the Russian Communist Party". Lepeshinsky is a veteran bolshevik. We believe that this narrative forms a striking and self-explanatory contrast to the letters of the political prisoners of the Solovetz Islands.

The whole company would, for instance, go out skating upon the smooth ice and take a swing about the frozen river. The excited and riotous Ilyitch would be there first, calling challengingly: "Hey, there! Who will race me?" And several pairs of legs would fly off and away into space. Ilyitch would lead them all, exerting his will-power, the strength of his muscles, to the limit.

Or, for instance, our amateur hunters would gather to have some fun with shotguns. The best hunters among us were Kurnatovsky and Starkov. As regards Ilyitch, he was a master in the art of taking foul aim. But how could he possibly remain behind and finish among the last? No, indeed! And if Starkov covered twenty versts, Ilyitch would actually run across hillocks and swamps forty versts, driven by the hope of sniping some stupid bird which would permit him to approach closely enough to enable this unlucky hunter to strike the victim...

The few days of our Minusinsk gatherings would fly by. A game of chess, gay chatter, discussions, promenading, then again chess, and for diversion sometimes chorus singing. It must, however, be emphasized that singing was not the least of our program. I have already spoken of Starkov's ability at organizing a chorus. But Vladimir Ilyitch introduced into our vocal amusements a certain zeal and fresh vitality. When it came to our ordinary repertoire, he would shout in rage: "To the devil with 'Oh, my poor lot!' (a melancholy song favoured by Starkov). Let's have, 'Boldly, comrades, in line!'" ...

I remember, in the course of one of my visits to Shushinskoye, finding N.K. Krupskaya very busy. She was busy with cotton, gold-leaf, cardboard, walnuts and all the

paraphernalia making up the decoration of the traditional Christmas-tree. It was her mother that planned the tree.

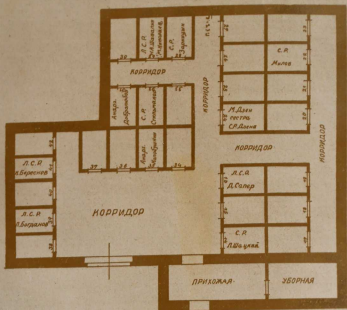
"Nadejda Konstantinovna, what do you want with all this rubbish?" I asked.

"It is for the village children", she answered simply and put me to work at once drawing and cutting little animals out of cardboard. She was as happy as a child imagining the joyous light in the blue eyes of her little guests when the magic sight of beautiful illuminated tree would be revealed before them ...

The last winter of our three-year term of exile passed swiftly. After two months of severe Siberian cold, with the temperature between 40 and 50 degrees Reaumur, I once, in the middle of February, came out in the morning to discover to my satisfaction that a thaw had set in. The last day of our exile, at the end of February, was approaching... All around us were joyous, happy, agitated faces. Everybody was full of lively activity preparing for the long trip.

Vladimir Ilyitch seemed to be the busiest of all, hustling everybody. The pleasant dreams of the future, the prospects of further revolutionary activity, of a return to the civilized world, all of this raised our mood to the pitch of ecstasy. There was joking, laughter, and bold songs of victory without end.

S E C O N D P A R T .



THE PRISON WITHOUT BARS. (See page 93)

Diagram of the "G.P.U." Prison on the Gorokhovaya Street in Petrograd, Drawn by Shabalin. All the Cells Face Inner Corridors. None of the Cells Have Windows. The Prisoners Are listed According to the Number of the Cell:

14. L. Shatzky, Socialist-Revolutionist
16. D. Saper, Socialist-Revolutionist
22. Milov, Socialist Revolutionist
24. M. Dzen, Sister of the Socialist-Revolutionist Dzen
28. Zarnitsky, Socialist-Revolutionist
29. M. A. Shabalin (M. Nicholaiev) Left Socialist Revolutionist
31. Dobroliubov, Anarchist.
32. Stilmanov, Socialist-Revolutionist.
35. Kolobushkin, Anarchist.
39. L. Bogdanov, Left Socialist-Revolutionist.
41. M. Beresnev, Left Socialist-Revolutionist.

THE PRISON WITHOUT BARS.

One wants to believe that this letter will reach you. But to believe is one thing, and to overcome all the infernal difficulties, - the bayonets, the isolation of my cell, the sharp eye of the prison cerberus, the searches, and the many other extraordinary police measures, - is an other thing.

Do not forget that I am writing this from a torture-chamber, in comparison with which the Russian bastilles - Schluesselburg and Petropavlosk, in the dungeons of which I languished in the old days as a "statecriminal", pale in their regime and in their special measures. I will take the liberty of describing briefly the arrangement and regime of the "prison without bars", and to cite some facts which, it seems to me, cry to heaven. There are two buildings for general prisoners and two for solitary confinement. The latter deserves telling about. In a room covering 986 square feet, in the first building, 29 cells have been built. Each cell is 5 and a half feet long and 3 and a quarter feet wide. More than half of the cell is occupied by a bunk and a little table. This is all the furniture, except a dull little electric bulb, of about five candle-power, right under the ceiling. Nothing else. No windows. No mattresses, no quilts, no pillows, the prisoners sleep on bare bunks in the cold rooms. The doors of the cells are locked day and night. Here everything is forbidden: open-air exercise, conversation, reading, etc. It is permitted only to breathe the poisonous air, to eat during the day two little bowls of soup, prepared from dried herring, and a pound of bread, to drink three cups of hot water with a teaspoonful of granulated

sugar. And that is all. Incidentally, the first building is considered the better. I spent only four days there.

In the second building there are the "coolers" and the so-called cork-cells. The former are simple. There are windows in them but without glass. The "coolers" where people spend weeks in terrible contortions, partly due to the undernourishment, are provided in order to "starve out" the prisoners' "heresy".

The cork-cells are the acme of prison craft. The walls, floor, ceiling and door are inlaid with cork. There are no windows, no bed. The "furniture" is like of the first building. There are only 2 "cork-cells". (I was confined in one of them. The cork-cells are regarded as the most "terrible" and isolated of all.) I am more and more convinced that it is enough to spend 3 or 4 months in a cork-cell in order to become a physical wreck. The absence of natural light, (in mines horses go blind!) of fresh air, walks, a bed, and the meager nourishment, the absence of a change of underwear, the cold and the dampness! One must add the ban on books, the wealth of huge spiders, bugs, mice and other "creatures". The confinement becomes difficult to bear.

One of the walls of "my" cork-cell is saturated with stinking fluid, a toilet is directly above it.

Outside the cork-door is a guard, who walks his beat day and night, stamping the floor with his boots.

This noise, as well as the noise made up-stairs in the kitchen of the "commissars", have their effect.

Once upon a time the tomb-like stillness of the Trubetskoytower had a deadly effect on my nervous system and caused sleepless nights with dreadful hallucinations. Now, it is the other way...

In the next cork-cell there was for several days a man

whose identity I did not know, who shrieked all the time in an unhuman voice, stamping his feet and beating his head against the wall for hours at a stretch. I did not know who he was and why he was jailed, whether he was insane or was only simulating, but I did know that it was a human being beating his head against a wall and in spite of myself I would think that any moment the wall might be covered with human brains...

Together E. Litvinova, a member of the left socialist revolutionist party, was put into "cooler" No. 10, to "starve out" her party loyalty. This was in March, when the cold in Petrograd was 19 degrees below zero. She wore a shabby autumn coat. She was doubled up in convulsions from the cold, and contracted a dull cough which resounded throughout the building. She spent a week in the "cooler". The tshekists observed that the heresy was not driven out of her, while her health was growing constantly worse. They transferred her to another cell.

But there are also other means of "influence" being employed here. At first they put a young man into cork-cell No. 1, a worker of the Putilov plant by the name of Bisha. He related that the investigator conducted the inquiry with ... a block of wood. ... out its punishment regardless of any guarantees and solemn promises...

In cell No. 21 there was an insane person, a certain Bryjanovsky, an ordinary criminal. The prosecuting authorities, in order to find out whether he was ill or only simulating, took him on February 28 for examination, and applied the latest "scientific experiments" to him by cauterizing his body. After this "scientific examination" the "experts" of the Gorohovaya gave it as their diagnosis that Bryjanovsky was not "deceiving" them. The sick man was sent to a hospital. But two days later he

was again called before investigator Mihailov, one of the chief "scientists".

Scenes of a different kind are being staged here for political "sanitation". Thus, there was arrested on April 1 the sailor Yakovenko, the associate chairman of the Kronstadt Revolutionary Committee during the uprising of 1921, who came from Finland to Petrograd to organize the revolutionary activities. Together with Yakovenko, another rebel, Petrov, was arrested; the latter, afraid of the "torture-chamber", betrayed all and entered the service of the "Teheka".

The investigators "bothered" with Yakovenko fifteen hours daily, they strove to extort a "confession" from him and a written appeal by him to the rebels to return to Lenin's kingdom. The authorities promised in advance to pardon the rebels for all their secret and open sins. The "amnesty" of 1921 was again dragged out from the archive, and in the name of communist honour they swore that they would carry it out punctiliously.

Yakovenko was not caught on this hook. Indeed, it would have been criminal on his part to become a bolshevist advocate. The "Teheka" would mete out its punishment regardless of any guarantees and solemn promises...

When Yakovenko categorically refused to send such a message, the "experts" of the Gorohovaya advanced a more convincing argument. Behind a curtain was mobilized the "public opinion" of Kronstadt. Several women (certainly wives of communists) began to "persuade" Yakovenko that before and after the revolt they were satisfied with existing conditions, and they demanded of him, as the leader, that he return their "sons" to them. Yakovenko would not budge. Then the women began to spit in the

face of the imprisoned revolutionist.

When this disgusting comedy ended, the tchekists said to him: "You see now, that the mass of the people, the lower classes, were against the revolt."

The bolsheviks have forgotten the revolutionary magnanimity with which the rebels treated the arrested commissars.

In recognition of this magnanimity, they hand-cuffed Yakovenko upon his arrest. In addition to Yakovenko, there are two more members of the Revolutionary Committee in prison, Kupolov at the Gorohovaya and Archipov at the Special Section of the Cheka on Italiysky Street.

A certain Danilov occupied the cork-cell before me. Why he was arrested I do not know. But he left traces of his painful suffering on the wall. Together with him his family was arrested - the wife and son. The latter was... 1 year and 2 months old. The unfortunate father inscribed on the wall this heart-rending cry: "My boy Kolya, aged 1 year and 2 months, is under arrest. He is suffering - what for?"

But "the boy Kolya" was not a pioneer. A large number of such "conspirators" have been imprisoned before him, guilty of being the children of fathers who were in disfavour at the Kremlin...

And so, my dear ones, on March 7, after almost half a year of freedom, I was again imprisoned. You know that the six months of freedom were bought at a high price - through an escape from the Central Penal Prison of Orel where I landed after the famous beating of the socialists and anarchists in the Butyrka, in the night of April 26.

I knew that the "Tcheka" would cruelly avenge the slap

which I inflicted by escaping from the model prison of Djerjinsky which has preserved all the worst features of the Czar's regime and added all the "best" of the communist. On guard there like a faithful dog, stands the scoundrel Saat, the former assistant warden of the Yaroslavl Penal Prison, robbing the prisoners. The whole flock of jailers formerly served the Czar. Several days before my escape one of our comrades declared to the assistant warden Sokolov, formerly a czarist jailor and now a communist: "When will you stop tormenting us. There is only one thing left to do - either to smash one's head against the wall or to escape from here even at a risk."

The answer of the little satrap was classical. It could serve as an ornament for the history of the Russian Communist Party: "You are not forbidden to smash your head here", said Sokolov, "but as to escaping... one is either taken to the morgue from here or set free by order."

When arrested at the secret quarters on the Zvenigorodskaya 23, where part of the printing type and samples of the passport bureau were kept, (there were 360 samples of one of the provincial cities), I made my next attempt to escape. Seizing my cap, I jumped out of the house just as I was, without an overcoat. A hunt was started for me at once, I fell in the yard and was caught, but tore myself away and continued to run. This time, however, fortune did not favour me. My heart failed. I fell on the street. The tehekists pounced upon me like vultures. They emphasized their victory by a blow with the butt of a pistol on my back. They picked me up. Two cold muzzles were put against my temples. I was led to the automobile...

"Are there any hand-cuffs in the automobile?" one tehekist inquired of the other. "No", was the answer.

I was asked some questions, threatened, but I heard nothing. I was pained to the depth of my soul and, speaking frankly, was sorry at the moment that they did not shoot me. I was pained because I, an old revolutionist, had to become unwittingly the betrayer of our best organizations, as I had then in my pockets a lot of secret addresses, most of which were not in code. It was painful... The comrades might forgive me if I were dead...

Especially since I was staking everything, I thought that either I would be killed at the attempt to escape or that I would again, as a loyal soldier of the revolution and the party, be at my revolutionary post, continuing the work under the unbearably difficult conditions. Something else happened... I was taken prisoner alive... In the automobile I had a "breathingspell" as the tchekists were also fatigued. I utilized this to destroy the addresses. Stuffing my mouth with paper, I chewed hard.

The tchekists noticed it. One of them said to the other: "He must have taken poison".

"Well, he can go to the devil", was the answer.

I swallowed part of the paper and the other part I expectorated. Only then they understood that I did not take poison, but was eating documents. They threw themselves upon me, forcing open my mouth, but it was already too late.

I breathed freely.

But finally the fellows rested, the automobile started. Then they began to "work". With one blow the cap was struck from my head. I was beaten with the butt of a revolver over the hands and limbs, my fingers still hurt me, and in the first days it was difficult to hold a spoon. But that was not enough for the sadists

They subjected me to real torture... It is dreadful to recall... They tortured my eyes... and sexual organs... I lost consciousness... When I felt the first blow, I firmly resolved not to emit a single sound, a single groan. And biting my lips hard, I kept silent. My grave-like silence was taken as a sign of "weak pressure". The latter was increased... Again I lost consciousness. When I came to myself, blood was streaming from my nose and left cheek.

"Why did you make him bleed?" one tchekist asked the other, "do as I have done, it causes pain but there is no blood."

Finally I was dragged into the commandant's office, on the Gorohovaya 2. I could neither stand nor sit. There was a row of chairs near the wall. I lay down. Blood was streaming from my throat. But the assistant commandant on duty kicked me off with his foot, declaring that it was not permitted to lie there. In the keepers' room, during the personal search, I again lost consciousness for a short while.

I was taken before the investigator, but refused to answer, except that I was a member of the party of the left socialist-revolutionists. From the investigator I was taken to the cork-cell.

Three days later the chief of the prosecuting department Piukenen, called me out. There were present a whole squad of spies and agents-provocateurs to recognize me but seeing the marks of torture on my face, he gave up the examination. He granted me a "favor" and transferred me from the cork-cell to the first building. Four days later I was again called before the prosecutor, but I categorically declared that I did not want to talk with the representatives of the resurrected Inquisition.

"You will learn to talk and acquire the desire for it

in the cork-cell", the investigator answered, and I was placed in the cork-cell, where I still am to-day. I am physically worn-out and feel that if I should spend another 3 or 4 months in the cork-cell, without light, I will go altogether blind.

My dear ones. Soon it will be the First of May. Our great holiday. On that glorious day, following the example of former years spent in prisons, I will declare a hunger-strike as a protest against the communist violence and torture-chambers in which I am spending my fourth First of May. That day add my voice too to the hymn of the toilers seeking their emancipation from the paws of capitalism and violence, regardless of the names and flags under which they may be disguised....

Good bye, until better days, many kisses.

Petrograd, Gorohovaya 2, the Cork-cell.

April 9, 1922.¹⁾

I. A. SHABALIN

(M.V.Nikolayev)

- 1) Five days after this letter was written, on April 14, I.A.Shabalin, together with three other inmates of the Gorohovaya prison, A.Sokolova, E.Litvinova, D.Saper, was taken under special convoy to Moscow. On the way, fifty versts from Moscow, Shabalin threw himself out of the window of his railway carriage. The train was going at full speed. It was stopped, and the tchekists opened fire in all directions. The fugitive, one of his arms broken, suffering from several minor injuries, in an exhausted condition managed, however, to elude the hunters and to reach safety. All the efforts of the "G.P.U." to locate him have been futile.

"REVOLUTIONARY JUSTICE".^{*)}

Citizen Kursky! In April of this year, after each of us had spent from 8 to 14 months in prison, we were indicted for belonging to the socialist- revolutionist party and for being active in it. In May we were sentenced by the "G.P.U." to administrative exile for two years into the remote parts of Russia.

We refused to accept this sentence, demanding, on the basis of the decree of the Central Executive Committee of the Union of February 6, of this year, either freedom or an open trial of the charges made against us.

You know as well as we that Article 8 of the decree of the Central Executive Committee of February 6, categorically declares that "from now on all cases of offences against the Soviet regime or any violation of the laws of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic are subject exclusively to judicial procedure by the revolutionary tribunals or the people's courts, according to their character".(No.30 of the "Izvestia" of February 8, 1923.) This decree, having been passed by the highest legislative organ of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, is a law, the observance of which, it would seem, should first of all be the duty of the officials of the Soviet Republic.

Nevertheless, the "G.P.U." which has taken the place

*) On the opposite page is a facsimile of this letter. In the original Russian it is entitled, "An Open Letter to the People's Commissar of Justice of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, Citizen Kursky". This document is particularly noteworthy because of the four signers, two-Kazchorsky and Bilima-Pasternak- subsequently lost their lives in the slaughter of December 19, 1923, on the Solovetz Islands. (See Part One.)

of the abolished Tcheka, almost from the first day of its existence began, without any participation of the judicial organs, to mete out punishment to the political opponents of the existing government - the socialists and anarchists - sending them by the score and the hundred into administrative exile.

In passing its sentences, the "G.P.U." paid so little attention to the decree of the Central Executive Committee of February 6, that to the very last it meted out its punishments without open trial, without even considering it necessary to obtain the approval of any of the highest organs of the Government.

Only after we, the undersigned, declared our refusal to go into exile, the "G.P.U.", for the first time, attempted post factum to legalize its lawless order by applying to the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee.

At first the "G.P.U.", through the mouth of its representative, Mr. Gertzman, endeavoured to persuade us of the futility of resistance. "I am surprised at your not proceeding into exile," he said to us on May 11, in the office of the prison on Kisselny Alley. "We shall not hand your cases over to the courts anyway, and you will remain in prison, perhaps for three years longer. The Presidium of the Central Executive Committee permits us to keep you in prison until the conclusion of the investigation, and we can drag out the investigation as long as we please." In reply to our remark that exile violates the laws of the Soviet Republic, Gertzman said: "Once the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee approves it - and this it will do - it is lawful. The Presidium can do anything. If it orders the "B.P.U." to shoot half of Moscow's population, we shall execute it."

The prediction of Mr. Gertzman came true. On May 19, the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee sanctioned the sentence of the "G.P.U." concerning our exile. But this did not convince us of the legality either of the sentence or of the sanction, since there is not a word in the decree of the Central Executive Committee of February 6, about the right of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee to permit repressive measures without trial.

In view of all this, Citizen Kursky, we decided to appeal to you for an explanation! You, the People's Commissar of Justice, are charged by Article 9 of the aforementioned decree with the general control of the execution of Article 8 of the decree, and therefore it is up to you, first of all, to defend the unprotected citizens and to take to account such officials who permit themselves to violate the rights guaranteed by this article.

We asked you, in our declaration of May 23, 1922, if there was any decree of the Central Executive Committee endowing the "G.P.U." with the right of applying repressive measures without open trial and empowering the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee to sanction such measures. What was your answer? The text of your communication of June 8, No.1304/6562, announced to us by the chief warden of the Taganka Prison, reads as follows: "The exile ... from Moscow was ordered by the "G.P.U." with the consent of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of May 13, of this year. Therefore it is lawful."

In this manner, you, the Procurator of the Republic, the supreme guardian of the law, openly declared your solidarity with the agent of the "G.P.U." in the interpretation of "revolutionary Justice", recognizing, first, that in the Russian Soviet Republic punishment without trial is still considered lawful and second, that any decree (on paper!) of the highest legislative institution

of the Republic can be violated freely by an inferior organ such as the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee.

We personally knew this before, but we wanted to have confirmation of this truth from your "authoritative" mouth. This we have secured. It is now clear to everybody that while despatching with one hand memoranda to the Entente Powers containing sworn assurances about the abolition of repressive measures without trial (No.66, "Izvestia" of March 23,1922), the Soviet Government, or more correctly the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party - this real, unlike the shadowy Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, legislative organ of the Russian Soviet Republic- continues with the other hand sentencing without trial socialists and anarchists.

The Czar's government, abolishing court trials and introducing the system of administrative exile for socialists, had openly published that fact. But you, hypocritically talking about revolutionary justice, in your cowardice keep your extraordinary laws against socialists concealed in the depths of your offices.

Moscow, Taganka Prison.

June 24, 1922.

(Signed) G. KACHOROVSKY

G. DIKANSKY

P. BILIMA-PASTERNAK

V. SHMERLIN-VOLIN.

A VOICE FROM THE WILDERNESS +)

The first period of my exile I spent in a dark country where there were no people, except myself, eight exiled priests and the "authorities". It took us only a month by row-boat to get there,- a distance of 900 versts along the Parabel and Kenghe rivers, besides some "hiking" across marshland.

It was so dead and human beings were so rare in those parts that even the birds did not fear us. Frequently wild fowl, such as heath-cocks and woodhens, would sit on the roof of the cabin in which the priests and I lived, and wild geese would swim in the stream under the window without fear and without stirring at our approach. Even the field-mice and the beavers, of whom there were great swarms, did not fear the presence of man and played freely about the cabin. At night one could often hear the desperate cries of the "holy fathers" whenever the brave little mice caught at their long hair during their innocent sleep...

What did we do there? I say "we", because I want to tell you a little about the priests. Nothing. There was nothing to occupy us. No books, no newspapers, no paper, no people with whom one could talk in a human fashion. It was absolutely impossible to busy oneself studying the locality

+) This letter, somewhat abbreviated here, was written by Olga Romanova, a girl 18 years of age, to A.A.Karelin, the well-known revolutionist. Romanova was exiled to the uninhabited parts of the Naryn territory in Siberia.

and nature generally. First of all because there are not even paths, let alone roads, in this wild country. It is true there was one little path of about seven versts, so bad that it was almost impossible to follow it, being a stranger, without breaking one's neck or at least a leg. It has so many stumps and roots that after the first attempt, one loses all desire to repeat it. Besides a special kind of boots is needed for the purpose. Sometimes one wants to leave the path and walk under the magnificent cedars, but this must remain a wish because it is impossible to walk even three feet off the path. The underbrush is in the way. What a pity! But if you try to overcome the obstacles you risk losing an eye and return with bleeding hands and face, clothes torn to shreds.

In addition to all this there is another awful nuisance which prevents the enjoyment of nature! in the whole Naryn territory there is such a multitude of mosquitoes and insects that some days it is impossible to go even outside the cabin without nets. (Naryn translated into Russian means "swamp".) There are some impassable swamps stretching for distances from 70 to 80 versts, and even the native Ostiaks accustomed to the taiga and the marches are unable to cross them. Yet the ostiaks, of whom there are many along the rivers of Parabel, Kenghe, Chuzyk, Wassyugan are really so adapted to the taiga that they safely walk 40 or 50 versts a day across swamps and thickets. But of course they are dressed in leather clothes, in high boots, and are equipped with firearms to protect themselves against beasts as well as with a palitza (resembling a scythe), with sharp steel ends, for the purpose of cutting their way through the thickets and underbrush.

There goes an Ostiak over the taiga, waving his palitza to the right and to the left, clearing his path, and when he comes to a swamp or an overgrown pond, he skillfully, without hesitation, begins to jump from one hillock to the other.

Now about the "holy fathers" Whenever I recall them I want to laugh. First, about things serious. Upon our arrival there, at the Upper Kenghe, the "fathers" busied themselves thrashing the grain left by a colony of "sectarians" who had lived there before our arrival and disappeared as soon as the authorities discovered them. The priests labored thrashing the grain with flails, toiling so that the sweat streamed down their bodies, the wind swept their long hair and spread wide the skirts of their priestly garments. They would toil hard; the work, however, moved forward very slowly. Tired, exhausted the poor souls needing a rest, would enter the cabin to strengthen themselves with the meager dinner and some clear "tea" - boiling water. I would put before them whatever God gave. Being the only woman among them, I baked bread for all and cooked dinner whenever there were any potatoes or peas. Sometimes, on account of the lack of provisions, the meal consisted of bread and hot water. The priests always took turns boiling the water. In the absence of a samovar, we used a kettle over a fire made outside the cabin, and even in the autumn, when the rain drizzled from morning to evening, we had to boil the water in this way. The priests would exert themselves to the utmost to blaze the fire, standing around it and protecting it from the wind with the skirts of their ragged garments, torn during the walks in the taiga. After standing for an hour or more in the wind

pain, numb and wet, the unfortunate men would drag their legs, covered with gaping boots, through the mud and water and enter the cabin to warm themselves with some "tea". In spite of my desire to help with the boiling of the water, the "fathers" never allowed me to get near the fire insisting that I remain in the hut. The poor souls were afraid that if I should take cold and become ill, they would be left without bread, since there was no one else to do the baking.

Incidentally I may add that on account of this baking I even now suffer from a dislocated right arm. (The arm was injured previously, during the journey, when all of us had to drag a boat by rope, carrying our baggage on us. It was then that I tripped over a log and fell, and my arm was injured. One "holy father", wishing to place the bone back in its place, pulled my poor hand so hard that my eyes nearly popped out. However, he not only failed to straighten it out, but dislocated it even more. For a couple of months it did not bother me. Then came the bread-baking, and now I cannot lift anything heavy, and when I turn it a bit the wrong way, it pains frightfully. Well, all this is rubbish, I have digressed too much...)

I lived in the wilderness for four months, true, including the time spent going there. As I said, I had nothing to do except to bake bread. When I was free, I wandered like a shadow around the cabin, sometimes following the path for a long distance, risking a broken leg too. Cautiously I would make my way. Then I would begin to think, and sitting on a tree-trunk, I would think, think, think. And they were all alarming thoughts, not happy thoughts, arousing me more and

more. I would sit for an hour, for two, sometimes longer, and then waking up, I would still be under the influence of the thoughts and recollections of my former life. I questioned myself: "Where am I? Why am I here? Whence these centuries-old cedars?" That would last but a moment. Then I would shake it all off and recover my consciousness and realize fully what, where, and why. Then a burning yearning would creep again into my heart, a yearning for freedom, for life, for people. I would want to cry out: "I desire liberty, freedom!" But to whom could I cry out? Not to the aged cedars. They will understand nothing, but slowly, slowly they will shake their heads as before. To the birds, mice and beavers who every now and then raised their heads from under the tree-trunk? They too will understand and say nothing, but in reply to my cry their eyes will glitter and then they will hide under the trunk, and the birds will fly off. Perhaps to the green frogs? But they too will be frightened by my cry, and clumsily hop off into hiding... So I would remain sitting in a petrified condition, my hands clenched in despair till the fingers cracked. I would sit, and all around me was life, the sun would shine brightly and gloriously, ^{call} luring and promising a better life; the birds would flutter and sing; the mice would bravely run between my feet and with their black and glistening little eyes stare at the creature they had never seen before. The mosquitoes would buzz and bite (it was these bites that finally would drive me away and back into the cheerless hut). All around was life, and I? - I? I could but look on... I would return to the hut towards evening. The priests would be at vespers or night-mass. I would rest a little, and then their exasperating singing would get on my nerves. I would run out of the hut and go off in any direction. The

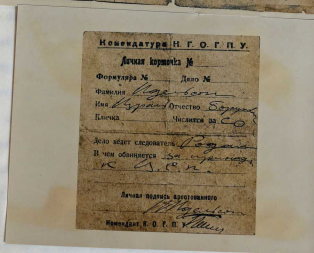
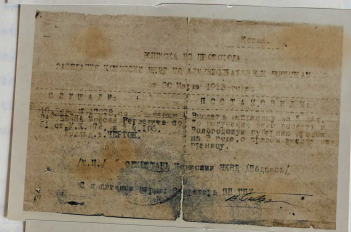
services would last three or four hours. Night would come, and the singing from the hut still reached my ears. I would not want to return. Later, the nights became cold. Especially, in the autumn I froze, having no warm clothes, I shivered, my teeth chattered. Finally, the service would end, all going to sleep. I too would turn in for the night. But the mice would give me no peace, either they pulled at my hair or they bit my feet or hands. One had to wake up to fight with them. And in the other half of the cabin, where the "holy fathers" were at rest, one heard the sound: "Sh...sh...sh..." It was the priests driving the mice away. Or suddenly, right after falling asleep, an inhuman cry would reach me from the other side. Some playful mouse must have become entangled in the locks of one of the priests, or bitten his hand or a foot. Brave little mice! They recognize nothing. They do not even fear hell in the other world for injuring "holy fathers".

After living there four months, I was sent back on foot, accompanied by an Ostiak guide. It was impossible to return by rowboat - the stream had become too shallow. And so I walked two days through the taiga and the swamps, a distance of 60 versts. Of course, there was no path. I followed the Ostiak who was clearing a passage. In the marshland I jumped from one hillock to another. It was cold. In the autumn the water is already like ice in the swamps. We reached a lake choked with vegetation. The Ostiak skillfully jumped over the hillocks, I following in his footsteps. Suddenly I missed my step and fell into the water (or rather into the thick vegetation filling the lake). I began to cry. The Ostiak returned and pulled me out. (Laughter.)

We continued through the "oorman" (the Ostiak name for the dense taiga). Two days later we reached a deserted cabin, spent the night there, and continued on our way but along a path already. The rest of the trip was made partly on foot, partly on horseback, partly by rowboat, until we reached Parabel, in the vicinity of which I am making at present my uncertain habitation.

1923.

OLGA ROMANOVA.



ABOVE: IDENTIFICATION CARD Issued by the Severo-Dvinsk "G.P.U." on February 11, 1924, to the Administrative Exile Israel B. Idelson. Photographed from the original.

CENTER: CERTIFICATE OF SENTENCE passed by the "G.P.U." Commission for Administrative Exile, on March 30, 1923, in the case of M.G. Weiswein. The sentence reads: "To be deported abroad for 5 years. To be exiled to the Vologda Province for 3 years until a foreign visa is secured, with the right of going abroad."

BELOW: PRISONER'S IDENTIFICATION CARD issued by the Kiev "G.P.U." to Israel B. Idelson. The question "Of What Accused?" is answered as follows: "For Belonging to the Party of the Zionists-Socialists."

ON VACATION IN NARYM ^{*)}

The Narym exiles are so firmly isolated from the rest of the world that only letters dealing with the health of relatives or our own health can hope to reach their destination. Any other messages, even complaints against the lawlessness and cruelty of our officials, addressed by us to the higher authorities, do not arrive. A telegram sent by us to Peshkova of the "Red Cross" remained on file in one of the local offices.

And yet the condition of the exiles and the system of exile are such that at times one becomes terrified by this dreadful isolation.... The local authorities the soviet and "G.P.U.", are treating us as common criminals having no rights at all. They told us so and are acting accordingly. To all our protests that we were not condemned by a court, that we were socialists in exile, there is one answer: "We know that you are condemned criminals, that you have lost all your rights." And whenever any of us are conveyed to some village or outlying cabin, the accompanying paper to the local authorities reads, "administrative exiles so-and-so", and then follow the names of a social-democrat and of a thief with a long prison-record coupled together. But the peasants very quickly drew the line between the "politicals" and the others, and to the honor

*) This letter from a socialist exile in the Narym territory, written early in 1924, appeared in the "Socialist Vestnik", the central organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, for April 17, 1924.

of the exile it must be added that the prestige of the former is very high in Naryn, which cannot be said of the reputation of the communists.

After all the suffering in the "G.P.U.", on the prison route and in the various jails, for we were assembled from all parts of Russia in Moscow first and from there sent to Siberia, we waited with impatience for Naryn itself - its spaciousness and peace.

We had spent much time in different "G.P.U." prisons, in damp cells, never breathing the open air, forbidden to see our relatives, deprived of the right of correspondence, the windows of our cells always closed under orders. Many of us had passed through the "Inner Prison" of the "G.P.U.", in which all examinations, receipt of packages, transfers from cells, visiting the bathhouse, - all that takes place at night only. We had been through the filthy and crowded association with common criminals on the route, suffering from bugs, lice, the absence of bunks, travelling in packed prison cars, frequently stopping at provincial prisons, and having endless encounters with squads of "G.P.U." guards coming from the opposite direction who never fail to indulge in the sport of clicking the muzzle-stoppers just for the sake of terrorization.

All of that wore the nerves of the healthy prisoners out and knocked off their feet the weak ones. We had cases of tuberculosis and heart disease among us. Towards the end only three to five comrades from among the party of 25 were capable of carrying their own luggage. Is it any wonder that we waited for Naryn as for a promised land? We thought we

would remain settled and begin studying ...

At first we were left in Kolpashovo, in accordance with the pledge of the authorities in Tomsk. To characterize our life here and the Tomsk "G.P.U." it must be said that we obtained this pledge only after our refusal to start out from prison to our destination. An attempt was made to cow us by the special detachment clicking the muzzles of the guns, but we did not budge and the result was a promise to leave us in Kolpashovo.

We began to arrange things, found living quarters, organized a common kitchen, and after resting commenced to study. Some of us secured poorly paid positions. We were cheerful and began to recover thanks to the fresh air, the bathing in the Ob, and the "freedom". But this "well-being" of ours was the main cause of the first attack inspired from Tomsk. The reasons were not even concealed from us. "You live here as if you were on a vacation!" the authorities, unashamed, told us. Some of us were then picked out to be sent to such points which were not even on the map in the old days of the Narym exile, localities infested with malaria, populated by foreign tribes, and far removed from a post office.

Especially cruel was the treatment accorded to Olga Romanova, 18 years old, who was exiled to the upper region of the Kenghe River where she was fed for three months on bread and hot water. I say "fed", because on the Upper Kenghe there are no free settlements, but a "concentration camp" organized on the initiative of the Tomsk authorities, which differs from the others only in so far that its inmates are

tortured by starvation. Some priests, some common criminals, several peasants and the anarchist Romanova were exiled there...

Romanova left the place, and on the way was caught in the first winter cold and had frostbitten feet. She arrived in her summer clothes in the village of Parabel, where our comrades took her in.

The exiles receive none of their allowances. During the entire period of six months several comrades received from 1 to 2 roubles, including cash, flour and millet. We began to look for work. It was not difficult to find it, as in the whole region there is an enormous demand for educational resources. We occupied a number of positions in the government service, in the educational field, but the soviet and local party committee, composed of total ignoramuses, under the leadership of the semi-literate chairman of the soviet, commenced a campaign against us...

Suddenly on November 1, a new misfortune, altogether unexpected, descended upon us. The local soviet took advantage of the refusal of three of our comrades to participate in the show organized by the educational department and selected for exile six of our comrades, including two who had children.

The cold was 35 degrees below zero. They had no travelling clothes. Sollertinsky and Pobstanitzky left for their destination. The others remained, and we declared through our representatives that they shall not leave. There were some very stormy conversations. The authorities seemingly gave in. It is true, no answer was made to our

(Signature) B.

application. We spent several weeks in a nervous condition, and then calmed ourselves. All that time the authorities were not asleep, special couriers^{of} the "G.P.U." were sent to Tomsk, the chairman of the soviet went there to get "moral" backing. We on our part, at the very beginning of the conflict, telegraphed to Moscow to the Procurator of the Republic and the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Union. We received no replies, but apparently the events which followed were the answer.

On December 15 all the Kolpashovo exiles received an order to leave within three days. The order did not affect the physician and the two women among us, as well as the clericals. The new points selected were all on the tributaries of the Ob, about 100 to 150 versts to the north of Kolpashovo. Without allowances, without clothes, we were permitted to carry not more than one pood (36 pounds) of luggage and to walk instead. This time we decided to obey. In the twenties of December the exiles, leaving the huts which they had repaired, the common kitchen they had organized began to leave in the atrocious Siberian cold, dressed in short fur-coats and some even without that. The one-year-old son of Tcherkess was in the party ...

Generally, the membership of the present-day exile is heterogeneous. There are old party members, who had done penal servitude under the Czar, such as Shtulmann. There are young women, such as Fanja Lissina, a worker of the Kostroma factories. There is the workingwomen Anna Yefimova, who for more than three months was on the prison route going into exile, detained at every county jail on the way, and carrying with her all the time her little girl ...

THE LOCK - OUT +)

By the order of the Presidium of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission (Tcheka) of January 10, of this year, I was sentenced to exile in the town of Velikiy Ustiyug for a term of one year.

On February 15 I arrived in Ustiyug, secured a position with great difficulty, as the local employment office could get me none. I found living quarters and arranged for the arrival from Smolensk of my family, consisting of my wife and an infant 1 year and 2 months old.

On May 20, in Ustiyug, the "G.P.U." sent me the following notice by messenger to be delivered under receipt:

"Secrete Operative Department, Section 1. To Citizen B.N. Butiagin.

To enable you to make all the necessary preparations, I hereby inform you that at the order of the Chief of the Secrete Operative Department you will be sent on Monday, May 26, to the town of Kotlass, in the Severo-Dvinsk province, for residence, there as an administrative exile. The original order has been signed by the proper authorities."

In this manner, the "G.P.U.", absolutely unexpectedly, without preferring any charges against me and without any trial, assigned me to a new place of exile in a small town.

+) This communication was officially addressed to the "G.P.U." by the administrative exile Boris N. Butiagin.

This is done under the pretext of the necessity of vacating living quarters in the city, according to the chief of the local "G.P.U." Four months I have been here and the city was not too crowded, and only now when I finally settled here with my family that starved in Smolensk during my imprisonment, it appears necessary to make room in Usting by removing B.N. Butiagin (none of the other political exiles are being removed from the city), and to send me urgently with my wife and child on one day's notice to Kotlass, where the only free space is on the floor of the third-class waiting-room in the railway station, and where no work is to be found.

To the "honor" of the "G.P.U." it must be added that the act described above is not the only measure of arbitrary rule shown here. At the end of April the "G.P.U." demanded that I leave my position in the Forestry Union, and upon my refusal to fulfil this unlawful demand, had me arrested and imprisoned for 28 hours. This happened after the employment department refused to find me work. I pointed out then and consider it necessary to remind the "G.P.U." now, that I was sentenced to exile to the provincial city of Usting and given the right of securing freely a position, as a result of an agreement with the Presidium of the Extraordinary Commission concluded on the seventh day of my hunger-strike in the communist Butyrka prison early in January of this year. I also consider it necessary to remind the leaders of the "G.P.U." that even the Czarist governments never went so far in limiting the field for employment to administrative exiles.

The Czarist government prohibited the service of exiles in such government offices as the police, gendarmery, treasury department, but recognizing the law, it never prohibited employment in other organizations and enterprises.

The communist government or its agents have gone further than Czarism and the conditions of exile in the years of 1914 - 1915 pale in comparison with the new exile system inaugurated in the only "free" land of its kind in the world, with the most "left" government of all.

Stating all this, I should like in any event to know whether the cruelty to which I and my family are subjected is an arbitrary act of the local authorities or whether the central "G.P.U." supports this outrage.

I want to know this because I am more and more under the impression that there is no law in Soviet Russia and that the representatives even of the highest Soviet authority, of the Political Department of the State ("G.P.U."), apparently consider it a bourgeois prejudice to carry out their pledges.

Velikiy Usting

May 21, 1922

(Signed) Boris Nikolayevitch Butiagin

A BOLSHEVIST CELEBRATION. +)

On March 14, the day of the 25th anniversary of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, the socialist political exiles serving their terms in Orenburg met at the house of one of their comrades for the purpose of celebrating that historic event. In spite of the intimate comradely character of the celebration, all the participants, 23 people, were arrested and taken to the cellar under the headquarters of the Orenburg "G.P.U.". In the act drawn up at the arrest it was stated that nothing illegal was found during the search and that in accordance with the declaration of the arrested persons, they all gathered in order to spend an intimate evening on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Russian Social-Democratic Party.

The prisoners were kept in the cellar 7 days without any examination and without any charge being made against them. They were then informed that, at the order of the Orenburg "G.P.U.", they were to be exiled from the city of Orenburg to various points in the Kirghiz territory. The demand to produce any charge or to indicate the basis for such a repressive measure was met with a refusal. At the end of the seventh day all the prisoners were set free upon a pledge of mutual security given by all the prisoners that

+) March 14, 1923, Soviet Russia was celebrating with much pomp the 25th anniversary of the Bolshevik Party, which was formally announced to date from the foundation of the Russian Social-Democratic Party in 1898. However, at that time there were no Bolsheviks and Mensheviks yet, since the split into these two factions occurred only in 1903. The Mensheviks therefore accused the Bolsheviks of usurping their date, and secretly celebrated the anniversary as their own. The Orenburg Social-Democrats, as this letter shows, paid dearly for it.

they would appear on a certain date at the headquarters of the "G.P.U.". Ten of the comrades were informed of their exile into the province of Aktiubinsk, and they had to pledge themselves to deliver their luggage at headquarters by Saturday, March 31, and to assemble there at 6 o'clock in the morning on Sunday, April 1, before starting for Aktiubinsk.

During the night of March 31- April 1, the exiles began to gather at the house of one of them living nearest to the "G.P.U.", so that the whole group of ten could go together to headquarters in the morning. A number of other exiles, socialists as well as non-partisans, called singly at the house to bid us farewell. At two o'clock in the night agents of the "G.P.U." arrived without an order and declared us arrested. In reply to our persistent demand for an order, such a document was brought an hour and a half later. About three o'clock, at the moment the prisoners were to be taken to the "G.P.U.", three more exiles called at the house, two of them of the departing group. Towards four in the morning we were all brought to the headquarters of the "G.P.U.", and for about 2 hours were kept outside the building on the street. Our repeated insistent demands to be taken inside the building were refused by the commandant. Our additional demands that one of the higher officials of the "G.P.U." be called out were also refused. Instead a military detachment of about forty men suddenly appeared. The soldiers, with their bayonets fixed, surrounded us. The comrades of the departing group were called out by name and separated from the rest. The agent of the Orenburg

"G.P.U.", Uglov, came out and proposed that the departing group enter the building, and those who came to see them off go into the cellar. When requested to call out one of the higher officials, he sharply replied that he did not want to talk with us. Then the commandant fell with shouts upon an exile nearest to him, Dr. Verchovsky, and seizing his throat with one hand and his face with the other, began to drag him into the court. Following the example of the commandant, the soldiers and several agents threw themselves upon us. They used bayonets, butts of rifles, and their fists. In reality offering no resistance, we were pushed into the court, some of us suffering brutal violence.

Indignant over the complete senselessness of the arrest itself, as well as over all that followed, we immediately sent a statement to the plenipotentiary representatives of the "G.P.U." for the Kirghiz Republic, despatching a copy to the Procurator of the Kirghiz Republic demanding the immediate release of the arrested exiles and an inquiry into the entire incident. We declared a hunger-strike. The inquiry was entrusted to one of the culprits of the incident, Uglov. The inquiry was stopped on the third day of the hunger-strike and we were set free by the representative of the Kirghiz "G.P.U.", who announced our exile to "dark corners" of Kirghiz territory. Fourteen of us had ^{to} appear on Saturday, April 14, with our luggage at headquarters to proceed first to Aktiubinsk and later into the depths of Kirghiz Republic.

In all of this we see: 1st - an attempt on the part of the local authorities to deprive us of the right of

elementary comradely association which had been sanctioned by decades of Russian political exile and recognized even in the worst times of Czarism; and - proof of the uncompromising attitude of the Government towards the development of the socialist movement, and of its warfare against any manifestation of independent socialist thought in Russia; 3rd - it is an act of the most brutal violence on the part of the provincial administration to send us to certain perdition into the depths of the Kirghiz steppes without trial and inquiry.

In the name of our elementary rights as human beings, as citizens, and as socialists, we protest in the most decisive manner against the moral and physical violence perpetrated on us.

We demand:

1. An unbiased investigation through a special commissioner of all the events of March 14, and of the morning of April 1.
2. An examination of all those who were sent out, arrested or suffered violence on the morning of April 1, and the open trial of those responsible.
3. The suspension of our exile from Orenburg and of our ten comrades from Aktiubinsk until the conclusion of the inquiry.
4. The stoppage of exile to places lacking the elementary conditions of settled civilized life and remote from railroads, as well as the stoppage of exile of sick and feeble persons without a preliminary examination by a

medical commission.

5. The immediate issuance of the proper orders urgently by telegraph.

April 12, 1923

Political Exiles:

Orenburg

(Signatures)

A. Kaplan

R. Bogorad

M. Bogorad

I. Bogorad

F. Lyssov

A. Rozhkov

S. Deitch

D. Liberova

V. Besrutchko

I. Machaev

V. Kaplan

L. Granovsky

K. Ponotchevnaya

G. Verchovsky

M. Sheyenson

P. Kolotushkin

J. Frumin

ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЕ СОВЕЩАНИЕ:

A. Kaplan *R. Bogorad*
M. Bogorad *I. Bogorad*
F. Lyssov
A. Rozhkov
S. Deitch
D. Liberova
V. Besrutchko
I. Machaev
V. Kaplan
L. Granovsky
K. Ponotchevnaya
G. Verchovsky
M. Sheyenson
P. Kolotushkin
J. Frumin

апр 1923 г.

супр.

to Mrs. George A. M. &

From New York City, N.Y.

My dear friends, I have just received your letter of the 10th inst. and am glad to hear from you. I am well and hope this letter finds you the same. I have been thinking much of late about the future of our country and the people who inhabit it. I feel that we are in a critical position and that the future of our country depends upon the wisdom and courage of the people who are now in power. I feel that we are in a critical position and that the future of our country depends upon the wisdom and courage of the people who are now in power. I feel that we are in a critical position and that the future of our country depends upon the wisdom and courage of the people who are now in power.

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IN THE KIRGHIZ STEPPES. +)

Exclusion from public service is a violation of law

We, the undersigned political exiles in the Aktiubinsk province, demand that the responsible officials of the Orenburg, of the Kirghiz and the Aktiubinsk departments of the "G.P.U." be made liable before the law and handed over to justice for their openly lawless actions towards us.

We lived as political exiles in the city of Orenburg.

On April 1, of this year, the Orenburg and the Kirghiz departments of the "G.P.U." exiled us to the Aktiubinsk province. At the same time the local Orenburg "G.P.U." sent an order forbidding the seven social-democrats among us to hold positions in the government service. We declared our protest against this unlawful measure to the "G.P.U." of the Kirghiz Republic which, agreeing that the order of the local "G.P.U." was unwarranted and unlawful, announced through the assistant chief Bartashevitch that this order had been annulled by it.

However, when we arrived in Aktiubinsk, it appeared that the assurances of the Kirghiz "G.P.U." were but vicious lies and that the former order remained in force.

Three of us, socialist-revolutionists, were permitted to enter the service of the soviet and other establishments. But on account of the pressure exerted by the chief of the Aktiubinsk "G.P.U." on the various departments, the possibility of remaining in the service of the soviet and other public institutions was

absolutely prohibited against the brutal outrages of the

+) The original text of the communication bears the inscription:
"To the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Union. Copies to the Procurator of the Republic and to the Presidium of the All-Russian "G.P.U."."

in reality eliminated. Exclusion from public service is a violation of our civil rights. Political exiles are not deprived of these rights and are not limited in them according to the law. The organs of the "G.P.U." have no right to establish such limitations. The resolutions to that effect of the Orenburg and Aktiubinsk "G.P.U." are nothing but acts of the most brutal administrative violence and a direct mockery of the fundamental laws of the Soviet Government itself.

All of us, ten persons, were exiled by a resolution of a special commission of the Commissariat of the Interior to the Orenburg province or the city of Orenburg. The Kirghiz and local "G.P.U." moved us to the Aktiubinsk province, viciously perverting the decree of the Central Executive Committee of the Union according to which the right to pass sentences of exile and to fix the destination, and consequently to change this destination, is exclusively entrusted to a special commission of the Commissariat of the Interior and of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee.

The Aktiubinsk "G.P.U." has scattered us throughout the obscure corners of the Aktiubinsk province, such as the villages of Koss-Istek and Irghiz, lost in the Kirghiz steppe, about 150 versts from a railroad. Life in these places, after being deprived of the right of entering the public service, holds out to us a direct menace of death from starvation.

We resolutely protest against the brutal outrage of the Orenburg and Aktiubinsk authorities, against this savagery perpetrated upon socialist exiles, against the aim to exterminate us physically by putting us in impossible conditions of existence.

We demand the suspension of the order barring us from public service and our return to the city of Orenburg.

April 14, 1923.

Political Exiles: +)

(Signatures)

N. Mandelstamm

Dumka

B. Gutermann

L. Kimber

S. Pokrovsky

B. Levinson

U. Subelevitch

U. Braude

S. Peretz

-
- +1) The tenth member of the group, a woman named A. Volkova, did not sign this communication for some reason. She, however, shared the fate of the rest of her comrades.

H U N G E R S T R I K E S . +)

On January 28, 1922, a group of anarchists in the Kisselnaya Prison, in Moscow, declared a hunger strike. They demanded either to be given an open trial or to be permitted to leave the country. On the third day of the strike, on January 30, these anarchists were transferred to another prison, on which occasion they were subjected to physical violence. Three of their number (G.K. Askareff, the Secretary of the Russian Section of the Anarcho-Universalists and editor of their journal, the "Universal"; S.A. Stitzenko and M.V. Simtchin) sentenced to two years concentration camp in Severo-Dvinsk, were taken to Archangelsk, together with 17 other anarchists who did not participate in the hunger strike and who had been sentenced to the concentration camp and there placed in the general barracks. Within two days they exile in Archangelsk: Askareff, Stitzenko and Simtchin declared that they would continue their hunger strike, which they did. The guards accompanying them telegraphed several times en route to the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission (the Tcheka), informing the latter of the situation. Arriving in Archangelsk the prisoners were sent to the headquarters of the local Tcheka where examination of the accompanying official papers disclosed the fact that there had been filed two sentences

+) This letter from the Archangelsk Concentration Camp was published in the central organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, the "Socialist Vestnik", No. 15, 1922. It reveals some of the earlier history of the so-called Northern Concentration Camps which are described more fully in Part One of this book.

against each of the three hunger strikers (Askareff, Stitzenko and Simtchin). The All-Russian Tcheka had sentenced them to the concentration camp in Severo-Dvinsk, while the Moscow had at the same time ordered them to be sent to the Archangelsk camp. It was already the ninth day of the hunger strike and the men could hardly stand on their feet. They were thrown into a sleigh, with the thermometer showing 25° below zero, and sent to the "distribution point" (which is also the concentration camp) and there left for hours in the cold. For some reason the Distribution Point refused to receive them, and they were ordered back to the Tcheka, where they were again left out in the cold (no less than half an hour). Then they were sent to the hospital. Within a few hours, upon the refusal of the men to accept medical aid, they were again put in the sleigh and returned to the Tcheka. The next day they were taken in the same sleigh to the concentration camp and there placed in the general barracks. Within two days they were again transferred to the concentration camp hospital.

On the sixteenth day of the hunger strike Simtchin was attacked by convulsions. The Commandant came then and stated that he had received a telegram from the Superintendent of the Tcheka concentration camps, a certain Katznelson, of Moscow. In his telegram Katznelson offered the men to terminate their hunger strike till his arrival, in view of the fact that he had been given authority to settle the whole matter to everybody's satisfaction. The men consented conditionally, but demanded that the Camp Administration put Katznelson's offer in writing. It took from the evening till 1 P.M. of the next day before the paper was prepared: on February 13,

on the seventeenth day of the hunger strike, the latter was terminated. The medical staff of the hospital exerted themselves in a touching manner in behalf of the men, giving them the best of care, and soon they began to improve.

When Superintendent Katznelson arrived he did not show himself to the prisoners, and when called upon by them he pretended to know nothing of the matter. Upon being faced with the official "paper" he declared that he would make telegraphic inquiry of the Tcheka. Convinced of the uselessness of all these excuses, Askareff and the others began their second hunger strike on March 3, which proved of terrible effect upon their constitutions not yet recovered from the first hunger strike. Already on the first day all of them had a high temperature. On the third day Stitzenko showed a temperature of 40° , and he became deaf. On the fourth day Askareff also had a temperature of 40° , he suffered convulsions, turned blue and cold, and for a time seemed almost dead. The prison administration, becoming alarmed, ordered the medical staff to list Askareff among the contagious cases, so that in case of his death it could be officially reported that he died not from hunger but from some contagious disease, in all probability typhus.

About this time there was received a telegram from the All-Russian Tcheka to the effect that the sentences of Askareff and the others had been set aside, that they were to be put on trial and should therefore be sent to Moscow. The hunger strike was then of course terminated. After having somewhat recuperated in the hospital, the prisoners were transferred to Moscow where they were placed in the "inner

prison" (of the Tcheka). Upon their threat to begin a new hunger strike they were transferred on April 1. to the Kisselnaya Prison from which they had been removed two months previously.

The story of the other 17 transferred anarchists is as follows. In Archangelsk they were sent at night from the railroad station to the Tcheka, arriving there tired, half frozen and hungry. The Commandant of the Tcheka wanted to send seven of their number away immediately, to some unknown place. The prisoners declared that they would refuse to be moved till morning. The Commandant drew his revolver and threatened their lives, but that proved of no avail. The prisoners refused to give their names, and the Commandant could therefore not select the seven men he needed. In the morning all the seventeen were taken to the concentration camp, where they were divided into three groups and placed in separate barracks.

The Archangelsk concentration camp consists of 20 barracks, six of which are occupied by prisoners. The barracks are long buildings, each about 140 feet long, containing two rows of double benches placed one on top of the other. In these barracks there are crowded up to five hundred persons, but just now the barracks contain (owing to reduced "loading") 100 to 150 men each. They all lie on the bare boards: there are no mattresses, pillows or blankets. The place is alive with vermin: the first thing that struck the new arrivals was the sight of scores of naked prisoners carefully picking lice of their underwear. Dirt, cockroaches and lice constantly fall from the upper benches on the lower right on the sleepers below. On the whole, the upper places are to be preferred, also because it is warmer there, although the barracks are generally tolerably well heated and the inmates do not complain of cold.

Every new arrival is subjected to a thorough search, being completely undressed, examined all over, and so on. All the belongings of the prisoners, such as underwear, clothing, money, little mirrors, etc., are taken from them, to be turned over to the stock room. They are permitted to keep only one change of underwear. Those who have, for instance, both shoes and felt boots, or an overcoat and a fur half-coat, may retain only one of the things. Even the apparel with which the All-Russian Tcheka had supplied the anarchists were here taken away from them in spite of all their protests. The things are supposed to go to the stock room. But between 2 and 3 o'clock on the same night the anarchists heard a group of overseers go to the stock-room and there begin to sort the things. The anarchists raised a cry, and the keepers retreated in confusion, explaining that they intended only to examine the things again..

The population of the camp is made up of Kronstadt and Tambov prisoners, of Wrangel and Savinkov men, and a considerable number of Tchekists come to grief. The remarkable peculiarity of the camp consists in the fact that the prisoners serve as their own guards, manage all the affairs of the institution and keep up a most cruel regime. There is no paid staff in the camp. All the positions, comprising those of keepers, overseers, clerks, employees of the general administration, of the hospital, the educational department, and including even the "Acting Commandant", are filled by prisoners, mostly from the number of the Tchekists. The members of the administration have feathered their bed so well there that some of them prefer to retain their positions after completing their sentences or receiving a pardon. That was the case with Oyia (educated as a jurist, formerly Chief of the Tambov Tcheka,

sentenced to be shot for colossal thefts of diamonds and other robberies, his sentence later changed to 25 years service in the camp), the Acting Commandant, the engineer Nosatchenko and others.

That such a regime can be maintained is due to the presence of the many Tcheka men and to the moral degradation and corruption which the great majority of the prisoners have fallen into - more correctly, have been forced into. Comparatively most decent have remained the Kronstadt men, but of their original number of 5,000 sent to the Archangelsk camp there have remained, it is said, after one year only 1,500 persons. And yet they were a young and exceptionally strong and healthy race. The inmates of the camp have lost almost all semblance of humanity. They are absorbed by the one thought of self-preservation by means of gaining the good will of the authorities and thus securing the position of an overseer or some good work. The surest and quickest way of "standing in" with the administration is to turn spy. As a result, all of them - prisoners, overseers and the higher officials - are busy spying on each other. On the average there are (the Bolsheviks keep statistics on every subject) twenty reports of spies every day. Nothing, not a single word spoken, is hidden from the authorities. There is no attempt in the camp at organisation, mutual help, solidarity or united struggle. The female prisoners - formerly of the aristocracy and the intelligentsia - give themselves to any overseer at his first demand, without protest or resistance.

According to the inmates, the regime of the camp has become incomparably more tolerable, the punishments fewer and the treatment more decent after the prison had been

investigated by a Commission appointed at the instigation of the "Red Cross." Yet the following fact throws light on the character of the existing discipline. When the anarchists arrived, the peasant Glebov, of Vologda, who knew them and who had been imprisoned together with them before, tried to attract their attention by knocking on his window and shouting. For this he was put into the punishment cell for two weeks and afterwards sent to Cholmogori to hard labor.

In the morning all the prisoners must line up for the count and at the given signal sing the "International". Before the investigation the singing of the "International" was obligatory, but now the prisoners are not forced to sing. Yet failure to sing is considered evidence of unrepentance and counter-revolutionary obstinacy. After the song the prisoners are formed into groups of ten for work within the camp. These are selected from the healthy and clad inmates. Many go about in such rags that even the authorities do not consider it possible to send them out into the cold. Refusal to work is punished with the dark cell.

The prisoners receive tea three times a day, with three ounces of sugar. Dinner consists of soup made of some fish, while for supper is given kasha (gruel) of wheat or rice, prepared with fat (imported). The products are of good quality; the food is not only eatable but palatable, but there is not enough of it. Previous to the investigation, the daily bread ration consisted of one pound per person; now it has been increased to a pound and a half.

Soon after their arrival the anarchists declared a hunger strike, putting forth the following demands: to be placed together in a separate wing, to have their elected starosta

(official spokesman of the group) recognised by the authorities (in the camp the starosta is appointed by the administration), to receive books, papers and personal apparels; per-mission to associate with the women Anarchists, and some other lesser demands. The hunger strike lasted eight days. The authorities did nothing except to place armed guards beside the hunger strikers. After a while word came from the All-Russian Tcheka that the demands of the strikers concerned the internal management and therefore the matter was to be taken up by the local administration. Assistant Superintendent Lebedinsky agreed to satisfy almost all the demands of the strikers excepting their right of association with the women. That question Lebedinsky left to the decision of Katznelson who was soon to arrive and who was expected to legalise the newly gained rights. When Katznelson arrived, he refused to enlarge the privileges of the anarchists and declared that he would not issue the legalising order, on the ground that the anarchists were to be sent to Cholmogori, their presence in the Archangelsk camp being only temporary. Similarly Katznelson refused to release from the camp the anarchists (Afanassiev, Kisselev, Altshuler and others) who had been sentenced not to the camp but to exile. (Incidentally, there are generally cases where those sent to Archangelsk for exile, with definitive instructions to that effect, are imprisoned in the camp).

Thus the eight-day hunger strike proved of no avail, and the anarchists faced the question what to undertake in the situation. Then the women anarchists forced their way into the main cell of their male comrades in order to consider joint action in the matter. The authorities sent for the guards who

used violence to pull the women out of the cell. Spontaneously there began a new hunger strike, the men immediately throwing their bread and other food out of the cell, as a protest against the brutality toward the women. Within a few days the women were at night transferred to another prison - the House of Correction. The circumstances of the transfer were such that the women felt convinced they were being taken to execution. They threw off their upper clothing in order that the executions might not possess themselves of it. Five of the hunger striking men were taken from their cell at night, subjected to violence and sent on a cart to Cholmogori. These five were: Karasik, Lukin, Tarasiuk, Silayev, and Mokhov. They continued their hunger strike during the transfer and upon their arrival at the new place. The women grew so weak from the second hunger strike that on the fifth day they were transferred to the camp. Soon Katznelson appeared there and declared that all the anarchists, both the men and the women, would be sent to Cholmogori and that there they would be placed in a separate wing with full autonomy and all their demands satisfied. The women consented. Then Katznelson suggested that they send one of their number as a delegate to terminate the hunger strike at Cholmogori, because - as he correctly assumed - the prisoners there would give no credence to the communication of the authorities. The hunger strike was stopped on the sixth or seventh day, but the women delegate was not called for and the administration acted very ambiguously. Then the women began the third hunger strike. They were transferred (with the exception of L. Altshuler who fell sick as a result of long hunger) together with the remaining men to Cholmogori. No news has since been received from there.

KOROLENKO TO GORKY.

Dear Alexei Maximovitch! +)

I want to share my misfortune with you. My younger daughter, Natalia, was married to a very good man, Konstantin Ivanovitch Liachovitch. He was very popular in Poltava, with the workingmen, too, who knew him since 1905 yet. He was an old revolutionist, was forced to seek refuge abroad in the years of Reaction, and lived in France in Toulouse where he studied in the University. Then he returned to Russia. Here again he was subjected to persecution under the regime of the Hetman⁺⁺⁾, and was exiled by the Germans to Brest-Litovsk, upon the instigation of the local authorities of course. After the Revolution in Germany, he returned to Russia and was elected to the Soviet by the workingmen. Well, you know that now we have a "dictatorship of the proletariat", which consists of this, that the representatives of the proletariat must speak under the dictation of Communists, Liachovitch did not belong to the "obedient sheep" and frequently spoke the bitter truth to the authorities, i.e., he voiced just that for which he was elected by the workingmen. He was a menshevist social-democrat, i.e., he said the very things that Lenin now inscribes in decrees. So, naturally, he was arrested, I warned the President of the "Tcheka" that he was suffering from heart-disease and that thyphus would be fatal to him, and the prison was thoroughly saturated with typhus. That very thing happened.

+) This letter to Maxim Gorky (Alexei Maximovitch Peshkov) from his life-long friend Vladimir G. Korolenko was published together with other Korolenko letters by Gorky.

++) Hetman Skoropadsky, the provisional ruler of the Ukraine in 1918, under the German military occupation.

He contracted it by contagion, and we buried him on March 17.

One wants to ask: Why did an honest man, a sincere revolutionist perish? Was it for that which Bolshevism is now beginning to embrace, now, that it may already be too late? History will some day take note of the fact that the Bolshevik Revolution has treated genuine revolutionists and socialists with the same means as the Czarist regime, i.e., through pure gendarmery methods.

When I ask myself the question: "Why has there been hitherto no social revolution not only in our country but nowhere else?" I answer it as follows: "A social revolution would be the highest manifestation of justice." For it such a sense of justice is required from which we are as yet far removed. In Europe elements of it already exist. They have already learned to take into account the opinion of the majority. There it would be considered an obvious absurdity to say that a man can be forbidden to express his opinion. Here this is a fact. At the time when the country needs the highest exertion of mental and moral forces, she is forced to be silent.

Once, some three years ago, I was invited to make a speech at a certain village. I said what was on my mind, and afterwards a sailor said to me: "You know, if you had said that on our front, you would not escape with your life!" A people which thinks of its rights in such terms is still far from the order of the highest justice. It still has a great deal to learn from those whom it has proclaimed contemptible bargainers and traitors,^{+) such as the leaders of German}

^{+) This is a reference to Lenin's invectives against the socialist leaders of Western Europe who disagreed with him as to the social revolution.}

socialism like Kautzky. And instead we assumed the leadership of the world revolution. Is it any wonder that we committed such mistakes which show only how not to make a social revolution. ...

Now I wish you all the best. A happy journey, as I heard you are leaving to take the cure. Best wishes.

Your

VL. KOROLENKO.

June 29, 1921.

THE RIGHT OF DEFENCE.⁺⁾

Behind prison bars, we only now have the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the stenographic records published by the Executive Committee of the Communist International of the joint session of the executive committees of the three Internationals. On page 54, of the Russian edition of the records, is contained the following assertion of K. Radek: "It is true, we are barbarians, but our prisoners have the right to choose their own public defenders."

Without disputing the first part of this assertion, we consider it necessary to assure you categorically that its second part completely fails to correspond with the facts. And that in our own particular case in which the "Supreme Prosecutor" Krylenko demanded death sentences, we were not permitted to choose defenders according to our wishes nor to call witnesses on our side and to re-examine in court those dark characters whose "evidence" signed by nobody played a part in the case.

Our case was "tried" by the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal of the Central Executive Committee on April 21, last year, without defence, without any examination of witnesses, and the "sentence" is already known to the readers of the "Socialist Vestnik" - 5 years of solitary confinement in prison, plus compulsory labor.

(Signatures) E. VASSILIEV

Moscow, May 8, 1922

PETER PETRENKO

A. LOCKERMAN

P. MELSITOV

Sentenced in Connection with the Case of the Donetz Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party.

^{+) This challenge from a Soviet prison to Karl Radek, the representative of the Communist International at the memorable joint conference of all the socialist internationales then in existence, has as far as we know never been taken up at Moscow.}

A SOLDIER OF THE REVOLUTION. +)

I, a workingman by origin, a former communist, a volunteer in the Red Army from 1918 to 1922 inclusive, was arrested in the city of Maryupol, the Province of Don, on July 30, 1923, and for four months have been in the prisons of the Union awaiting my fate. I am charged with articles 57, 61, 66, 70, and 72 of the Criminal Code. The inquiry into my case is finished and the material is in the "G.P.U." in Moscow, under No.87, of the Archangelsk Section of the "G.P.U." In addition to the evidence and declarations which I submitted to the "G.P.U.", I also sent a statement in the form of a letter to M.I. Kalinin, the President of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee on Sept.13, explaining the substance of the case and asking him to give his attention to this act of violence. Whatever his answer may be, I beg you also to intervene in the case and to see to it that it should be handled according to the law, and if that is impossible, to appeal to the press pointing out that such a thing should not be permitted, of communists applying punitive measures to workingmen of differing beliefs.

My case originated as follows: After my discharge from the Red Army in August, 1922, I as a communist entered the service of the Archangelsk Section of the "G.P.U.", holding a minor position until December. Realizing that I, a workingman and soldier of the Revolution (who should strike the enemy in

+) The author of this letter is a typical son of the Russian Revolution. A self-educated workingman, Alexander Novikov assimilated in his own way the ideas of the Revolution. The "Open Letter" which caused his arrest will be found in the Appendix to Part Two of this volume.

the open) should not be doing Cain's work of strangling the working class, I left the "G.P.U." of my own free will and at the same time I left the Russian Communist Party, which fact I declared in an open letter addressed to the press and to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. It was not published, but according to a note in the paper "Volna", I was thrown out of the Party as an "unfit element". In Archangelsk I spent four more months, until April 20, 1923, serving as a clerk in the Financial Department, but at the insistent demand of the Control Committee I was discharged by the Commission in charge of the "comb-out" and excluded from the Trade union, and all the doors to work or a position were shut for me. My protests were only a voice in the desert. On account of the persecutions I went to Maryapol where I lived until my arrest. (My letter was published in the "Socialist Vestnik", in Germany, No.12, for July, 1923, with an introduction by Dam entitled, "Eyes Are Opening.")

During the search in my place, manuscripts were taken away from me which served as the material for the charges against me. They were my personal notes on the questions of the day in Soviet Russia, my impressions during the Revolution and generally my views,- all this I had written down for myself, as memoranda for the future. In these, not being limited by the censorship and the severity of the laws, I called things by their real names, i.e., I criticized those actions of the bolsheviks during the Revolution which I considered apposed to the spirit of the Revolution.

In one of my notes, under the title, "My Reminiscences: Wherein the Soviet Power is Bad", in a detailed description of facts and my views of them, I wrote that "the trial of the

Socialist-Revolutionists which took place in Moscow has been staged and put up at the expense of the "G.P.U." for the public opinion of Russia and of foreign countries." I was asked in the "G.P.U." how I could write such a thing and how I knew about it? I replied that I wrote for myself and I would answer for the truth of my writing before my own conscience, as I had no intention of publishing what I had written, and that was not obliged to give anybody an account of the sources of the truthfulness of my impressions.

This is the basis for the charges made against me in accordance with Articles 61, 66, 70 and 72. In addition, one of the important incriminations is my note-book which I preserved accidentally, and in which the addresses of the administrative exiles in Archangelsk, the Socialist-Revolutionists and the Social-Democrats, were entered by me for purposes connected with my service in the "G.P.U.", as well as a note to the effect that "Ivanov-Rinov is an agent-provocateur."

As to the purpose of these notes, I replied that I did not know Ivanov-Rinov, but that I had accidentally met him when I entered the service of the Economic Council of the province, as we were candidates for the same job. Whether he is an agent-provocateur or not, I did not know that I had no interest in it, and that my note was made accidentally. All this forms the charge against me of being connected with and participating in counter-revolutionary organizations and disclosing secrets of state, in accordance with Articles 61, 66 of the Criminal Code.

I am further accused of conducting anti-Soviet propaganda, while working in the Financial Department, among the

employees. What this is based upon, I well know. This is all there is substantially in the indictment in my case, as far as I know. It is no more and no less than revenge for my speaking out openly and the basic cause for it is my "open letter", but I am not afraid of vengeance. Even as I am pure myself, so I desire all to always be pure and frank, and I would sound the trumpets of Jericho, if I had them, about this injustice, about the violation of the fundamental rights of human liberties and, above all, of thought and personality. I never was a slave and never will be.

I want to proclaim that in a free country where the working class is supposed to be at the helm, where the newspapers brand the bourgeois governments of Europe, for persecuting the workers and the communist press and for maintaining prisons and jails under a regime of civil liberties, as medieval barbarism, claiming at the same time these liberties exist in Russia, that here the worker is the master, the bearer of power, free to speak what he will and arrange his destiny as he may please and that he is permitted everything and even encouraged in his thinking (but it is only phrases).

Suddenly, at the same time, this workingman is seized, put in prison, subjected to punishment without a trial and investigation, outside of the law and order. Why? Only because he, as the bearer of his authority, opened his mouth which he thought the only revolutionary thing to do, and did it honestly and openly, exercising the right of a citizen to argue. You are punished because you think, because you are interested in events one way or another, because you want to set down your views on paper since you are literate enough

although not a master of the word to appear in the press, and you want your notes to serve you as reminiscences for the future.

Where is the logic of it? Is it possible that I will be forbidden to do that too? And if you have a note-book where you put down whatever you need, so as not to trust your memory, such as addresses and notes, isn't that a part of one's personal life, where the law does not touch you? Whether the entries were made for personal or service purposes, what is the difference, nobody has any business to pry into my note-book. Clear logic would seem to say all that, but suddenly one breaks into your personal life, your soul, into all that you had devoted your mind to and that is dear to you.

One questions, does such unscrupulousness in violating one's personal rights, especially where there are civil liberties, exist in bourgeois countries? Perhaps the times of Nicholas I. can compare with ... (Obscure) Where, then, are the gains of the Revolution? Why is one kept in prison? And am I then alone? There are thousands such as I. Unheard of, their voice does not ring out on the pages of the Russian and European press. Nobody is interested in them. At least I open my mouth but they have not done even that. They were always slaves, and now they are beaten by those whose heart is cruel and whose hands are high !

(Signed) ALEXANDER MATVEEVITCH NOVIKOV

November 27, 1923
Archangelsk Prison.

GRAVE AND CHRONIC MALADIES. +)

In September and October of last year we were arrested together with scores of other comrades during the "G.P.U." campaign aimed at wrecking the Charkov organization of the social-democrats. After a more or less short period, five of us were released, as suffering from grave and chronic maladies, under a written pledge of mutual security and of our remaining in the city. The five were, Raphael Grigoriev, A.Kolmskov, and I. Resul, all suffering from tuberculosis; V.Tcherkeas, afflicted with heart-disease and sick pneumonia contracted in prison; and I.Voronitzyn, who was loosing his eyesight. One of the five, Raphael Grigoriev, was arrested while in the hospital of the Charkov Tubercular Institute and was released from prison after the official interference of the Assistant Procurator of the Ukrainian Republic, Maker. Two of the others who are now in prison, N.Titensky and A.Fomitchev, were released at the moment the case was about closed and the remaining prisoners about to be exiled to Turkestan.

On the night of April 3 to 4, of this year, all of the undersigned were again arrested on an order of the "G.P.U." and one of the agents of the "G.P.U." announced to us the following sentence passed by a special council of the Commissariat of the Interior: "Imprisonment for three years in the Archangelsk Concentration Camp."

+) This communication was addressed to Skrypnik, the Procurator of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, and a signed duplicate to the chief of the "G.P.U.", Mantzev.

The passing administratively of a sentence which condemns most of us to certain perdition has firmly convinced us that the Government has decided to exterminate us physically, but at the same time lacks the courage to assume the responsibility for it openly.

We hereby inform you that on April 4 we declared a hunger-strike which we announced in the corresponding statements to the Chief of the "G.P.U." Mantzev, and the President of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, Petrovsky.

We address ourselves to you as to the representative of Justice, inviting you to investigate our cases and if any element of crime be found in them, to put us all on trial. We know but too well the severity of the punishments fixed by the existing criminal code, especially with regard to so-called counter-revolutionary crimes, but we prefer the most severe sentence passed by an open court trial to the lightest administrative punishment.

If, however, there are no data justifying you to put us on trial and the Government can fight us only by means of extra-judicial measures, i.e., by means essentially opposed to the law, then we have the right to demand from you guarantees safeguarding our lives, our health, and a minimum of civilized life. We consider it necessary to communicate to you the conditions on which we can end the hunger strike:

I. It will be immediately suspended if the administrative sentence indicated should be annulled and we should be officially informed that our case is to be tried in court.

II. The acceptance of the administrative repressive sentence passed on us we make subject to the following conditions

1. A medical examination to ascertain whether our health permits a long trip and living in a climatic zone worse than that of Charkov.

2. The granting to those who desire it the right to go abroad and the leaving us free in Charkov until we secure the proper visas.

3. None of the sick among us should be confined in prison or in a concentration camp.

4. Those of us found by the medical examiners to be unwell should be exiled to places not requiring a long trip, climatically not inferior to the Charkov zone, and to points where the systematic assistance of expert physicians can be had.

5. The trip to exile together with our families should be made at the expense of the state, without taking the ordinary prison-to-prison route.

6. The granting us of a month's time to settle our affairs.

7. The immediate release of all of us upon our mutual pledges or of upon the pledge of our representative for all.

This is the minimum of our demands. We realize but too well that every day of the hunger-strike brings the majority of us nearer to the fatal end.

But we also take into consideration the fact that the notorious Archangelsk concentration camps on the White Sea threaten us with inevitable ruin.

We prefer without hesitation death from a hunger-strike in prison in the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic to slow extinction in a concentration camp modestly hidden away in a pernicious dark corner.

We have warned you, Mr. Procurator, of the choice we have made and the decision we firmly adopted. We have also given this warning to the Central Executive Committee of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic and to the "G.P.U.", and all responsibility before the Russian and International proletariat for our lives, health and the fate of our families will fall with all its weight on the Soviet Government.

Charkov, April 5 1923. (Signatures): I. Voronitzyn

Raphael Grigoriev

A. Kolmakov

I. Resul

N. Titensky

A. Fomitchev

V. Tcherkess.

The text of this letter was published in the official organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, "The Russian Vestnik", No. 14, for July 6, 1924.

HERETICAL STUDENTS. +)

As a result of our futile demands to be transferred from the criminals' ward to that of the political prisoners, (there were appeals to the Administration, the "G.P.U.", and the Procuratorship), things moved as far as an obstructive demonstration, with the smashing of the eyeholes and window-holes in the doors, etc. On April 30, fifty students declared a hunger-strike supported by a group of prisoners charged with social-democratic activity. After six to seven days of the hunger-strike, some of the demands were satisfied.

In the night of May 7, the social-democrate Malevsky, Savadsky and Khavinson received an order to proceed to Moscow. Indignant over the fact that, in spite of promises, they were being sent off without warning, and exhausted by the hunger-strike which had just ended, they refused to go. They were dragged by force during which operation blood streamed from Malevsky's throat all over the cell. This aroused the anger of the entire "political" corridor, which declared a new obstructive demonstration and a hunger-strike of one day as a protest. Up to 200 people participated in it. The obstructionists were punished by being deprived of their promenading hours and of any packages received for them. This punishment was,

+) The text of this letter was published in the central organ of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, the "Socialist Vestnik", No.14, for July 8, 1924.

however, removed afterwards by Messing. For the damage to state property, for the "economic counter-revolution", as one of the prison functionaries put it, a huge bill was presented to the "hirelings of the English bankers" ...⁴⁾

The examination conducted by investigator Kozhevnikov who was sent here from Moscow was very characteristic. The charges made were truly mythical: we are accused of belonging to some unexisting organizations, many of us for participating in the activity of five of them simultaneously. The questioning is a mere formality. Kozhevnikov behaved at the inquiries in the most offensive manner: He shouted, stamped his feet, addressed the prisoners familiarly with "thou", cursed. His usual epithets were "scoundrels", "rascals", "kids", "milksoys". Especially galling was his treatment of the women. He threatened with the Solovki which he described as "a place where they let the counter-revolutionists' blood", and where recently six socialists had been shot. He invited several of us to become agents of the "G.P.U.", threatening in the event of a refusal "to make further study impossible and to make life generally intolerable."

The results of such an "inquiry" were sentences unheard of for their cruelty. So far fifty-six have been sentenced, forty-one men and fifteen women: 21 men and 7 women to concentration camp for three years, 2 men and 1 woman.- for two years, 6 men and 1 woman to exile for three years, 2 men and 6 women to exile for two years.

⁴⁾ The bolshevist press frequently refers to the socialists as "the hireling of the English bankers."

MARIA SPIRIDONOVA

This cruelty, and one should bear in mind that the majority of the prisoners are non-partisan and many are absolutely non-political, is explained simply. Kozhevnikov dropped a remark that the operation did not catch the proper people and that therefore it was necessary to punish particularly severely those who were caught so that the others who are free should not carry on too much.

The workingman A.M. Smirnov, who was arrested in Petrograd, formerly a member of the Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Party and now a student of the Petrograd University, was invited by investigator Kozhevnikov to head a movement of "ex-socialists". "You only have to sign these five lines and you will be free again, otherwise we will keep you". Smirnov rejected this favor of the gendarme. The result was three years of exile in the province of Viatka.

The case of Maria Spiridonova is unique. The reader is earnestly urged to read this and the following two articles before forming a definite opinion. Maria Spiridonova, a revolutionary, was outraged and angered by the attempt to assassinate a general notorious for his cruelty to the peasants. She was condemned to death. The protests of European public opinion compelled the government to commute her sentence to penal servitude in Siberia where she spent 11 years. Released by the Revolution, she returned home like a conqueror. Her party, the left socialist-revolutionists, supported Lenin in November, 1917, and had several portfolios in the Soviet Government until 1918. Then Spiridonova was arrested, but set free after five months in prison. In February, 1918, she was again arrested. The sentence of the Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal in her case read: "Not wishing to cause Maria Spiridonova unnecessary suffering... the Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal resolved to isolate Maria Spiridonova from political and social activity for a period of one year in a sanatorium, affording her the opportunity for normal physical and intellectual work." The present excerpts are from letters written by Spiridonova during that "sanatorium" confinement. The Soviet press of the time claimed that she was hysterical and needed a cure. Spiridonova's own account, although dating as far back as 1919, is reproduced here mainly because it is indispensable to a fair estimate of the entire case.

M A R I A S P I R I D O N O V A .^{+))}

February 19.

I think that in court it will be possible for me to pass this on to you. I am therefore writing it for any eventuality.

First, do not be surprised if you find me looking badly and make no deductions from it. I did not have enough food here and the conditions of imprisonment - the lack of fresh air, of heat, of undisturbed sleep - were not very good. The environment is purposely arranged as if for vengeance...

You will recall that in 1858, in Paris, the bourgeois government invented the Law of Espinasse "About Suspects". The order was given to purge Paris of all "suspects". The purging was executed. A similar order was issued in the provinces. The

-----ists and mensheviks are being invented wholesale.

+) The case of Maria Spiridonova is unique. The reader is earnestly urged to read this and the following two articles before forming any definite opinion. Maria Spiridonova, an intrepid girl revolutionist, was outraged and sabered in 1906 by a horde of Czarist cossacks after an attempt to assassinate a general notorious for his cruelty to the peasants. She was condemned to death, but the protests of European public opinion compelled the Czar to commute her sentence to penal servitude in Siberia where she spent 11 years. Released by the Revolution, she returned home like a conqueror. Her party, the left socialist-revolutionists, supported Lenin in November, 1917, and had several portfolios in the Soviet Government until 1918. Then Spiridonova was arrested, but set free after five months in prison. In February, 1919, she was again arrested. The sentence of the Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal in her case read: "Not wishing to cause Marie Spiridonova unnecessary suffering... the Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal resolved to isolate Maria Spiridonova from political and social activity for a period of one year in a sanatorium, affording her the opportunity for normal physical and intellectual work." The present excerpts are from letters written by Spiridonova during that "sanatorium" confinement. The soviet press at the time claimed that she was hysterical and needed a cure. Spiridonova's own account, although dating as far back as 1919, is reproduced here solely because it is indispensable to a fair estimate of the entire case.

instruction was to "discover" plots of not less than 10 persons in each province, to involve in these plots the open enemies of the Empire and to put them at the mercy of the Minister. The Minister exiled them to ~~some~~ ^{Cayenne} and to other terrible places, without investigation, without trial, giving an account to no one. It was impossible to secure defence, to protest, to appeal. It was a grave. The government of Napoleon III. had to terrorize in order to show that it would stop at nothing. I had to break every illusion of justice, of truth, to paralyze all minds by insolently outraging truth, to accustom everybody to such violence, so as to demonstrate its power.

The very same thing is being done by the Government of Lenin and Co. Literally the same. Plots of right socialist-revolutionists and mensheviks are being invented wholesale. While still cooperating with the bolsheviks, I often quarrelled with them furiously pointing out that these "plots" are lies of hysterical tchekists. And later, after we left, these "plots" assumed a mass character. I am now confident that they were invented on purpose, that they were panicky visions but systematic fabrications. The best proof of this is the later "plot of the left socialist-revolutionists." Even from their own statement of the case it can be seen that there was no such plot...

Send me a thermometer. I get a little worse every day. I should lie in bed, but the bed is frightful; impossible to lie in it with an aching side and back. My side is all sore, as far as the spine. It means that my tuberculosis is developing rapidly. It is a shame that I succumb to it so

easily. The bed is made of beams and rough sticks, and is without boards. The so-called mattress is a dirty thin rag through which everything cuts into the body. I tried to put the mattress on the floor and sleep on an even surface, but the stone floor is damp and very cold.

March 4.

In the newspaper wrapped around a package delivered to me today. I discovered the "Case of Spiridonova", where I read the wording of my sentence which I heard badly at the time. It was very amusing reading. What brazenness! Bukharin was hooted down by the workingmen at my meeting, and almost put out. Yurenev was silenced at my meetings or permitted to speak a moment amid a chorus of whistling. Smidovitch was allowed to speak 15 minutes, but all the time there was noise. And all these unrecognized leaders of the people and official orators, sticking their pride in their pockets, were my judges in "a court of justice." ... They could not answer me at public meetings, - so they think they can overcome me with prison, trial and the Tcheka.

I named there the towns where by foul corruption or through the arrests of the candidates the elections to the soviets were effected. (And Smidovitch, with angelic naiveté, proposes that we fight them in the election campaign after putting us in prison.) I indicated a number of factories in Moscow where the workingmen are subjected to indignities and where the disregard of their will approaches an outrage. And speaking of the ruined peasant economy which is the only thing that could raise the country and give it bread and socialism.

speaking of the defiled Soviet Government, of the bespattered and terrorized spirit of the worker and peasant, of the flogged back of the moujik, of the counter-revolution planted in the village by the guardian commissars, I really was "emotional", I cried "with an uninterrupted voice". This hooliganism, this robbery of the people and its sacred revolutionary rights is perpetrated not in the despotic realm of Krassnov, but in that of Lenin and Bukharin, which even now makes a difference to me, hence my "howling". In Krassnov's satrapy I would only get... stoppers. One sentinel is unfailingly at the door.

I cannot characterize otherwise than "diseased hysteria" the regime which Bukharin and the other "leading soviet figures" whom I have offended and "defamed", have created for me ostensibly to cure me, "without wishing to cause any suffering."

Contemptible hypocrites and Jesuits ... In their servile newspapers they cry about Radek chained in a German prison, but do you know the conditions which they -socialists- are creating? I would prefer chains on my feet and arms and neck to my present environment. Just to characterize our Communist Government I will tell everything about it, and not because I cannot bear it.

On February 15, I suppose for the purpose of the "educational cure" or simply in order to exasperate me, I was transferred to the Kremlin, to the guardhouse. I live in a narrow hole next to the ward where 100 to 130 men of the Red Army are quartered (it is a school of "Red" officers, mostly communists). One room separates me from the main ward. The filth, noise, rattle, whistling, wild shooting, clatter

and all the rest that goes with a military barracks where the men are on duty day and night. My room is divided into two tiny cells by a board-partition, which does not reach the ceiling and is very narrow, about two and a half to three feet wide.

In my cell there is a window, in the next - it is dark. A resonant stone vault, stone walls nearly three centuries old, and a damp stone floor. Behind the partition are two guards armed with rifles, who every now and then click their muzzle-stoppers. One sentinel is unfailingly at the door, frequently looking into my room. The other pries through a little window-hole cut at another place, and the two of them, together with visitors, (at this moment there are five altogether) are constantly glued to the window and the holes, greedily watching me. This is for me the most fundamental of all evils. In the Tcheka, where I spent about a day, I had to declare a hunger-strike, as I had no other means of defence against a woman-spy who was planted in my cell. After a quarrel she had had with another spy outside my door, both of them, frightened, naively stared at me without removing their eyes for a moment. In this place I thought it was a temporary evil, that I would overcome it, but seems to be the system. Whose? Bukharin's, Smidovitch's, or Sverdlov's? I do not know, but it is the system. And like all centralized systems, its origin of course hails from above. It is the third week now that I am compelled to sleep without undressing, and I am very fatigued. My whole body does not seem to be mine any more. I cannot wash, I cannot read, write, eat, think calmly, when uninterruptedly I am the object of the curiosity

of these slenths. You know what it means generally to me to be an object of curiosity. You know well enough that it is to serve long sentences of penal servitude, but in this manner we were not treated even by the servants of the Czar.

"That will do", I sometimes address the spies, "you have stared enough, you ought to be ashamed."

"It's our orders," they reply, sometimes in a confused and sometimes in an insolent voice....

To characterize the hypocritical care of the bolsheviks about my health I will add a little concerning the externals of my "sanatorium".

There is no stove in my room and it is heated through the partition. It is chilly, of course. And when it begins to get warm, the moisture from the window requires rags to be absorbed, the corners of the walls and the ceiling and the floor are covered with wet spots, and the whole cell looks as if painted.

I have fever of course all the time and I am coughing as a result of this dreadful cell and the unaccustomed tobacco smoke which drifts invisibly. I cough from the poisonous gases coming from the stove which is peculiarly constructed.

After the stove is heated, I sit for hours at the table, trying to lie down on my absolutely impossible bed, trying to overcome the throbbing at the temples, the hammering of the heart, and the other consequences of the poison. This is a daily event.

When I applied for open-air exercise, I was refused. When I asked for newspapers, I was refused. With great

difficulty I secured soap. Why are there no visits permitted?

The sentinel convoys me to the toilet, which harmonizes fully with the general style in my cell and even with the cracked partition here. Behind the door of the toilet the sentinel stands guard. To reach the toilet it is necessary to pass the big hall packed with savagely staring soldiers who immediately dash into the room adjoining the toilet which has large glass doors. So that in addition to practically living in one room with two to four strange men, I have to share generally my life and all its prose with 100 soldiers.

The guards are changed every two hours. Every half hour there is some kind of an additional inspection. They are watching. At night there is the banging of the door, loud conversation, rattling, and every two hours, every hour, every half hour somebody looks through the door to see that I am lying here under my coat.

This was never done to me even when I was a penal convict. March 9 I was transferred to the Kremlin hospital.

And the endless, persistent petty incidents cannot even be told...

Bukharin, Lenin, Trotzky may be satisfied. They are avenged. But they do not understand that such opponents as I they can, if they so desire, torture or murder, but not humiliate by petty mockeries. This is shameful and base.

There is no need to say that specific measures of protection against my escape do not at all require such an environment. I was imprisoned by them in a normal jail five months and did not escape. I was in solitary confinement. My Lettish guards always slept at their posts and my windows

were open on the court, but I did not attempt to escape. Their confidence in me, their attitude, put me under obligation..

Naturally there were incidents with individual ruffians who would aim their guns at me. But this does not count. This happened seldom, only 5 or 6 times, and then it was only a threat of death and not a prolonged system of torment of the free spirit of a living human being.

I am writing you all this not in order to alarm you and make you run about the various offices begging and seeking relief. We must not accustom these power-intoxicated functionaries to have anybody crawl before them... We must again begin to fight and win respect for our spirit in prison, we must create traditions. Internationalists such as we, believers in the power of the toilers and not of a single party, will for a long time yet be languishing in the prisons of unprincipled governments of all shades.

March 14.

March 9 I was transferred to the Kremlin hospital. I was very ill. I became sick in the first days of my imprisonment in that hole, about February 14-15. It was diabolically cold and damp. Then the cell was heated, and it began to thaw and became wet. About March 4-5 I began to cough blood, and in quantities resembling the period of 1906-7-8, before I was sabered. I would bend over a stinking receptacle and let the blood stream from us. I was on my feet, because there was a din in my head, and knowing that my condition was bad, I did not want to succumb to it.

One night was especially critical. I awoke with a sensation that the end had arrived. Then it began. The entire

pillow, kerchief, towel were soaked with blood. I felt as if I were expiring. Suddenly I sensed that I was no longer the master, that "it" came...

I called the sentinel to raise me, but found that I had no voice. I tried to knock. But the hand would not obey.

I could not raise my hands to wipe the blood off the lips, mouth, and cheeks. How long I remained in such a condition I do not know.

At dawn I gathered strength to put myself in order. It was very interesting. The thoughts were so different. There was no indignation at death which seemed to be present. None at all.

I recalled everything that I had left undone. And there was such humility in the soul. It was so calm, calm. I was lying and waiting.

I was terribly shilled. Towards morning the sentinels became so alarmed at my appearance that, in spite of all my protests and begging, they telephoned to the authorities and asked for a physician. I had one answer to all the queries: "I want nothing."

The physician, a woman, looking at the gaping wet spots on the walls, and at the whole cell, said: "If you remain here another night, you will die." ...

Here in the hospital I almost recovered. My hands tremble, there is a noise in my head, but there is new strength. Here I lost about 6 to 8 glasses of blood. I would soak the end of my kerchief in the glass of blood, and would have a wonderful, bright, crimson banner.

Here I immediately began to breathe more easily. My physique must be powerful indeed. It will heal, and I will not die.

March 20.

I have been transferred from the hospital to the iron corridor, to an unheated room, papered in dark-red, with a stone vault, and smelling of rust. Upon the insistence of the guards it was heated once. Otherwise, there is no inclination to heat it. I am shivering, of course, but I like the room. The floor is of wood, the cell is long, narrow. One can walk about 10 steps.

Today the measurements of the windows were taken. They are putting in bars. Instead of a sanatorium, therefore, they are converting one of the Kremlin rooms into a prison. How thoughtful.

A HAUNTED SOUL "+)

I was brought to the sickbed of Marusia from the Butyrki Prison on October 27, 1920, after spending a year in jail.

She was arrested in the night of October 26, while sick with typhus. Boris Kamkov who was on duty that night at her bedside was also arrested. According to him, the raid was carried out on a large scale. Apparently, the exact lodging of Marusia was not known. And before locating her, a number of apartments in the enormous house on Tverskaya 75 were forced open and several women, frightened to death, were routed out of bed with the question: "Are you Spiridonova?" The raiders were armed with bombs and army revolvers, as if attacking a gang of bandits....

I was brought from the Butyrki upon the demand of Boris Kamkov. He was released two or three days later, and permitted freely to visit Marusia at any time of the day or night. The first months our jailers were unusually courteous. No forcible transfers from one place to another were made. Boris, Kakhovskaya and Bogoyavlenskaya were permitted to visit the patient. For about a month we remained in Marusia's house. The guards, about five or six tohekists, behaved very correctly, doing their best in order that the patient should not see or hear them. Boris and I never discussed the arrest with Marusia, and she never spoke of it either. Generally she was silent almost all the time, her teeth set, and when she spoke, she did it in a whisper and would be

frightened by a loud voice. She was leading her inner deranged life, with its nightmares, outside of reality. But there was one fundamental thing in all her nightmares: the prison, the lack of freedom, the consciousness of the violence perpetrated on her and others. She would see around her now Czarist gendarmes and cossacks, now Leninist tchekists. The physicians who called on her would assume the same shape. Whenever Boris and I introduced them to her, we became in her eyes traitors, accomplices of the jailers

On June 4, when I was preparing to put Marusia to bed after giving her a bath, as she slept much better on such occasions, I was called out of the room by the investigator of the Tcheke, Piukenen, who arrived with some other persons, and informed us that we were to be transferred immediately to another place. I explained that a sudden transfer like this, without previously preparing the patient for it, and without the assistance of the comrades whom she remembers and does not fear, might have very bad consequences for her. To my declaration the following answer was made: "I must carry out my orders today."

I had to submit to the threat of violence and was compelled to give the patient a large dose of a drug to induce sleep in order to overcome any possible physical resistance on her part. The transfer was of course made in the usual way, by automobile, which alone inspired her with disgust and horror. In the second hour of the night we found ourselves in our new quarters, as I learned the following day, in the Psychiatric Prechistenka Hospital, in the Shtatny Alley, since last Easter converted into a prison hospital.

A damp, apparently long uninhabited room, with the window-frame tightly sealed and the oppressive odour of a cellar, struck us very unpleasantly after our dry and sunny room. The wooden frame of the window was taken by Marusia to be prison bars, and as soon as she entered the room, she began to examine these "bars" and to saw them with her fingers which had not yet healed from "sawing" the frame of her bed at our last place in moments of depression. With the aid of a small penknife, I immediately removed the window-frame and opened the window. But all night she remained up, haunting the room like a shadow.

Outside were trees. Nightingales were singing. Our den which had been sealed for a long time, was filled with exquisite air laden with the aroma of poplars and birches. Behind the trees glittered the red stars on the caps of the soldiers and tchekists sauntering about with rifles or revolvers. Sometimes at night, as well as in the daytime, wild shots would be heard. The first week, from morning to night, an insane inmate nearly cried, sang and cursed. Marusia began to fear the window and the door, and would hide in the darkest corners at the appearance of the physicians.

But this was not her only reaction to the new environment. She absolutely refused to take food and even to drink water. All my persuasion, pleading, scolding, all my tricks (I put food in all the corners of the room) were of no avail. She would not explain why she refused to eat. She only whispered of tchekists and gendarmes, whom she saw everywhere about her, behind the door and the window, and even in the room behind the chair and the table.

I was in utter despair. The physicians began to talk about artificial feeding. This would have been her end. What was ailing her mainly was the hatred and horror of violence. Violent feeding would increase it to such an extent that she would not be able to endure it anymore physically. Besides, this act of violence would be associated in her mind with all those refined cruelties which she suffered in 1906 at the hands of the Czarist gendarmes and cossacks. I absolutely rejected the proposal of forcible feeding.

Looking for means of saving her, I seized at one thought: Perhaps Boris, who had spent about four months at her bedside, could influence her and make her eat. On June 9, at the end of the fifth day of her dry hunger-strike, I wrote to the Tcheka, pointing out the desirability of bringing Boris Kamkov. The same evening he was brought from the "Inner Prison" of the Tcheka. The patient recognized him and received him well. But ... our aim was not achieved.

Obstinately, with the consciousness of a healthy person, she continued to refuse food. On the sixth day she began to grow very weak. She was lying still, her face emaciated, in her eyes a petrified expression of yearning and horror, and frequently she would clutch at her heart. She slept from three to four hours daily, her pulse was from 120 to 130, and at the approach of the physicians who frightened her, the pulse reached 160. I began to apply to her heart day and night a cold wet rag which caused her apparent relief... On the seventh day of the hunger-strike (which was "dry" and that frightened us especially) we sent a declaration to the Presidium of the Tcheka demanding the only measure which could save

Marusia - her immediate release.

The answer to our declaration was remarkable for its cynicism. The following day I was called out into the court where at a table were seated solemnly two representatives of the Tcheka, a woman physician named Fainberg, the investigator Kozlovsky, and several physicians of the hospital. The senior physician read to me a paper signed by Samsonov, a member of the Presidium of The Tcheka, and invited me to sign it. The document instructed the senior physician to apply artificial feeding to Onufrieva (the Tcheka insisted on designating Spiridonova by this pseudonym, so as to conceal her identity from the medical staff, but of course the secret was out from the beginning). The consent of her guardian Izmailovitch was required, however, so as to make the latter responsible for any consequences. I did not limit myself to signing my name, but expressed my attitude towards the courtesy of the Tcheka.

While I was writing, the tchekist physician was conducting around the table a peaceful conversation with her colleagues about an ambulatory and other problems of the day. Suddenly there arose before me the distant, forgotten, I had thought, past: I am in the circular tower of the Minsk Prison, condemned to death. I am reading a newspaper, which reached me in spite of all the prison bars and prohibitions. It is the period of the bloody suppression by the Czarist Government of the Revolution of 1905. Every day the newspapers would tell of more and ever more executions, and every day the same newspapers, on the fourth page, chirped of the theatre, operas, ballett. And the dissonance in the soul from a comparison of the chirping on the one page and the martyrology on the

other was such that my soul refused to believe. And now again a similar dissonance struck me. Here, a few steps away, a human being is dying whose life was all spent in the service of the Revolution. The functionaries are reading to me, her most intimate friend, her death sentence, courteously inviting me to attach my signature to the effect that not they but I am killing her. While waiting for me to sign, they are discussing indifferently current affairs. *Strike, June 18,*

Paris I wrote approximately as follows: the catastrophic condition of the sick M.A.Spiridonova, according to the profound conviction of Kamkov and myself who have observed the entire course of her illness, can be relieved only by a radical change, by freedom, since the fundamental cause of the ailment is her consciousness of violence, of the lack of liberty, of prison life. Forcible feeding will undoubtedly hasten her end and increase her torment in association with the outrages she has suffered at the hands of the Czarist cossacks and gendarmes, who in her diseased mind are identical with the tchekists. The proposal that I choose between artificial feeding and the alternative, is equivalent to allowing me to determine the method of killing the patient. Rejecting absolutely the method of artificial feeding and selecting the more gradual and less painful alternative, I again emphasize that the death of Spiridonova will lie entirely on the heads of the present makers of the destinies of Russia." Verbally I then added my appreciation of "the original kind of liberalism which is bringing us back to the days of Socrates when the person condemned to be executed had the right of choosing the mode of his death." ... *and the letter. In the next day...*

On the tenth day of the hunger strike, Boris succeeded in making Maria take two sips of tea. This was the beginning of victory. She began to drink a little, a couple of times a day. But our attempt to give her some tea mixed with the yolk of an egg failed, and only provoked her fury and a refusal to drink at all. We had to be more cautious with our subterfuge.

On the twelfth day of the hunger-strike, June 15, Boris was suddenly taken away from us by trickery. He was called outside, and five minutes later they came to me for his overcoat and cigarettes. As if we would have built a barricade and offered any resistance with a dying person in the room! His sudden disappearance, without a word of farewell, had a depressing effect on Marusia. Two days afterwards she looked for him with her eyes, and called him in a scarcely audible whisper, "Boris, Boris." I could not leave the room for more than a very few minutes, as she would be alarmed that I too was taken away. The physicians declared her to be at the point of death.

On the fourteenth day, in the evening of June 17, when Marusia seemed completely exhausted, I poured into her mouth, which was half-open, about half a cup of tea containing the yolk of an egg. She swallowed it with her eyes closed. I quickly prepared a similar portion and repeated the operation. Even now I do not know how it happened: whether it was the result of an exhausted will, in connection with the physical collapse of the organism, or whether the instinct for life forced its own way by changing the original inner resolution. In all likelihood, it was the latter. In the first days when

she began to take food I had the impression of a struggle going on in her between the old resolution and the new impulse.

Now, as I am writing this, a week and a half have passed since the end of the hunger-strike. I see nothing hopeful for us in the near future. Marusia is almost always in a state of alarm.

The wild shots which occasionally resound not far from us bring on the thought that in the vicinity people are being executed. She tears forward to help the people supposedly led to execution. And when I hold her back, she reproaches me of being a coward, like all the others around her. If I should let her go, she would stop at no doors and go ahead, until she struck the bayonet or a revolver of a Leninist tshekist. I therefore keep her from going. She then tosses about, bruising her hands against the doors until blood flows, and is angry with me.... Something unprecedented, something which cries to heaven, is being carried on here. Certainly nothing like it happened either in Hungary or in Denikin's kingdom. Even there a psychically deranged person was never subjected to an outrage like this. In the course of a year there has been going on here the torture of the living soul of a human being, bound hand and foot by sickness, defenceless against any experiments made on her. In a diseased brain, the prison life, espionage and the oppression, are multiplied tenfold and leave their impression with acute painfulness. They know here from innumerable medical examinations and the daily observation by the physicians how seriously ill Marusia is, what a torment imprisonment is to her, - and yet they leave her in this environment on purpose. In the

stubbornness, which is truly revolutionary with which Marusia refuses to submit to their oppression they discern an insult to their power, and are sharply changing the conditions here for the worse. Apparently they really want to achieve the dreadful end, and with them it is now only a question of concealing from the world all that is transpiring here. In this respect they are performing miracles of isolation. They like to strangle, but they like to do it quietly ... And if the Czarist penal servitude could not destroy her, it will now be successfully achieved.

June 29, 1921.

A. IZMAILOVITCH.

+) The author of this and the subsequent letter, Alexandra Izmailovitch, in Spiridonova's most intimate friend. She spent 11 years in Siberia at penal servitude together with Spiridonova whom she calls familiarly Marusia in these letters. The history of Izmailovitch resembles that of Spiridonova. She too had been sentenced to death under the Czar. Since 1918 she has been in bolshevist prisons almost uninterruptedly. In 1919 Spiridonova escaped, with the aid of a guard, from her Kremlin "sanatorium", but was again arrested while sick with typhus in October, 1920. A year later she was transferred with Izmailovitch to a villa in the country about fifty miles from Moscow. The two women have been there under "domestic arrest" ever since.

PLEADING FOR PRISON.

In the course of several months, as I have more than once declared to the "Red Cross", the proprietors of the house at Malakhovka where Maria Spiridonova and I are lodged have conveyed to us in every possible way their desire to have us leave, the obvious and unquestionable cause of this being the open watch over our house maintained by the Tcheka ("G.P.U.") and the calls made on us by its agents, official and disguised.

At the present time the conditions of our living under the same roof with these people have become so embarrassing and our relations so damaged, that our remaining here further would be an oppressive burden. Besides, I have every reason for supposing that agents of the Tcheka ("G.P.U.") have been planted in our villa as tenants, and that the proprietors themselves have either partly or entirely become agents of the same kind. Marusia as usual divined this before I did, and her condition immediately became worse.

An attempt to change our living quarters here would not improve but on the contrary complicate matters, as any kind of moving sets on her in an extremely exasperating manner. The Tcheka will create the same conditions everywhere, whether it be another villa, a Moscow apartment, or a sanatorium, it will plant its agents around us.

My application through the "Red Cross" that Marusia be permitted to go abroad has apparently, to judge by the silence of the "G.P.U.", this time too been decided negatively.

The result is a grave situation from which the best way out, once permission to go abroad is refused, is to be in an ordinary prison where everything is clear and definite, where a jailer is a jailer, a physician a physician, a comrade a comrade, where there is no sham, no lies, no watching from the corner of the eye, no eavesdropping, and none of that terrifying moral atmosphere that distinguished our hospital in the Shtatny Alley, which was a highly refined place of torture for the patient and which Malakhovka is beginning to resemble.

Upon the clearly expressed wishes of the patient as well as my own convictions, I am addressing this plea to the "Red Cross" to do everything in its power to secure the transfer of Maria Spiridonova and myself to the Taganka Prison, into the normal environment of our imprisoned comrades with whom we could associate without being watched and without first obtaining permission, all of which would considerably neutralize the depression which the prison bars and the other jail externals would make on the psychically unbalanced patient.

The conditions of our present "freedom" created by the Tcheka are much worse than having to report daily to the police and are in no way less a mockery and injury to us, providing the Government only a false reputation for "humanity".

A. IZMAILOVITCH.

June 11, 1922.

CHILD WELFARE.

Representing the "Society for the Relief of Imprisoned Anarchists", with the permission of the "G.P.U.", Lia Cottman and Elena Ganshina went to Archangelsk (in March, 1923) to lend aid to the anarchists kept in the northern camps. During their stay there, a hunger strike was declared by all the anarchists of the Pertominsk Camp, demanding the amelioration of the conditions or transfer to Archangelsk.

Because Lia Gottman, Peter Skurikhin, who had been exiled to Archangelsk for two years, and Elena Ganshina informed the Moscow and Petrograd comrades about the hunger strike, all the three were arrested and convoyed to Moscow. The "G.P.U." sentenced Gottman and Skurikhin to exile in Beresov, in the province of Tobolsk for two years. After a hunger strike in protest, the sentence was changed to exile to the territory of Narym. Elena Ganshina is still awaiting her sentence in the Novinsk prison.

Tatiana Polosova, a member of the "Society for the Relief of Imprisoned Anarchists", was sent to Archangelsk to transfer the child of an Anarchist prisoner, Tamara Veger, who was at the time in the Pertominsk Camp. The child, a little girl, had for more than a year been in prison with her mother, since she was taken at the arrest.

We received from the innocently suffering little creature soul-rending letters in which she implored us to take her away since she never sees the sun and she was always terribly cold ... With the permission of the mother we inquired

at the "G.P.U." in Moscow whether the Society would be permitted to take the child away from the prison camp. We received permission for our comrade Polosova to go to Archangelsk with the consent of the central authorities to receive the child.

After much trouble and many struggles with the local authorities Polosova secured with great difficulty the child of Tamara Veger. But a day before her departure from Archangelsk, on June 28, 1923, Polosova was arrested. At present she is in the "G.P.U." in Archangelsk. The charge against her is unknown. (Probably "banditism".)

The unfortunate child was returned to her mother and is now together with her in the concentration camp of the Solovetz Monastery.

Such is the fate which has befallen all the comrades sent by the Society for the Relief of Imprisoned Anarchists to render aid to those who are languishing in the northern camps.

In the night of June 9, 1923, 41 Anarchists were arrested in Petrograd and 16 "traps" were planted in different homes. The house where Mollie Steimer and myself lived belonged to a physician who daily received many patients. When we were arrested, such a trap was left behind us. During the following four days everybody who entered the apartment was detained and nobody released. More than forty sick people who had come to the physician for treatment were arrested in the four days. No supplications, no imploring availed. All the people were kept for four days without food, since no permission was granted to go out for food.

One girl came to call the doctor to attend her dying mother. She was also caught in the trap. Her cries, groans, hysterics did not help. She was not permitted to return to her mother who died while her daughter was in the trap having hysterical fits.

The physician himself, the proprietor of the apartment, who daily worked in three hospitals where he had patients that needed his attention, was also detained. No declarations that these people had no connection with our affairs, no begging that the trap should be raised, helped.

At the home of another comrade, the workman Ivan Likhachev, a similar trap was planted. A woman next door not knowing what was going on in Likhachev's home, came in as she was in the habit of doing, to borrow something and was detained. In this manner about twenty people were arrested among whom were four mothers, wives of workingmen, with nursing infants at home. During four days they were not allowed to leave the apartment, there was no food in the place, and they all went hungry, although "according to the law" the "G.P.U." is obliged to feed all those who are detained in "traps". The mothers implored that somebody should be permitted to go and obtain food for the infants. Especially was this necessary in the case of one infant that was artificially fed. None of the supplications had any effect. There was one answer to all of them: "Not permitted". As a result, a child of four months died in the arms of its mother on the fourth day.

All of the 41 arrested anarchists were kept under guard in the "G.P.U." Prison on the Gorokhovaya Street.+))

+) See "The Prison without Bars" by Shabalin on Page 93.

When I recall this prison a shiver runs through me. It is an ordinary ^{apartment} divided by wooden partitions into 44 solitary cells. Each cell is three steps long and about one and a half wide. Half of the cell is occupied by a wooden bunk without a mattress. Day and night the electricity is on, as there is no other light. There is absolutely no fresh air, so that the prisoners stand at the holes in the doors which serve for the delivery of food in order to catch a whiff of air which is far from being fresh. The food which was utterly uneatable consisted of soup that reminded one of muddy water and of a pound of black and badly baked bread and hot water. Nothing more. But all that was only "half the misfortune". The most terrible thing was the vermin, everywhere of every description. When I put bread on the table, it would become in a few minutes a living, moving mass. In the course of the four days of our stay in this Soviet paradise none of us could fall asleep soundly even for an hour. We could not bear it any longer and began an energetic protest on the fourth day, demanding our transfer to the Preliminary Prison. In the evening of July the 13th we were transferred there.

During the following two weeks 26 persons were set free. The remaining fifteen anarchists were charged with propaganda of Anarchist ideas, according to Article 16 of the criminal code.

Maria Veger and Mollie Steimer were kept isolated, on an equal footing with common criminals. They declared a hunger strike demanding transfer to the politicals' corridor, the amelioration of the conditions of their imprisonment and the right to see visitors. The left socialist-revolutionist,

Lida Surkova, suffering from tuberculosis, who had been condemned to exile for three years to Petchora, the non-partisan Zoya Bensina and myself, after learning of the hunger strike of our comrades, joined with them as a sign of solidarity and protest.

On the fourth day of the hunger strike, the prosecutor Ivanov, who was in charge of our case, came to the cell of comrade Steimer and suggested to her to stop the strike on condition that he would satisfy all her demands but not those of comrade Maria Veger who was to remain with the common criminals since she was one of them. Comrade Steimer indignantly asked him how he could qualify Maria Veger as a criminal. To this there came a curious answer: "Veger was condemned in 1921 to two years' exile in Archangelsk as an anarchist. After several months in exile, she escaped. Therefore, she is a criminal."

Steimer then remarked that if that be the case, then, of course Lenin, Trotzky, Bukharin, Kamenev and all the others at the head of the Soviet Republic were criminals, since they had at different times escaped from exile and prisons. Aroused by this answer, the prosecutor Ivanov banged the door and went away. On the sixth day he called me out and proposed that I should stop my hunger strike and persuade the women to do the same. I replied that so long as all our demands were not be satisfied, we would not suspend the strike. Enraged he began to shout that he would not satisfy our demands and that he would order us fed artificially beginning the following day.

"Steimer thinks", he said, "that this is the American Government and all that she demands, we will grant. Nothing doing !"

Calling him a scoundrel, I went back into my cell. On the seventh day of our strike, a member of the presidium of the "G.P.U.", Zbruiev, arrived and granted all our demands.+)

1923.

SEMYON FLESHIN.

+) The reason for this unusual leniency was of course Mollie Steimer, the fearless little working-girl of New York who was in 1918 condemned by the American courts to 15 years' imprisonment for protesting against intervention in Soviet Russia! Mollie Steimer's case attracted world-wide attention at the time. After spending two years in prison in the United States, she was deported to Soviet Russia in 1921. Two years later, after having been twice in bolshevist prison, she was deported from Soviet Russia, barred for life from her native land, Russia, and from her adopted country, the United States. The present article was published in the "Anarchist Vestnik" for November, 1923.



BANNER SUDDENLY RAISED AT FUNERAL OF
PETER KROPOTKIN,

"We demand the Liberation from the Prison
Dungeons of the Anarchists Fighting for
the Ideas of Kropotkin - Anarchism."