FORCED LABOR IN SOVIET RUSSIA

Reports in past p. 170-188:
imitation of reports of the 20ies, though

Criminals & Politicals 3 steps:
1st: Pol. priv.
2nd: Pol. [illegible] to criminals
3rd: Crim. priv. 176/177

Bard org. reports also in hist. past.

1928-34: "Turning point" (Stalin) Turning to Totalitarianism of Workers' state 193

[illegible] — abolishment of [illegible] opposition, of Oblig. passports (1932) 195

Lab. camp start in 1930.
All persons under NKVD in 1934 - 250 000

236/237: The leaders of the [illegible] seem not [illegible] but the Police chief

Class enemies in the camps.

264: Mortality rate: 40% of Poles in one year!

For efficiency 105 % salary: 88
! 240 Efficiency
Title already wrong: slave labor = Russia is forced labor.

2. Reports bad, sentimental, no details, written by "eminent personalities" etc.

3. Economic viewpoint – [illegible].

4. True is that the Secret Police & the SS were asked to finance [illegible]. [illegible] in French [illegible]. Liberation [illegible].

Preface: Resurgence of slavery – new [illegible] – founded on slave-labor.
[illegible] Slavery integrated [illegible] with a series of [illegible]

classification p. 4 ff.

Rate of solidarity 15

Separation of families, friends etc. 15

Steady growth independent of opposition (Dallin)
growth in Sov. Russia – e.g. says that this is a form of enforced migration.
Cov. to Asia – 58 to 67

93 ff. ending with process of [illegible]

FORCED LABOR IN SOVIET RUSSIA

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AND

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Maps and Documents

forced labor in the Soviet Union. It is high time to become aware of the new social system which has arisen in the east during the last seventeen years—a social system with novel and surprising features, and which is as far removed from capitalist society as it is from the Socialist pattern professed by the early builders of Soviet Russia. What has emerged is a hierarchical society of several distinct classes and a multitude of intermediate castes. The entire structure, however, rests on a new foundation: the huge class of forced laborers, a segment of mankind degraded to the level of beasts of burden. It is this class which constitutes the lower level of the social structure. Like a taproot, it conveys sap to the higher layers of the edifice. Its individual cells perish with terrible speed, and much of the government's energy goes into filling the gaps with a continuous supply of fresh human material.

This new type of society is the natural product of its basic elements; no other outcome was possible. A chemical synthesis of coal, hydrogen, sulphur, and chlorine produces the poisonous mustard gas, which bears no resemblance to any of its elements. A historical synthesis of unlimited state power, a universal state economy, and militant proselytism has produced the new type of Soviet society. The former process is governed by laws of natural science, the latter by laws of sociology.

There are people who believe that the Soviet state, while depriving the individual of political rights, assures him "economic democracy" and security and to that extent represents a "progressive" form of social organization. How much mischief has been wrought with this concept of "economic democracy"! True, unemployment does not exist in Russia, and every citizen has a job. But so did the serf and the slave. Unemployment was virtually nonexistent in Hitler's Germany. If the Soviet system of forced labor is progress, what is reaction? If the Soviet system is "economic democracy," what is slavery?

The successful extension of the Soviet sphere of influence to include other nations of Europe and Asia marks the transplantation of this new set of social relationships into these countries. As soon as a nation is brought into political dependence on Moscow, the giant from the east moves the complex pattern of its own

society across the border to serve as a model for the remolding of its new satellite.

Forced labor as a major economic institution developed in Russia as a combination of two elements—concentration camps and compulsory labor. Throughout the ages, in a multitude of countries, both elements have existed independently of one another. When combined and increased in extent, however, they invariably produce the phenomenon which has now matured in the Soviet Union. We can observe the two elements arising, merging, and growing in all the nations which have fallen into one of the Soviet spheres of influence. Here concentration camps are being expanded to make room for all "socially dangerous" groups of the population, and compulsory labor is being introduced in each and every one of these countries. Unless the process is checked, it cannot be long before in these countries, too, the synchronized and synthesized elements will grow into a monolithic system of slave labor on a grand scale.

One of the main reasons why the "iron curtain" is essential to the Soviet state, is the existence of the forced labor system. To demand the removal of the "curtain" is to indulge in wishful thinking. It would be easier for a camel to get through a needle's eye than for Stalin's government to tear down the curtain. Soviet Russia cannot afford to open the gates by abolishing control over foreign correspondents and permitting them to mix with the population, travel, observe, and report freely.

Nor is the average citizen within Russia well informed about the labor camps and the system of exile. Every individual in the Soviet Union lives within a series of curtains. Only minor items pertaining to his own life are known to him—scattered details which never permit of generalization and the drawing of meaningful conclusions. A recent arrival from Russia in this country asked us to tell him "what is going on in Russia—for we don't know anything." How could he? His newspapers and radio are masterpieces of political drapery.

The Soviet press has never so much as mentioned the process of compulsory "migration" of millions of men to the east and north,

misinformation, he delivers a public address in Irkutsk and tells his listeners that "men born in wide, free spaces will not brook injustice and tyranny. They will not even temporarily live in slavery."

Actually they *do* live in slavery. They have been torn out of life and society, deprived of everything including hope, and nothing is left to them but their chains . . .

Nothing but their chains! Exactly a century ago Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels appealed to the workers of the world to unite —"you have nothing to lose but your chains." It is under this slogan that the great Soviet experiment has been carried out. It is under this slogan that "wage slavery" has been replaced with a degree of coercion of labor never heretofore attained. After three decades a new class has emerged, a class degraded and condemned to new slavery, a class of workers who have certainly nothing to lose but their chains.

THE organization of the book, the sequence of its chapters, and the distribution of material are always a problem in the preparation of an historico-political work; it was not absent in connection with the preparation of this volume. The division of the book into "Present" (Part I) and "Past" (Part II), is, of course, somewhat artificial; many references to history were necessarily incorporated into the first part of the book, while the second brings the narrative up to the present time. It seemed, however, sensible to concentrate, in the first part of the book, the most important data relating to the situation in the 'forties and to supplement them with accounts and descriptions of the most important forced labor camps.

In preparing this book we were able to draw on a number of first-hand reports concerning the Soviet punitive institutions, written by men and women who have had a record of sad personal experience. For obvious reasons some of them must, at least for the time being, appear under assumed names. Chapter I, which is a narrative of life in the prison camps, was written by Ernst Tallgren, who is of Estonian origin and who was, before the war, a professor at an eastern European university. Boris

Certain camps act as construction crews of large industrial establishments. They put up the buildings, then move on to put up more somewhere else.

NUMBER AND CLASSIFICATION OF PRISONERS

There are three distinct groups of prisoners in the labor camps: (1) professional criminals; (2) *bytoviks;*[2] (3) political offenders.

Professional criminals: thieves, burglars, murderers, etc. A decided minority, they form the only organized group within the camps. Because of their solidarity they usually get along better in the labor camps than other prisoners. They are better fed and better clothed. They influence camp life much more than their number would seem to justify. Most of them continue to practice their criminal trades, stealing anything they can get their hands on, especially food. Frequently they organize assaults on their fellow prisoners. During the winter of 1941-42, in some of the camps in the north, I saw the criminals openly snatch bread from the other prisoners as the rations were being distributed. Their victims had no defense but to try to gulp down their food as fast as possible. "The only safe place to keep your bread is in your stomach," they would say. In spite of this wisdom, bread would often be seized while a prisoner was eating it. This struggle between hungry people for a 500 gram (1.1 lb.) loaf of bread might have been a scene out of Dante. The camp authorities, though claiming a desire to suppress criminality, shut their eyes to most of these practices, and are sometimes in silent accord with the criminals.

Bytoviks: mostly officials in public institutions found guilty of abuses. As all life in the Soviet Union is state controlled, even the man who sells lemonade at a soft-drink stand is a state official. These state employees are badly underpaid,

2. The closest one can come to this word in translation is "offenders against the mode of life."

and in order to support themselves and their families they often resort to various kinds of speculation. Among this group are also sexual offenders, people engaged in illegal business, and similar cases.

The bytoviks are often given posts in the administration of the camp or in the "cultural and educational department." They are proud of their distinct character and position of preference over the "enemies of the people," or political offenders.

The category of political offenders consists of several subgroups:

1. Peasants suspected of individualistic tendencies and thus undesirable on the collective farms. The most numerous among these are the Ukrainian farmers; the Russian farmers come next; and then follow a host of dissenting farmers from among the national minorities: Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Kirghiz, Mordovians, Caucasians, and so on. They are usually without political convictions except for a wholehearted hatred of the Soviet system. As they are used to heavy physical labor, they constitute the bulk of the work brigades.

2. Persons who have been abroad, or have members of their families abroad with whom they communicate. Here the percentage of Jews is disproportionately high, as almost every Jewish family in Russia had relatives living in Poland or Rumania. This group also includes foreign Communists: Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, etc., who fled the persecution of their own governments. Nearly all of them were arrested in 1937, when Yezhov was Commissar of the Interior, under a charge of espionage. Today these prisoners are referred to in the camps as "men of the 1937 class." Like the peasants, the majority of them are sentenced not by a court but simply by some agency of the secret police.

3. Former inhabitants of the borderlands. These are primarily Russian Poles who lived along the western frontier of

the Soviet Union, and Chinese and Koreans who lived along the eastern border. Many of them were deported into the interior before 1937, and during the mass arrests that year were sent from their new homes straight to labor camps.

4. People condemned for their religious beliefs: Catholics, Baptists, members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and others. They are distinguished by their high moral standards and the firm strength of their convictions. Against the background of demoralization and mutual enmity prevalent in the camps, these people shine like beacons in the dark.

5. Middle or high state officials sentenced for various political offenses. Many belong to the Communist party. A large number are civil engineers and technicians convicted chiefly on suspicion of sabotage. This group is slightly better off than the rest of the political prisoners; they usually manage to get administrative posts which ensure easier living conditions.

6. People condemned for specific Soviet wartime crimes: collaboration with the enemy under the occupation; prisoners of war; men and women dragged to Germany and found guilty of voluntary ties with the enemy; and nationals of countries occupied at the end of the war.

MATERIAL CONDITIONS

Work. Every prisoner is required to work. What he does depends on his qualifications as well as his physical ability.

The prisoners are classified as follows: (1) fit for any kind of labor; (2) for labor demanding moderate effort; (3) for light labor only; (4) invalid, first class; (5) invalid, second class. They are assigned accordingly to any work, moderate work, or light work. In practice, the camp authorities pay little attention to the distinction among the first three classifications. To be listed as an invalid means to be put on a starva-

wire, and guarded from watchtowers. Within the zone are the camp offices, kitchens, baths, hospital, and prisoners' barracks. The living quarters of the free members of the staff, some of the stores, the bakeries, workshops, stables, cattle sheds, tool sheds, etc., are usually outside the zone.

Within the zone the prisoners have liberty of movement; they are not, however, allowed to go outside. A few whose work requires it receive individual passes. Otherwise, the prisoners leave the zone only in work brigades and with a military guard.

The military guard of the camp is on hand to watch the prisoners at all times. Its members are wholly independent of the camp authorities, and there is often conflict between the two. The authorities may want to disperse the brigades over a wider territory, whereas the guard objects that it would make its task too difficult. Or the guard may refuse to allow the sawing and chopping of wood for fuel within the zone because the saws and axes are potential weapons. In these matters the military guard overrules all others.

Food. The food given to the prisoners is far from uniform. There have been times when the rations were so appalling that hundreds died of starvation. In 1938–39 a change for the better occurred in most of the camps. In 1940 the situation became worse again, and after the outbreak of the Soviet-German War in 1941 famine became the normal condition in many camps. The prisoners would dig out rotting cabbage from rubbish heaps, and roast rats. This naturally resulted in increased mortality.

The general food policy in the camps is to keep the men in a state of semistarvation, and by holding out hopes of slightly better food give them an incentive for doing more work. Thus for an additional roll and a piece of fish after the day's work the prisoners strain to the last limit of their strength. Generally speaking, the food is somewhat better in the camps of the north, worse in those of the Temperate Zone. The better food supplies, I have been told, go to the camps beyond the

manifestation of incompetence or ill will in either camp authorities or prisoners. When he detects such offenses, he is the examining magistrate.

In order to fulfill his duties adequately he keeps a network of agents planted among the prisoners. Their reports frequently result in trials for antigovernmental activities or sabotage. These trials, especially during the war with Germany, have usually ended in a death sentence.

Prisoners convicted of serious political offenses are more closely watched than the others. Knowing this, they live in continual fear lest they say anything which may be interpreted as an indication of antigovernment feeling.

RELATIONS AMONG THE PRISONERS

The relations of the prisoners to each other are a sad commentary on mankind. There is neither solidarity nor comradeship among them. A prisoner can sooner count on the aid and sympathy of the administrative authorities than of his fellows.

This lack of sympathy is symptomatic of a state of mind prevailing throughout Russia today. Like all manifestations of a collective psychology it is difficult to analyze. There can be no doubt, however, that it has its roots in the government's policy of suppressing all collective action or thought outside the officially defined framework. The MVD's treatment of the prisoners carries this to an extreme. If husband and wife are both sentenced to forced labor, they are never sent to the same camp, or to the same region, where they might have some chance of meeting accidentally. This rule applies equally to parents and grown-up children, friends, and men sentenced for the same offense. There is also a tendency to separate prisoners who have been working together for some time. Hence a practice of continual transference from brigade to brigade and from camp to camp.

Soviet Russia is a country covered from end to end with a monstrous network of agents and informers. In the time of the tsars informing was regarded by all Russians as contemptible.

Even the supporters of the regime would not shake hands with one of the tsar's informers. But today the youth of Russia is being brought up to reverence the agent and the informer. In all kinds of quarrels people threaten to report each other to the MVD. There are men in the camps who have been betrayed by their own children, relatives, friends, by people to whom they have been kind. It is not surprising, therefore, that the basic attitude of people toward each other —in the country as a whole, and in the camps in particular— is one of distrust.

Within the camps this distrust turns into enmity. There is mutual hostility—hostility of each against each. Of course there are exceptions. There are people full of kindness and sympathy toward their fellow sufferers. They remain, however, only exceptions, and they cannot alter the general tenor of personal relations in the camps.

Russia has always been a country of expert cursing, but the terms of abuse now used in the camps surpass anything heretofore known. This brutality of speech and manner is directed even against the weak and the sick. Blows inflicted for no reason are far more frequent than a helping hand. When a strong man sees someone in obvious ill health, he will ask him: "When are you going to kick off?" The sick are usually forced to take the worst place on the bunks and often have to lie on the floor.

Some modification of this attitude is found within each national group. The camps are towers of Babel. Besides the Russians, there are many Ukrainians, Germans, Poles, Georgians, Armenians, Caucasians, Tatars, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Chinese, Koreans, etc. Within each national group there develops a certain amount of sympathy and readiness to help. Among the prisoners of all other nationalities there is a marked hostility toward Russians—often plain hatred. Often, too, Russianism and the Communist regime are identified as being one and the same thing. In this the camps mirror a feeling which prevails to a considerable extent outside them. Nationalistic tendencies are a decentralizing influence in the Soviet Union.

II

Eye-Witnesses Report on Forced Labor

A lieutenant colonel in the Soviet Army, Sergei Malakhov,[1] relates the following about the Russian labor camps and the position they occupy in the people's life and in public opinion:

The population is well aware of the great issue of forced labor and "corrective" camps. But the attitude of the Russian people is not easy to describe. Since the millions of inmates of the labor camps are officially labeled "enemies of the people," not even the slightest sympathy toward them may be expressed either in public or in private circles. It is only rarely that the problem is even mentioned in conversation. When something occurs which calls attention to the labor camps, people generally express their disapproval of the "people's enemies" in order not to be suspected of criticism, or of compassion for the convicts.

In the late 'thirties and during the war some prisoners who had served their terms were released from exile and from camps, and a few were even permitted to return home. Their lives became so burdened that they sometimes felt impelled to end them by suicide.

I was acquainted, for example, with the case of a professor of mathematics at the University of Moscow who returned from a labor camp in 1938. He had been accused of conspiracy against the government, sentenced to ten years in a corrective labor camp, but was released after eight years when it turned out that he was innocent. When he arrived in Moscow, he found nobody at home in his apartment. His little daughter was playing in the yard. When they saw him, the neighbors appeared confused and stared

1. Colonel Malakhov, now in the United States, left Russia after the second World War. His book on internal conditions in Russia is scheduled for early publication in this country.

at him silently, while his daughter ran off in tears, crying, "My father is an enemy of the people. I don't want to see him." He tried to catch her, but she disappeared. At nine o'clock that evening his wife came home from work. She told him that during his absence she had remarried, that she had burned his belongings and that he could not enter the apartment. Meanwhile, the second husband appeared and asked him to leave immediately, threatening to call the militia (police). The professor spent the night in the yard. One of the neighbors called a policeman, who checked his papers and found out that he was permitted only to pass through Moscow and could not stay there longer than 24 hours. The professor again knocked at the door of his wife's apartment, but once more she refused to let him in. When she left the house in the morning, he tried to open the door with a master key, whereupon he was forcibly put on a train leaving Moscow. While the train was running at full speed, he jumped off and was killed.

I knew a construction engineer, a member of the Communist party, an interesting, lively man of great energy and will power. He had never taken part in any "conspiracy," but was accused of friendship with a Communist leader who was convicted during the "great purge." He was arrested and sentenced to a term of 15 years. He was placed in a lumber camp, where he worked under the most severe conditions. After a year and a half he was released, but not until the camp administrators themselves had been executed by the NKVD for excessive cruelty. Now he was declared innocent, given 2,000 rubles, and sent home. At first his wife refused to have anything to do with him, but he produced his documents showing that he had not escaped but had been released and rehabilitated. He has been a broken man since. He is frightened and jumpy, reluctant to talk, and exceedingly nervous. He mistreats and shouts at his child, whom he used to love very much. He has not changed since his release, and whether he will ever fully recover is doubtful.

I know a barber in the Ukraine who, under Lavrenti Beria, was released from a labor camp when the reaction against the sweeping terror under Yezhov set in. He had previously been a mechanic in a flour mill. He was accused of wrecking equipment and of causing stoppages. He was arrested, cruelly beaten up, and made to "confess." Sentenced to ten years, he was sent off to Siberia, where he managed to become a camp barber. Because his

(right—left) and employing all the Russian oaths at my disposal I encouraged my little oxen to toil their way slowly up the mountain . . . Then down the steps to the water with a pail, slowly filling up the two barrels on my cart. This was my job from sunrise to sunset. Our main occupation was carrying bags, baking bricks; there were no days off; we could only celebrate if mother nature showed sympathy with us and presented us with a sandstorm or, in winter, with a snowstorm . . .

Months and months went by like this. In the fall of 1939 I fell sick. Brucelosis, they told me; when I began to spit blood, I got into a hospital. For the first time a bed, a bedsheet! Though with bedbugs and lice, still . . . My life was saved by a Russian doctor, a convict, who made up for the lack of medicine with exemplary care for the sick. Supplied with a note, "No longer fit for hard labor," I returned to my penal cell after several weeks.

In January, 1940, there came an order from the central point of the camp ordering me to move immediately to the collection point. After a touching parting from my comrades, and supplied with a little bag of salted fish and bread for the trip—perhaps to a far-off camp—I was driven to the nearest railroad station through the icy Siberian night. After a few days at the transit point, I and two other Germans were returned to Moscow.

In prison there I met Roberta Gropper, Zensl Muehsam, Carola Neher, Wally Adler, Hilde Hausschild, and many others. All together we were 25 German women who had all been returned from prisons and penal camps. We did not know what was to happen. They always called out two or three women at a time. We only learned our fate when about three weeks later Betty Olberg and I were loaded on a prison train in Byelorussia and left in the direction of the Polish border. In Brest-Litovsk the GPU turned us over to the Gestapo. We were taken to Lublin prison, where there were already 150 Germans, including 17 women. Thirty-nine men and I were arrested by the Gestapo and taken to Berlin.

The author of this report spent the next five years in the Nazi concentration camp of Ravensbrück in northern Germany and was liberated only at the end of the war when the German resistance collapsed.

camps are veiled are indescribable. As in a Russian fairy tale, you talk to people one day—the next day they have disappeared. The bad wolf has eaten them. You are no longer supposed to concern yourself about them. If they write to you, you will seek in vain in their letters any clue to their mode of existence. They will ask for parcels and assure you that they are in good health. Their names have been crossed out of the book of life; their wives will divorce them, and their Komsomol children will not write to them.

The Soviet state is the only one in this world where people live under continual threat, as if at the muzzle of a cocked revolver. In the camps of the BBK—the White Sea–Baltic Sea Canal —alone, there were about 500,000 people, and the 50,000 Poles sent there easily dissolved in the total mass. All of Russia is covered with camps as if with a mysterious rash; and the infinite cynicism of officialdom, well aware of its own actions, is expressed in the hermetic isolation of these camps from all foreign visitors. This enabled the subservient rascals among the cultural élite of Soviet society to deny the very existence of this unprecedented system before the war. After my liberation I held in my hands the official textbook of *Political Economy*, a collective work published in Moscow under the editorship of Professor Mitin, in which one erudite scoundrel calls the assertion that slave labor exists in the USSR "bourgeois calumny."

It is ridiculous to suppose that all these millions of prisoners are guilty. How can half a million Poles (most of them Jews) who were sent to the camps in the summer of 1940 be criminals? A government which does not hesitate to keep millions of its citizens in a state of slavery as a measure of pacification and strengthening the regime; a government that continually tears pieces of live flesh from the body of the most unfortunate people in the world; a government that sends masses of innocent and intimidated people through the sieve of the NKVD, without trial and without cause, without pity or regard, into the labor camps (and the local staffs of the NKVD, in turn, themselves operate under terror and fear)—such a government is the most monstrous phenomenon of our contemporary world.

It is true that in comparison with the death factories of Oswiecim and Maidanek the Soviet camps may pass for humane. But Hitlerism has been beaten, while the Soviet camps continue to exist.

There are no more crematoriums; but the camps where I spent the best years of my life continue to be ignored by the people; and the cot I once occupied is now taken by my comrade. Since they came into being, the Soviet camps have swallowed more people, have exacted more victims, than all other camps—Hitler's and others—together, and this lethal engine continues to operate full-blast. . . .

An entire generation of Zionists has died in Soviet prisons, camps, and exile. We were never able to come to their rescue, not only because it was difficult but above all because we had lost all heartfelt, spiritual contact with them. We did not care about them. I do not remember seeing a single article about them in the prewar press, not the least effort to mobilize public opinion and alleviate their fate. . . . My most shocking encounters in the Soviet camps were meetings with people who had been sentenced solely for having been Zionists in their youth. Before me were old men and women, broken, without hope or faith. They asked me to give their regards to their people and their country, as if to holy symbols that would never again become a reality for them. People with many achievements to their credit, people whom their countrymen must certainly remember—they asked me not to mention their names in the press abroad, because this might be fatal for them or their children, for their families living in freedom, in Soviet "freedom," that is. I keep silent about them. But there are other names that I shall list without hesitation because they are public knowledge, and not I but others should long ago have raised the question of their fate.

M. Kulbak, a brilliant and talented Yiddish poet, suddenly "disappeared" in Soviet Russia. Kulbak was no Zionist. He was a friend of the USSR and had gone there to live and work in the "fatherland of all toilers." He wrote two notable books there: *Messiah ben Efraim* and a novel, *Zelmenianer*. Kulbak had the same idea of Communism as many others who have lived in a world of phantasy. But he was careless enough to settle not in Paris but in Moscow. Now his books are on the index, his works are forbidden, and he himself is listed as "missing" . . .

Every Lithuanian Jew and every Zionist knows the name of Benjamin Berger, before the war President of Zionist Organizations in Lithuania. I bow my head before this man, who saved my life, saving me from . . . starvation. In the Kotlas Camp,

lowed in the mire, exposed to the cold and rain. They lit fires, pulling the barracks apart for wood. Now and then club-swinging guards chased the men from one cage into another, hitting them indiscriminately and without any reason. Twice a day the prisoners received one third of a liter of soup, and once a day about half a kilogram of bread. Drinking water was drawn from canals, ditches, and puddles. In these camps bands of thieves had the upper hand; they organized assaults against whole groups of prisoners and robbed them of their belongings, especially clothes. The harassed prisoners, under the threat of clubs, merely let themselves be robbed in the night.

. . . In the labor camp we were put in with Soviet thieves, dregs of the dregs. Those that I knew were indeed human beasts. Homosexuality was common among them and was practised openly. These offenders were let loose on every new contingent of Poles arriving in the camp. They pilfered whatever the newcomers possessed. Several of them would attack a single person, grab all he had, and run away, while the guard looked on with amusement. Prisoners thrown into isolation cells with them were tormented by these convict supervisors, sometimes to the point of death by starvation. . . . There was no defense against them since the guards winked at all this, and sometimes even incited it. . . . Wounding or killing a man bothered them no more than would killing a fly. They were in charge of everything, and it was their business to determine the quantity of work allotted to each prisoner.

Half naked, barefoot, and nearly dead, we reached a place in the deserted, terrible, frozen "tundra" where a post bore the sign "Lagpunkt No. 228." With almost superhuman effort we dug *zemlyankas*, i.e., pits filled with mud and barely covered with branches and earth. Our nourishment was rye flour (raw) kneaded with water. In the night men crowded in the zemlyanka sleep on branches thrown over the mud, warming themselves by contact with one another's bodies. Moans, curses, cries, and threats resound during the night. The men irritate and hate one another. At 4 A.M. the *naryadchik* [chief] sounds reveille by hitting the blade of a saw with the haft of some instrument. There is no need of dressing, since no one ever undresses. Breakfast con-

of the NKVD with the title of commandant had complete authority over the new population.

"Those who work will eat," the commandant declared, and promised each worker an income of five rubles a day. Actually men were able to earn 40 rubles a month, women about 20. Only meager "advances" were paid out against these earnings. The settlers had to pay for their food, which consisted of watery soup and sour bread; they were "always hungry." For every minor infraction of the rules they were fined. For lateness at work they were fined only a few rubles, but the real punishment consisted in compelling the culprit to walk to the offices of the NKVD, some 60 miles away. He lost ten working days on the round trip. For persistent refusal to work, or for walking around in the woods during working hours, "settlers" were imprisoned in a special jail, a cabin with iron bars.

A few psychological observations of Mrs. Kochanska have a significance that extends beyond the limits of little Wintertown. She relates how the population of the settlement gradually revised its former political convictions in favor of Germany and even of Hitler. The revision went so far that a Polish Jew, Dr. Altberg, declared: "We did wrong in ever opposing Hitler. Poland should never have fought. Nothing could have been worse than our plight here."

Other remarks in the same vein make clear how unproductive and inefficient forced labor is even when compensation, wages, and food are correlated to the output of the laborers. When the women gathered potatoes in the settlement fields, a great many potatoes rotted and nobody cared. When valuable vegetable oil was spilled, nobody cared. And, in general, everyone came to the same conclusion:

". . . what I don't do today I can do tomorrow. And anyhow, they'll probably let the hay rot here, so what little I do will be so much wasted effort.[6]

6. Mowrer, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–81, 121. Another interesting report about the Poles in Soviet exile is Ada Halpern's *Conducted Tour* (New York, Sheed & Ward, 1945.)

V

The Essence of Forced Labor

Forced labor in Soviet Russia, like any kind of slave labor, is cheap, and therein lies its first and foremost virtue. Soviet authorities have never indicated precisely how great the cost differential is as between free and forced labor. It has been officially stated, however, that in 1932–33 "the cost of upkeep per prisoner was over 500 rubles a year." During the same period the average wage in the Soviet Union, according to official statistics, amounted to 1,496 rubles a year.[1] This differential, multiplied by the millions of prison workers and the years of work, is an important element of the government's industrialization fund. General workers' wages rose 174 per cent between 1926 and 1933 (due in part to the inflationary rise of prices); during the same period the cost of food per prisoner increased by only 90 per cent.[2] The quantity of available "consumer goods," and especially of clothing, housing, and food, was extremely small in the 'thirties and, of course, in the 'forties, too. The economies achieved as the result of use of forced labor enabled the government to increase the supply of these goods for the benefit of the other, especially the higher, strata of the population. This feature of forced labor in Russia is the source of huge profits realized by the NKVD in certain of its enterprises—profits never made in other fields of Soviet economy. It is for this reason that Soviet publications never present complete reports or statistical data concerning the profits of such industrial units. From the very

1. *Baltiisko–Belomorski Kanal*, p. 53, and *Sotsialisticheskoye stroitel'stvo* (1936), p. 512.

2. Andrei Vyshinski, ed., *Ot Tyurem k vospitatel'nym uchrezhdeniyam* (From Prisons to Educational Institutions), p. 437.

have always presented a special problem. The problem has great significance in connection with contemporary Russia, where no private slave ownership exists. Whenever men have been the property of a state or of a city, members of the free community were not always entitled to do with them as they pleased. Various agencies had specified rights as to giving orders and punishing slaves, and they were obliged to feed and to house them. A written or unwritten code of regulations concerning state-owned slaves must be obeyed.

It is no new phenomenon for the best minds of a nation to approve of slavery. Maxim Gorky, with his cohorts of minor writers, had a predecessor in Greece whose stature far exceeds his own. Aristotle considered slavery a useful institution even while insisting that no Greek citizen should be enslaved.

The most extensive development of slavery may be seen in the Roman Empire. In Italy during the first century B.C. there were 2 million slaves, as compared with a free population of 2.5 million. In addition, 400,000 slaves in Sicily worked beside 350,000 free Sicilians. Under Augustus the number of slaves rose to 3 million, i.e., more than half of Italy's population at that time.[8] The characteristic of slavery in ancient Italy was the widespread use of slave labor on private estates. In certain regions the entire agricultural economy was based on slavery; workers and employees were the property of absentee landlords who resided in the towns. Along with the millions of these hard-working slaves, however, an upper class of slaves developed in the cities, particularly in Rome. They were active as physicians, teachers, and philosophers. Many great actors, librarians, and artists were the private property of citizens of Rome. A paradox duplicated in Russia was the activity of slaves as prison wardens and prison guards.

Another group of slaves were the *servi publici*, some of whom occupied positions in magistratures while others worked as ordinary public laborers, building roads, repairing

8. These estimates are Beloch's. Most historians are doubtful whether the number of slaves in Rome can be established with any degree of certainty.

under its control. When manpower perishes, the slave-employing agency sustains no loss of investment.

In the first stages of the development of the forced labor system the labor camps were a consequence of certain political measures resorted to by the government, such as the collectivization of agriculture. Later on, cause and effect were intermingled. In the latter 'thirties, and particularly during the war, the NKVD took certain political measures because of its need for fresh human material. There was, for example, no political necessity for sending a million men and women from eastern Poland, the Baltic countries, and Bessarabia to prison camps in 1939–40, when these regions were annexed by the Soviet Union. There was no political sense in sending to labor camps many thousands of men and women from among the small national groups whose "autonomous regions" were liquidated during the war. There is not the least doubt that whenever an important measure of suppression is being discussed and prepared, the NKVD never forgets its great economic function—to fill the perpetual need for replacements for the dwindling population of the labor camps.

An unusual disproportion exists in Russia between the number of males and females. Even before the latest war there were about 8 million more women than men in Russia. The huge mortality among males during the war has made this disproportion an alarming problem. The number of boys and girls born is almost equal. The reason for the disproportion in peacetime is the great mortality among adult males; and the existence of forced labor is one of the most important causes of this unnaturally great mortality of men in Russia, since women constitute no more than 10 to 15 per cent of the population of the camps. This state of affairs is of course well known to the Soviet Government, but everything is covered up and explained away with the hard-ridden, trivial formula of the "inevitable sacrifices in the great struggle."

THE PRICE OF SLAVERY

In its economic results, the system of forced labor appears to have been efficient in Soviet Russia. In making a summary analysis of the war, Stalin stated—and the entire press immediately echoed—that it had been a great test of the new social and political system of Soviet Russia; that victory had demonstrated the soundness of the policy of farm collectivization and industrialization, as well as of Communist domestic policies. He avoided all mention of another important factor of the war economy—the forced labor system—which contributed a great deal to the wartime economy. If it were true that the final success justified and blessed the means, it would be equally true that it constituted historical approbation of slavery in a modern state.

Actually, the efficiency of forced labor, despite incentives and compulsion, was and is on an extremely low level. The *average* efficiency of a slave laborer has certainly been below 50 per cent of that of a free Russian worker, whose productivity in turn has never been high.

In a broadcast People's Commissar Krylenko complained that in the corrective labor colonies there prevails "a careless attitude toward public property, hitches and shortcomings of various kinds, raw materials and tools lie around uncared for and are improperly utilized, and we have snags instead of a capable organization of work." He also stated that the crops grown in corrective labor colonies were 40 per cent lower than the average for the Soviet Union.[19]

"Ugly wrecking activity took place in the Armavir CLC," a report to the Conference of CLC Agronomists stated, ". . . grain was squandered in the fall and in the spring no grain was found for sowing; in the horse stables pieces of glass were mixed in with the fodder; as a result about half the horses perished." In general, "in most corrective labor colonies the

19. Broadcast of May 24, 1934.

terrorism—the latter was the winner. After the first decade of the Soviet system the new trends were definitely victorious.

The Cheka-GPU was at first regarded as a temporary institution which would soon disappear and leave the whole field to other, more liberal, governmental agencies; capital punishment was likewise part of the new law as a "temporary necessity" against "belligerent counterrevolution." All armed resistance to the new regime ceased in the early 'twenties, but the GPU continued to grow and to expand. It widened its own network of prisons and concentration camps. It made abundant use of its right to pronounce death sentences and to carry out its own verdicts. It soon overshadowed the "liberal" Justice Department, and in this victory of the GPU the prevailing trends and new policies found their clear expression.

This conflict between the lofty ideals and the reality of the postrevolutionary decades marks the ideological evolution of Russian Communism. There is no other domain of political activity in which a retrogressive development—from the highest peak of humanitarian idealism to the lowest methods of coercion—is as clearly discernible as in the field of Russian justice and law, crime and forced labor. It ended, as we shall see, in the restoration of old ideas and terms such as prison, guilt, and punishment in the late 'thirties, and in an unprecedented wave of terrorism. "A prison is a prison," wrote *Soviet Justice* in 1937, why so much shyness? "And punishment is punishment—why be afraid of this word?" "Measures of social protection," it was found, "is a ridiculous term." "We must overcome the sugary liberalism, the compassionate attitude toward the offender."

Concentration camps were the striking innovation created by the Cheka-GPU in Russia.

The two elements which in later years were combined to form the huge system of forced labor—convict labor and concentration camps—were originally independent of each other. Prison labor was considered a humanitarian reform for criminal prisoners; concentration camps were an institution for the severe handling of political opposition. The first was a source

of pride to the talkative and evangelical Commissariat of Justice; [4] the second was a hushed-up achievement of the secretive Cheka-GPU. The two potential elements of the corrective labor system were brought into being almost simultaneously.

In January, 1918, a decree was promulgated which was actually the initial step on the long road to forced labor in Soviet Russia. Paragraph I of the decree ordered: "Work details are to be formed from among the prisoners able to work, for the carrying out of tasks necessary for the state, tasks no more strenuous than those of unskilled workers." [5] Soon after the promulgation of this decree the first small farms operated by convicted criminals came into existence.

Concentration camps were erected in different regions of Russia during the Civil War. When, in 1923, a reform of concentration camps took place, 23 of them were found to exist.[6] Most of them were abolished and their inmates transferred in part to prisons [7] and in great numbers to the far north Archangel region, where camps were erected on the mainland and, in particular, on Solovetski Island.

At first the concentration camps in Russia were intended as places for assembling those who during and after the Civil War had participated in the armed struggle against the Soviet regime. The conditions, which were described many times later, were rigorous, and the treatment accorded the inmates was often cruel. There were executions without trial and death sentences were frequently imposed upon innocent peo-

4. In the early years after the Revolution a number of concentration camps and "places of detention" were under the jurisdiction of the Commissariat of the Interior, which at that time had functions entirely different from those it fulfilled, as the NKVD, in later years. In 1922 the Commissariat of the Interior had under its jurisdiction 56 concentration camps with an aggregate capacity of 24,750 prisoners. In 1923 most of the existing prisons were transferred to its jurisdiction. Later on the Administration of Places of Detention was transferred to the Commissariat of Justice and finally, in 1934, to the NKVD.

5. *Gazeta rabochevo i krestyanskovo pravitel'stva* (Government Monitor) (January, 1918), No. 16.

6. M. Isayev, *Osnovy penitentsiarnoi politiki* (Bases of Penal Policy) (Moscow, 1927), p. 101.

7. Despite the official terminology, the term "prison" of course remained in common use.

VIII

"The Northern Camps of Special Designation"

The nuclei of the future Russian labor camp network were the Northern Camps of Special Designation (SLON), located in the northernmost region of Russia, on the White Sea islands and in the adjacent regions on the mainland. When they were created, in the early 'twenties, there was no intention of building them up into economic establishments; they merely represented an outgrowth of the Civil War. While other concentration camps, however, were gradually being closed down, the Northern Camps not only survived but developed into an important new institution. Of the component units of the Northern Camps, one was located in Pertominsk, another in Archangel, a third in Kholmogory, and a fourth in Kem—all of them on the mainland. But the core of the Northern Camps was the camps of the Solovetski Islands, called Solovki for short.

THE SOLOVKI

The Solovetski archipelago consists of numerous small islands situated about 250 miles from Archangel and about 40 miles from Kem. The islands are covered with forests interspersed with a great number of lakes. An arm of the Gulf Stream which touches the archipelago mitigates the severe climate, although not sufficiently to make cultivation of grain possible. In the fifteenth century the first monks appeared—Savvati, German, and Zosima—who founded a cloister on the central island, Solovetski, that developed into the Solovetski Monastery and soon became a center of colonization of the Karelo-Murmansk region. All this territory belonged to Great

iron-barred windows. A wire partition running the whole length of the car left an aisle along the wall that had the windows. In the aisle guards were posted who watched the prisoners through the partition, while the prisoners were put into compartments arranged between the partition and the blind wall. The trip from Moscow took us three days and three nights, during which time the prisoners received nothing but boiled water and bread. (Later the transports were routed from Leningrad by the Murmansk Railroad to the transit center at Kem, and from there by boat to the camp.)

In Archangel we entered a new world, the realm of the "Northern Camps." The transport was taken over by a young man in a uniform overcoat who did not resemble the usual type of Cheka agent. It turned out that he himself was a prisoner and acting commandant on duty in the Archangel Camp. While the other prisoners were left in Archangel, the "politicals"—Socialists and Anarchists—were to proceed to Pertominsk; the commander of the convoy escorting this group was an officer who had somehow clashed with the law and as punishment had been assigned to convoy duty in the Northern Camps. All the members of the camp administration were of this brand, except for a few top-flight officials, and even these were rumored to have received their appointments as a punishment. Such rumors circulated even about the chief of USLON (Administration of the Northern Camps of Special Designation), Nogtev, and his deputy Eikhmans. The administration was recruited from among the prisoners, with preference being given to former GPU agents, especially in appointments to posts which required the carrying of arms.

On our way from Archangel to Pertominsk the feeling of isolation permeated us with mounting sharpness. Our group of 10 to 12 people had to walk the first three or four miles on the frozen Northern Dvina River and then over a road covered with deep snow. It was impossible to walk except along the trail, closely following the sledges in which rode the convoy commander and on which were piled our belongings (the peasant woman with her baby was allowed to perch on one of them). On both sides of the trail the snow lay knee deep. We had to walk for several days. In a day we covered a distance of about 15 miles, resting every two or three hours, thus giving our companion a chance to feed her child. Nights we spent in seashore villages. It was, I think, on the second day that we saw on a crossroad a file of sledges and

ported because her brother was Minister of the Imperial Household of the last tsar. A certain Dekhterov was charged with having inquired about the price of a boat ticket to Vera Cruz. Another prisoner, Guriev, was guilty of having been the owner of a tailor shop; a former Moscow dentist, Malivanov, had worked for the American Relief Administration during the famine of 1922–23 and had to atone for this crime.

An important category of prisoners in the Solovetski camp consisted of Greek-Orthodox clergymen. In the middle of the 'twenties—their number reached about 400. Prominent among them were Bishop Illarion (Troitski), who was closely associated with the late Patriarch Tikhon; Bishop Masuil (Lemeshevski), who managed the Leningrad bishopric after the execution of Metropolitan Benjamin; Bishop Peter of Tambov, who died in 1924 in the penal section on Sekirny mountain; the vicar of Saratov (Sokolov); Bishop Serafim of Kolpino; the Father Superior of the Kazan Monastery, Pitirim (Krylov). The confinement of Russian priests at Solovki was an elaborate blasphemy. Detention in a monastery which from time immemorial had attracted numerous pilgrims and had now been converted into a concentration camp must have been felt by the priests as a special insult. The administration, far from sparing their feelings, compelled them to witness the profanation of former churches. Along with other prisoners, the priests were housed in the Troitsky and Preobrazhensky cathedrals. They were subjected to studied humiliation. In the middle 'twenties the commandant of the Kremlin division ordered forced hair cuttings for them.[3] During certain periods, however, the administration tolerated the holding of religious services. The priests would gather on holidays and say prayers. But this was permitted only in off-work hours, although work was done all day long, including Sundays and holidays.

Three groups of prisoners constituted the main population of the camp at that time: (1) common criminals of the type considered incorrigible; (2) "counterrevolutionists," commonly known as "K-R's"; and (3) "politicals." Today this classification is a matter of history, but to the prison inmates of the first decade of the Soviet regime it was a significant and most important classification.

3. A. Klinger, "Solovetskaya katorga" in *Arkhiv Russkoi Revolyutsii*, XIX (1928), 196–197, 220; Anzerova, *Aus dem Lande der Stummen*, p. 160.

The differentiation between counterrevolutionists and politicals had been inherited from the prerevolutionary struggle and from 1917. Adherents and leaders of former rightist parties, supporters of the prerevolutionary regime, the moderate-liberal party of the Constitutional Democrats, commanders of the White armies, and other similar groups were in the sizable category of counterrevolutionists. On the other hand, Social Democrats, all factions of Populists, Social Revolutionaries, Left Social Revolutionaries, and Anarchists were designated as "anti-Soviet" elements and their members in the labor camps were referred to as politicals.

In this first decade the last-named group occupied a privileged position in the prisons, by comparison with the counterrevolutionists and criminals. Their privileges were a vestige of the interparty relationship as it had taken shape in the decades before the Revolution. The leftist parties (Populists, Social Democrats, and Anarchists) had all been persecuted by the old regime and had shared with the Bolsheviks all the hardships and privations of prison and exile. The overthrow of the imperial regime was largely a feat of the political left, in which the Bolsheviks were still a minority. Now, a mere five or six years after 1917, it was as yet impossible to break the ties with the past and condemn members of the leftist parties to the same treatment that was accorded to the supporters of the imperial regime. Only gradually did the old sentiment die out. Moreover, in popular parlance these leftist parties had never been referred to as K-R's, despite the strenuous press campaign that accused them of aiding counterrevolution. In all the prisons and concentration camps the parties of the left were still better off than all the other prisoners.

In the Northern Camps the administration recognized the right of the politicals to self-organization and negotiated with them through their elected representatives. Moreover, the administration accepted their refusal to perform forced labor, and placed at their disposal a special kitchen to which were supplied all food rations allotted to political prisoners; by this device they improved their diet as compared with that of the criminals, whose rations shrank considerably as they passed through the hands of many administration agents.[4]

4. Subsequently, Moscow began to tire of the liberal tradition in Russian jails which accorded a privileged status to political convicts. The GPU resolved to extend to political prisoners the general treatment applied to common criminals, and started a campaign against their privileges. In 1923–26 the GPU proceeded systematically against Socialist and Anarchist convicts, and against their endeavors to safeguard, at the price of great sacrifices, the "rights" which they had won in arduous struggle. Later, after my escape, the attitude toward the different groups in the prisons and camps underwent a radical change. All privileges of the political prisoners were abolished, and after the end of the 'twenties the politicals were even officially treated as inferior to the common criminals.

POLITICAL PRISONERS AT SOLOVKI

I was one of a group of 150 political prisoners brought to Solovki from Pertominsk on July 1, 1923. We were assigned to the Savvatievski hermitage, about eight miles from the kremlin. There was not a soul around, only here and there an ancient building. The walk would not have been difficult had it not been for the mosquitoes which swarmed in the night air. They entered our mouths and ears and bit ferociously at every unprotected spot. We beat them off as best we could and protected our heads with kerchiefs or paper. After a while fatigue began to overwhelm us.

Finally, we came in sight of a group of buildings fenced in by barbed wire. At several points we saw watchtowers provided with bells. As we approached, the armed sentries on the towers rang the bells to summon the guards and the camp commandant. Once more we went through the routine of being turned over by the convoy to the prison guards. Then, at long last, we were left to ourselves. After our war against the mosquitoes, our three-hour walk from the kremlin, and the sleepless night we had spent on the boat, we did not feel like inspecting our new home. We dispersed to our cells and, without undressing, dropped to sleep wherever we could find places—on benches, cots, or on the bare floor. One thing was immediately apparent: the building was too small to accommodate 150 persons.

The administration took no heed of this overcrowding and continued to bring in new groups from the mainland. We could not possibly protest the admittance of co-prisoners who had been assembled in the courtyard behind the barbed wire, but the overcrowding got on our nerves.

The administration was not in the least interested in establishing a peaceful atmosphere; on the contrary, Nogtev tried to provoke the political prisoners. For weeks he would withhold letters from relatives who were unable to learn the place to which the

IX

The Great Upheaval (1928-1934)

Everything changed, once the Soviet Government embarked on the First Five-Year Plan and proceeded to fulfill its program of complete collectivization of agriculture within a few years. The years between 1928 and 1934 marked an impressive upheaval in internal politics and economy—one of the greatest in Russian history and probably one of the greatest in the history of mankind. The living conditions of the people were more deeply affected than they had been during the initial years of the Soviet Revolution; no sector of human endeavor remained untouched. It was during those years that an entirely unexpected way was found out of the impasse reached in the penal system and the prisons and concentration camps at the end of the first Soviet decade. And it was in this period that the system of corrective labor camps was established and developed.

Stalin termed these years "the Great Turning Point." The objective was rapid development of the Russian economy as a highly centralized state enterprise and without foreign investments, which had played such an important role in the prerevolutionary growth of Russia's industry. Realization of this objective was possible only if the general standard of living of workers as well as peasants was systematically held at a low level, so that the surplus of national income would constitute a great fund in the hands of the government. Low wages and substantial deliveries of agricultural produce were the prerequisites of a successful Five-Year Plan. In order to achieve these goals all the police power of the state had to be exerted, and extreme coercion resorted to. Under these con-

THE TURNING POINT

During the first 12 years of the Soviet regime the individual citizen was still allowed considerable liberty insofar as his economic activity was concerned. A worker, in spite of the fact that he was employed in the service of the state, was nevertheless free to accept or reject a job, change from one profession to another, and even not work for a certain time if he so desired and could afford to do so. He was free to quit his position and to travel over the country, and he needed no permission to accept employment elsewhere. Workers often abandoned industrial work and returned to their peasant families. According to the Labor Code, "The transfer of a hired person from one enterprise to another or his shipment from one locality to another, even when the enterprise or institution moves, can take place only with the consent of the worker or employee concerned."

The so-called intelligentsia was no less free in the choice of professions. Men with technical or engineering backgrounds for one reason or another often preferred to work in other professions. Physicians often derived their main income from private consultation. In the nonpolitical fields the intellectuals were relatively free.

Much economic freedom was left to the peasantry, too. The land was privately owned by peasant families and, except that he was prohibited from selling the land, each farmer was free to conduct his affairs as he pleased. He had the right to divide his land among his sons, to sow whatever crops he chose, and to sell the produce on the free market.

The only important institution in which compulsion prevailed was the army. Conscription had been retained from prerevolutionary times, but in Russia, as in most European countries, compulsory military service was considered a democratic achievement, and no objections were raised to it in principle. In contrast to the rest of the population, the army was the only organism that could be transferred rapidly from

In December, 1930, a decree prescribed sharp measures against "deserters" and "jumpers," [1] ordering the training of 1,300,000 new workers in the shortest possible time. It also contained a vast, utopian scheme of immediate mobilization of all labor. In March, 1931, the Labor Department again ordered a census of potential labor reserves, reiterated its instructions concerning the wider employment of women and against unauthorized quitting of employment, and recommended the introduction of a system of "voluntary bondage" —*samozakrepleniye*.

So-called "specialists" were forbidden to advertise for employment in the press. Students of universities and technical schools were assigned to their future positions a year before graduation and were compelled to serve for five years in the job assigned to them by the government agency. Government agencies were also empowered to transfer trained workers and specialists from one job to another wherever, in the opinion of the authorities, the workers in question were not being used in their optimum fields.

By a series of decrees the worker's freedom to leave his job was being systematically restricted, and a press campaign was initiated which advised workers to enter into long-term contracts. Since these measures did not prove fully successful, the government, in December, 1932, proceeded to introduce obligatory passports: now no one could move about in Russia without one. In every job, the management had to mark the dates of service in the passport. Thus increasing control over the workers was becoming possible. Another decree issued in 1932 ordered that workers dismissed for repeated failure to report for work were to be evicted from their apartments. The effect was considerable; an apartment was and is the main treasure of a worker's family. The Soviet press of the time was full of strange notices about engineers and technicians who had "deserted" their jobs; thus all other agencies were

1. "Jumpers" are workers and employees accused of frequently changing jobs in search of better conditions.

having been arrested was that more labor was required for the purpose of pushing the Five-Year Plan."

"In Penuga, where the weaker were sent, conditions were very bad," another one revealed. "They were housed in a locomotive works, in which there were three tiers of bunks, all full up, and men died there every day. . . . The peasants who were mobilized were also living under very bad conditions, and were very little better off than the prisoners."

The camp prisoners, the investigators add, "included a proportion of men who, by reason of their antecedents or lack of stamina, were wholly unsuited for this type of labour. How many such men there may have been in 1930 we cannot say, but for them the conditions were inhuman and oppressive, though there is no evidence of organized brutality." [8]

RIGHTIST AND LEFTIST DEVIATIONS

On the political side, this experiment in accelerated industrialization, collectivization, and the introduction of a widespread system of forced labor was pressed as an issue against the Communist "rightist faction" which was opposed to the radical agrarian reforms and in general to the terrible strain on the people which the program entailed. The rightist opposition was the only Communist group that could have veered Russian policy to the path of gradual evolution of the Soviet regime toward democracy; this was precisely the reason why it was liquidated in the early 'thirties. Many former leaders were out of place now. They were now accused of too much liberalism in their teachings and writings, of reflecting a probourgeois state of mind. Rykov, the Premier, had to resign and make way for Vyacheslav Molotov; Mikhail Tomski, the trade-union leader, was dismissed and replaced by Nikolai Shvernik, the present President of the Soviet Union. And Nikolai Bukharin, ideologist and leader of the Comintern,

8. Pim and Bateson, *Report on Russian Timber Camps* (London, 1931), pp. 80, 93, 132.

was relieved of all important jobs. The opposition of these men to the new trends was vigorous but of no avail, and it was actually for this opposition that they were later brought to trial and convicted. One of the offenses of the rightist faction was proclaimed to be their concern for "class enemies," kulaks, and others; as far as internal policies are concerned, these men were later accused of leniency toward enemies of Communism. Under the old Penal Code of 1924, for which they were made responsible, every prisoner, whether kulak, "wrecker," capitalist, Menshevik, or any other kind of "class enemy," was entitled to improving treatment in prison as the years of his sentence went by (this is the so-called "progressive treatment of prisoners"). The very hope of the "liberals" of converting a "class enemy" into a useful member of Soviet society was now declared to be anti-Communist.

This was not a purely academic discussion. As has so often been the case in Communist disputes, seemingly theoretical theses had a tremendous practical significance. Millions of "class enemies" were being exiled at the time, and their fate—wholesale starvation and probably death—was the issue. If a "class enemy" was able to develop into a loyal Soviet citizen, the cruel treatment of the deported masses of humanity was a crime. If, on the other hand, there was no hope for them, if they would forever remain carriers of counterrevolution, no pity was permissible, and they must be considered outcasts of society. At best they could be used for a short while as labor.

Shirvindt, one of the authors of the Penal Code of 1924, was "unmasked" and accused of rightist deviations. He tried publicly to oppose the trend toward what he called "rolling back to the old prisons." He aimed his arrows at Nikolai Krylenko, Commissar of Justice, who was adhering strictly to Stalin's party line and who now demanded the introduction of greater severity in the prisons. Shortly afterward it was stated that the Penal Code of 1924 "rolled down the tracks of bourgeois-liberal penal theory. . . . It unquestioningly took over the so-called progressive system from bourgeois penology and on its basis frequently equalized all those deprived of lib-

And if some day the enemy's ring
Cruelly tightens around us,
We shall rise like an army of daring men
And follow Yagoda to battle! [8]

An official author figured out what kind of literary material is being printed in the press of the labor camps. He found that 48.3 per cent of the individual items deal with work and the economic tasks of the camps, 5 per cent with exposing "class enemies" in the camp, and 6.2 per cent with Soviet policy, domestic and foreign.[9]

The peak of hypocrisy is reached in the fulfillment of the famous slogan of "self-guarding" of the inmates. This slogan, invented in the early 'twenties and sounding most democratic, now means in practice that former GPU-NKVD men sentenced for the basest of crimes have been entrusted with watching over their fellow prisoners. Many of these criminals are even considered worthy of carrying arms, of being relieved of excruciating physical labor, and of playing the role of intermediaries between the camp administration and the mass of inmates. They occupy the highest, and often highly privileged, positions in the rigid hierarchy of the forced labor institution.

Next to these GPU criminals come the common criminals. It is emphasized, reiterated, and impressed upon everyone in the camps that the common prisoners are no enemies of Communism, while the rest of the camp population have been incorrigible and unworthy of concessions. This is another piece of official hypocrisy. Theft—so the old theory runs—is the consequence of poverty and unemployment. Thieves are therefore victims rather than enemies of society. It is intentionally overlooked that among the criminals a great majority are not petty thieves but capital offenders, embezzlers, and bribe-taking Soviet officials.

Only grave offenders have been kept in the corrective labor camps, since a sentence of less than three years is served in a

8. Maxim Gorky, ed., *Bolshevtsy* (Moscow, 1936), p. 7.
9. *Ot Tyurem*, p. 260.

new decree ordered the GPU to "turn over all investigated cases to the organs of justice," meaning the regular courts, and that the harsh Judiciary Collegium of the GPU—the caricature of a court—was abolished. (Only in its last paragraph did the decree mention a mysterious new "Special Council" with far-reaching powers.) The official press hailed the transition from GPU to NKVD as a step toward greater guarantees for the individual. "The Soviet State," *Izvestia* commented, "is changing its methods of struggle. . . . The role of the courts is growing more important." *Pravda* added that "now that the enemies are smashed and the dictatorship is firm," the government is going to operate a "unified system of Soviet justice." Henry Yagoda was appointed People's Commissar for Internal Affairs. Then, by a decree of October 27, 1934, all Soviet "places of detention," including those under the Commissariat of Justice, were transferred to the NKVD.

A few months later the Special Council of the NKVD was organized. While its prerogatives were vast—it was authorized to impose sentences of up to five years in corrective labor camps, deportation, and expulsion from the Soviet Union—a guarantee was provided against unlawful practices by the Special Council: the Prosecutor of the Soviet Union (a position created in 1933 to exercise "supervision over the legality and correctness of the activities of the OGPU," among other purposes) was made a member of the Council, and no action could be carried out against his veto. There was thus created an agency whose striking role in subsequent years could not have been foreseen at the time. At its helm were two men, Henry Yagoda, the People's Commissar, and Andrei Vyshinski, the Prosecutor.[1] Collaboration and then life-and-death struggle between these two men belongs to the dramatic history of the following years.

As far as the peasants were concerned, the government made an important concession in permitting members of the

1. In 1934 Vyshinski was still Deputy Prosecutor; actually, however, he was already in charge of the department.

portees from Polish provinces somewhat higher, at 1,470,000, of whom the special migrants accounted for 990,000, prisoners in labor camps for 250,000, and Polish prisoners of war for 230,000.[2]

Little did the Soviet authorities suspect, while the deportations were under way, that a year later an alliance with the Polish Government of General Sikorski would become imperative and that the hundreds of thousands of Polish prisoners would have not only to be set free but to be permitted eventually to leave Soviet soil; they certainly did not anticipate that this multitude of men and women would live to carry abroad eloquent and convincing tales of life in Soviet exile.

The amnesty for the Poles was signed on July 30, 1941, after the deportees had spent nearly a year in the various camps and settlements. The number of dead after two years has been estimated at 270,000 out of the total of 1,080,000.[3] Despite the amnesty considerable numbers were detained in the camps. Two years later, when diplomatic relations between the Soviet and Polish Governments were severed, new Poles began to pour into the prisons. Eventually, soldiers of the resistance movement, or "Home Army," and members of the underground arrived; as a rule they were sent to the eastern camps. In July, 1946, a report in the London *Polish Daily* gave detailed figures on 110,000 Poles in a number of Russian labor camps in 1946.[4]

The miracle of amnesty was for the Poles only, not for the other nationalities deported in the same year. From the three little Baltic republics, with an aggregate population of 5 million, about 200,000 Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians were deported. Essentially they belonged to the

2. Mora and Zwierniak, *La Justice soviétique*, pp. 86–87.

3. Dangerfield, *op. cit.*, p. 87. Other Polish estimates indicate a mortality rate of over 40 per cent for the same period.

4. Vorkuta, 11,000; Severonikel, 4,000; northern railroad camps, 3,200; Bezymenlag, 7,000 (including Lithuanians and others); southern camps, 4,900; Temnikov camps, 5,000 women; Tobolsk, 16,000; northern Ural camps, 1,500; Norilsk, 2,600; Novaya Zemlya, 1,000; southern Siberian camps, 8,000. In addition, 50,000 were reported living in five Far Eastern camps. *Polish Daily*, (London) July 30, 1946.

. . . Care must be taken that the operations are carried out without disturbance and panic, so as not to permit any demonstrations and other trouble not only on the part of those deported but also on the part of a certain section of the population hostile to the Soviet administration.

. . . Operations shall be begun at daybreak. Upon entering the house of the person to be deported, the senior member of the operative group shall assemble the entire family in one room, taking all necessary precautionary measures against any possible trouble.

. . . After completion of the search the deportees shall be notified that by a government decision they will be deported to other regions of the Union. The deportees shall be permitted to take with them household necessities not exceeding 100 kilograms in weight. . . .

If inhabitants of the village begin to gather around the deportee's house while operations are in progress, they shall be called upon to disperse to their own homes and crowds shall not be permitted to form.

. . . The delivery of the deportees from the village to the meeting place at the railway station must be effected in daylight; care, moreover, should be taken that the assembling of every family shall not last more than two hours. In all cases throughout the operations firm and decisive action shall be taken, without the slightest excitement, noise and panic. . . .

In view of the fact that a large number of deportees must be arrested and distributed in special camps and that their families must proceed to special settlements in distant regions, it is essential that the operation of removal of both the members of the deportee's family and its head should be carried out simultaneously, without notifying them of the separation confronting them. . . .

The convoy of the entire family to the station shall, however, be effected in one vehicle and only at the station of departure shall the head of the family be placed separately from his family in a car specially intended for heads of families. During the assembling of the family in the home of the deportee, the head of the family shall be warned that personal male effects must be packed in a separate suitcase, as a sanitary inspection of the deported men will be made separately from the women and children.

I have been a member of the Communist Youth League since 1934; from 1941 on, I served as liaison officer in the Red Army. My older brother is a member of the party, the head of a workshop in a big plant; my other brother was also a party member and a major in the Red Army: he was killed during the "liberation" of Poland in 1939. My father was secretary of the party committee in a remote district until his death in 1938. All our family had always been loyal to the Soviet regime, consciously and out of profound conviction. I did not at all share the defeatist mood, when in the first months of the war the majority of our soldiers and a part of the officers desired to surrender to the Germans. I did not believe in the German idea of "liberation."

After capturing three heavy German tanks I was wounded in the battle of Orel. I was awarded the Order of the Red Banner "for valor and bravery in action." In October, 1941, our entire unit was surrounded and captured after a desperate fight. A bomb tore off three of my fingers. How it happened that I, an officer, a candidate for party membership, failed to shoot myself as instructed, and how I let myself be taken prisoner, I cannot explain. Perhaps the acute pain in my hand held me back, or else perhaps the awareness of having fought to the last; or maybe the utter exhaustion after 11 days of uninterrupted fighting had rendered me completely apathetic and indifferent to my future. Besides there were 2,000 other soldiers and officers sharing my fate. I cannot describe my horror when a few days later I became fully aware of being a prisoner, nor the abhorrence of the German treatment of the prisoners, whom they were shooting for disobedience, starving to death, killing the sick and exhausted who were unable to march on. My experiences and emotions of those days defy the boldest imagination.

I was sent to work near Katowice in Silesia, where I was required to toil under hard conditions despite my crippled hand. I shall not describe the working conditions there. That was one of the gloomiest aspects of German captivity, I believe. Within four months I had become a blood-spitting invalid with swollen legs. In May, 1944, in view of my inability to perform hard labor, I was transferred to the Hannover region to work in a plant producing spare parts. At the same time I was again approached with an offer to join the Vlasov army, but I preferred to die an honest man in the eyes of my fatherland.