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THE  
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# THE PROFITS OF SLAVERY

BALTIC FORCED LABORERS AND DEPORTEES UNDER STALIN  
AND KHRUSHCHEV

by

ADOLFS ŠILDE

L.



LATVIAN NATIONAL FOUNDATION IN SCANDINAVIA

Stockholm 1958

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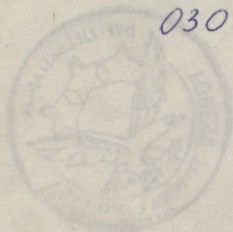
*Map prepared by Elmars Ozols*

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# THE PROFITS OF SLAVERY





## P R E F A C E

*The author has interviewed some 2000 German and Austrian war prisoners and civilians who were released from the Soviet Union in the period from October 1955 to the end of 1957. They came from Soviet forced labor camps, prisons, and deportation areas where they had shared the lot of Latvian and other Baltic political prisoners and deportees.*

*Eye-witness testimony has provided extensive and reasonably accurate factual material on the deportation areas containing Balts, the regime in forced labor camps and prisons, and the conditions under which the victims of Soviet terrorism lived until 1953 and later, in other words, under and after Stalin. In addition, it was possible to obtain evidence on the slave laborers' risings against and their resistance to the Soviet rule.*

*Literature on Soviet forced labor, genocide and mass deportations in general is already fairly extensive. This book, therefore, treats of these Soviet methods primarily as they affect the Baltic peoples — the Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians. Hitherto, little reliable testimony has been available concerning them, and their sufferings have therefore received no publicity. Actually, material now available indicates that the Baltic nations were particularly hard hit by Soviet deportations. Since 1940, they have been subject to Soviet aggression, colonization, oppression and systematic decimation.*

*Previous publications on the deportations of Balts mostly referred to the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States in 1940/41. A tragic experience for the Baltic people were the mass deportations of June 13 and 14, 1941. Many Balts who since 1945 have sought and obtained asylum in the West, witnessed this action. However, their testimony is incomplete, as it does not go beyond description of the arrest and abduction of the bolsheviks' victims. They cannot tell what happened to the deportees afterwards, since they did not witness it, while Moscow*

has kept silent on this point. Today, through the testimony of the aforementioned prisoners, ample evidence has been obtained on the fate of the Baltic deportees in the icy Arctic deserts, Siberia, the Far East, Central Asia, in undeveloped and unhealthy areas. This evidence makes it possible to appraise the deportations from a new angle.

It would be an entirely unwarranted service to Soviet tyranny, if we failed to speak of the sufferings and humiliations to which Moscow has subjected the Baltic peoples. The Kremlin chose these members of the Western family of nations as the first victims of its aggression and terrorism. An additional reason for not keeping silent is the fact that many Baltic deportees have asked that their plight be made known to the free world.

The sections of this book, which deal with the Soviet forced labor camps are not exhaustive. Mention has been made only of camps in which the presence of Balts has been corroborated by evidence.

The facts compiled in this book first appeared in its Latvian version entitled *Pa deportēto pēdam* (Retracing the Road of the Deportees), which appeared in New York in 1956. Subsequently, the author has obtained additional material which made it possible to supplement the present survey. On the other hand, some of the facts which were used for general orientation have been omitted in the English version, restricting commentaries to a minimum. Similarly, poetry written by Baltic deportees, found in the Latvian edition, has been left out. The verses voiced the martyrs' longing for their country, faith in the future and opposition to the hated Soviet regime.

The English version pays particular attention to the situation of the deportees in 1952—1956, a field in which ample material has been obtained.

Although the author knows the full names of many of the persons mentioned in this book, he has refrained for obvious reasons from mentioning them. Similarly, persons who have submitted testimonies have asked that their names be withheld.

The author wishes to express his warm thanks to Dr. Armins Rusis, for providing the English texts of the Soviet pertinent laws, obtained from the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; to cartographer





# CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	13

## PART I

### I EUROPEAN RUSSIA AND THE ARCTIC REGION

Slave Labor in the Arctic, Tundra and Swamp Regions of Russia 25. - Vorkuta 26. - Inta and Abez 44. - Ust-Ukhta 53. - Vozhael 56. - Ust-Vym 58. - Syktyvkar 59. - Pechora 60. - Kotlas 61. - Archangel 62. - Molotovsk 64. - Povenets and Medvezhegorsk 65. - Murmansk 66. - Novaya Zemlya 66. - Chuvashia 67. - Potma 68. - Marfino and Kuchino 75.

### II THE URALS

The Urals 79. - Solikamsk and Perm Region 83. - Kirov 86.

### III SIBERIA

Latvians in the Forced Labor Camps and Deportation Areas of Siberia 89. - Norilsk 90. - Igarka 95. - Dudinka 95. - Krasnoyarsk Region 95. - Mariinsk 107. - Kemerovo Region 111. - Tomsk Region 111. - Omsk Region 113. - Novosibirsk Region 119. - Altai Region 120. - Tayshet and Bratsk 120. - Irkutsk Region 129. - Khantimansk Region 131. - Yakutsk Region 132. -

### IV THE FAR EAST REGION

The Magadan-Kolyma Punitive Area 137. - Kamchatka and the Kurile Islands 145. - Sakhalin 146. - Khabarovsk Region 147. - Amur Region 148. -

### V CENTRAL ASIA

Kazakhstan - A Continent of Virgin Soil 153. - Karaganda and Spask 159. - Dzhezkazgan 166. - Kingir 168. - Balkhash 170. - Ekibastus 170. - Pavlodar 171. - Alma Ata 171. - Molotovobad 171.

## PART II

### VI WAGES AND LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE CAMPS

Nutrition and wages 175. - Food rations 175. - Wages 178. - Clothing 183. - Health conditions and mortality 184. - Children of the politically persecuted 193. - Moods 194. - Amnesty — but for whom? 199.

## PART III

### UPRISINGS

- VII "FREEDOM OR DEATH" 211.
- VIII STRIKE AND REVOLT IN NORILSK 217.
- IX DEATH HARVEST IN VORKUTA 230.
- X KINGIR PRISONERS FIGHT AGAINST TANKS 244.

## PART IV

### XI PRISONS

Inquisition and Graves of Living Persons 261.

XII EPILOGUE 277.

XIII APPENDIX 291.

XIV NOTES 295.

XV INDEX 297.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Vyshka — watchtower in a Soviet forced labor camp . . . . .	37
Deported Baltic women in Inta camp . . . . .	48
Graves of the martyrs . . . . .	55
Deported Latvians in the Archangel punitive area . . . . .	63
The taiga . . . . .	84
Latvian farmers in the Krasnoyarsk region . . . . .	97
Latvian women with children in Siberia . . . . .	115
A group of Baltic political prisoners in Tayshet . . . . .	121
A group of Latvian women in Siberia . . . . .	133
Dugout in the Kolyma region . . . . .	139
Recruiting of the Baltic youth for work in Kazakhstan . . . . .	155
A Lithuanian priest holding a secret Christmas service in a Central Asian punitive camp . . . . .	157
A group of Balts celebrating Christmas in a Kazakhstan camp . . . . .	159
A group of Baltic political prisoners in Dzhezkazgan . . . . .	167
A group of Balts in a Central Asian camp . . . . .	172
A Soviet internal loan bond . . . . .	179
A fragment of a report . . . . .	233
Single-man cells in the Cheka Prison of Riga . . . . .	263
A worker from Liepaja who was arrested by the Soviets as a "counterrevolutionary" . . . . .	267

## MAP

Documented map of forced labor camps for Baltic deportees in U.S.S.R.

## INTRODUCTION

The nations of the West have viewed bolshevism under different aspects. They have mainly studied it as an economic doctrine, a way of life and government, a world revolutionary and messianic idea, a particular breed of imperialism and modern colonialism, a totalitarian and atheistic ideology. The Baltic nations, too, have formed their own views of bolshevism.

Historical processes in northeastern Europe and grim realities have compelled the Balts to appraise bolshevism empirically, thus greatly simplifying its concept. Soviet aggression and first-hand experience of Soviet rule have led the Balts to view bolshevism as synonymous with terrorism, destruction and systematic mass extermination. They have seen that the actions organized by the communist state include essential elements of genocide as a legally defined crime. It should therefore surprise nobody that the Balts single out from bolshevism, as a social-political factor, the destructive element, and they consider the communist organization and actions rather than the communist teachings and world outlook to be the characteristic feature of bolshevism. In other words, doctrine and world philosophy play a secondary role in the Soviet state, while the core of bolshevism is to be sought in the Soviet dictatorship, one-party system, omnipotence of the central administration, and totalitarianism as such. Applied terrorism is only a logical consequence of a government not bound by law.

The Baltic nations experienced bolshevik invasion three times: in 1919, 1940 and 1944/45. While in 1919 the rule of terror could be explained as an emotional outcrop of the Russian October Revolution, which was released by the idea of world revolution and did not avoid aggressive actions and terrorism as a means of political struggle,<sup>1)</sup> the repeated Soviet invasion of the Baltic countries and the rule of terror established there convincingly proved to the Balts that bolshevism and terrorism are inseparable.

The repeated experience of the Balts has shown that the Soviet system can survive only in a police state and that the Soviet Union has consistently endeavored to organize terrorism, to turn into a system, making it a permanent institution, a method of government, or, as Thierry Maulnier<sup>2)</sup> has put it, it has developed terrorism into a routine of the governmental organs. And what has been realized in the Soviet Union, is being applied in exactly the same way in countries with old traditions of western culture and civilization as soon as they come under Moscow's domination. The threefold experience which the Balts acquired through the imposed Soviet regime has disclosed that nothing has changed in the Soviet methods in the course of several decades. This permits one to state without bias that terrorism must be considered as a component part of the bolshevik regime, an essential, indispensable part.<sup>3)</sup> And therefore whoever tries to conceive bolshevism in an abstract manner, trying to see in it the age-old human longing for a better social order and social justice, will inevitably commit a grave error.

As stated above, several million Balts saw what bolshevism was as early as 1919.<sup>4)</sup> The idea of bolshevism and the Soviet system were then unfamiliar to the Balts and no resistance movement of consequence could develop within a short time. But already this period of five months of bolshevik rule in Latvia claimed many victims. The greatest toll was exacted from Latvian civilian inhabitants.<sup>5)</sup>

The Soviet rule in Latvia in 1919 took a toll of more than 5000 lives, and during the early stages of this bolshevik invasion 400 Latvian and Estonian intellectuals were taken to Siberia as prisoners.<sup>6)</sup> It should also be mentioned that for the first time the Latvians made the acquaintance of such attributes of bolshevism as people's commissars, people's tribunals, "riflewomen" (armed women for the execution of political adversaries) and similar institutions.

The Balts faced the Soviet regime for the second time in June, 1940, when despite solemn international treaties and numerous declarations of friendship, the Soviet Union undertook the military occupation (*occupatio bellica*) of the Baltic countries. This international crime was followed by a cynical terrorism which once more was turned against the civilian inhabitants. At that time, following

indications from their governments, the Baltic people refrained from opposing the Soviet occupants. This, however, did not restrain the Soviet authorities from the use of terrorism. As early as the beginning of July there was a large number of individual arrests, the Cheka and the secret Soviet tribunals were reintroduced, and on June 14, 1941, Moscow carried out mass deportations of Baltic inhabitants to remote regions of Russia. The total of deported Latvians in the years 1940 and 1941 amounts to 35 000 or 1.8% of the population of Latvia.<sup>7)</sup>

According to the Estonian Red Cross, during the same years Estonia lost about 60 000 people or 5% of its population.<sup>8)</sup> This means that one of every 20 Estonians, including children, was either arrested, deported or killed. The number of Lithuanians deported or murdered during the first Soviet occupation, 1940/41, totaled 34 260.<sup>9)</sup> As stated by the Baltic Council, available information shows that in the period 1940/53 Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania lost under Soviet occupation 600 000 persons or 10% of their combined populations.

While the Latvians had had a first-hand experience of other types of terrorism already in 1919, mass deportations, carried out with the purpose of exploiting the deportees as slave labor, was a new departure.

Although forced labor camps were set up in the Soviet Union as early as 1919, up to 1941 they had only affected Soviet territory.<sup>10)</sup> In 1941 this method of terrorism was moved westward. Up to July 10, 1934, the forced labor camps were supervised by the Ministry of Justice, but at the time when Baltic deportees were included in the contingents of work slaves, the camps were subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior, specifically to a board known as GULAG (Glavnoye upravleniye izpravitelno-trudovykh lagherei), central department for corrective labor camps, labor settlements and places of imprisonment. This meant, in practice, that whoever was interned in the forced labor camps was placed under the control of the political police of the MVD.

Information obtained by German welfare organizations in 1957 shows that GULAG has been replaced by a new agency, known as

GUITK (Glavnoye upravleniye izpravitelno-trudovykh kolony) which reportedly is not subordinated to the Soviet security authorities. However, as GULAG, the new agency has to supervise forced labor.

Considering that the bulk of the deported Balts consisted of farmers, intellectuals and the middle class, it was difficult to understand why they were placed in camps whose task according to the Soviet Criminal Code was "to accustom a-social elements to work." This procedure was incomprehensible only if one disregarded the fact that terrorism is inherent in the Soviet system and is indispensable to procure labor needed for the realization of the Soviet five-year plans. In the circumstances, it was irrelevant that the deportees were not idlers but active members of the community who had risen in the ranks through diligence and ability.

It is known that the Soviet regime has used both the terms "socially dangerous elements" and "anti-Soviet elements." The bolsheviks regarded these peoples as dangerous only because they had deprived them of their means of livelihood and their property by way of nationalization, and they did not rule out their natural reaction to such illegal acts. Already Russian peasants who had been deprived of their land had actively opposed farm collectivization. Knowing the Baltic farmers' attachment to their land and home, the bolsheviks expected a similar, possibly stronger, resistance in the Baltic countries.

Large landed estates and the class of absentee landlords had already been eliminated in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia during the first years of independence, through what was known as the agrarian reform. Hence, in Latvia and the neighboring countries, the Soviets could only liquidate medium-sized and small farm holdings. The bolsheviks designated every Latvian farmer as a *budzis* (the counterpart of a *kulak* in Russia), no matter whether he had used hired labor or had tilled his farm himself with his family. While in 1940/41 there was little progress in the Soviet land confiscation plans in the Baltic countries, the process was completed in 1949, following the re-occupation of the Baltic countries. It will be noted that neither in Poland nor in any other Soviet satellite country has the farm collectivization reached the same degree of thoroughness as in the three Baltic countries.

Practically all former land of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian farmers has been collectivized, and their farms have been replaced by kolkhozes and, since recently, by an ever increasing number of sovkhoses.

What other groups of people were deported? "Anti-Soviet elements," in addition to the farmers, also included parliamentarians, cabinet ministers, clergymen, judges, public attorneys, policemen, frontier guards, army officers, members of civic and patriotic organizations or societies with international connections, such as the PEN Club, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., the Boy Scouts, and others. Their fate was shared by their families.

Part of the "counterrevolutionary elements" were sentenced under Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code and interned in forced labor camps, while the rest were sent to deportation areas. The former were sentenced by Soviet tribunals, the latter by means of purely administrative procedure. In either case, the terms imposed ranged up to 25 years.

The Balts interned in forced labor camps with a severe punitive regime were thrown together with political deportees of other nationalities, and, up to 1950, with criminal convicts.

The Balts have not been segregated in separate camps. However, there are some camps in which Balts together with Ukrainians, <sup>11)</sup> make up the largest group of inmates. Since the combined population of the Baltic countries is about six million, in many individual camps of political prisoners — Tayshet, Inta, Kolyma, Norilsk and others — the Balts were relatively the largest group.

Beginning in 1955, the camp regime and internal structure have undergone considerable changes, and it is not possible to make comparisons on a large scale.

In addition to prisoners interned in the so-called regime camps — outwardly marked by barbed wire and watch-towers — there are the so-called "released," whose number has greatly increased since 1956. They continue to be attached to their previous mines or similar forced labor enterprises, but their lives are less difficult. They receive better remuneration and enjoy a few other advantages. This category is not, however, permitted to leave the specific punitive

area or, in some cases, an area of two miles radius or some other strictly limited territory. The "released" remain under the control of the MVD.

To secure labor, the industrial and other enterprises of the punitive areas hastened to persuade the political prisoners to sign "voluntarily" work contracts for three or more years, before Soviet President Voroshilov announced a general amnesty. Through this ingenious method their labor supply has been safeguarded even for the future.<sup>12</sup>)

In addition to this category of "released" who are bound to their former forced labor camp, there are other "released" persons who may move to a pre-selected Soviet deportation or exile area. This opportunity was used, after release from the so-called regime camps, by Baltic political prisoners whose families had been separated from them at the time of deportation and sent for forced labor to deportation areas, primarily to the regions of Krasnoyarsk, Omsk, Tomsk, Novosibirsk and Amur.

The regime of a deportation area differs from that of a forced labor camp insofar as it provides the deportees with some freedom of movement. Most victims of the mass deportations in 1949 — in other words, owners of collectivized rural or urban property, and other "anti-Soviet" elements — were sent to the deportation areas. On the other hand, Latvian and Estonian legionaries who had fought against the Red Army in defense of their national integrity were formally released from prisonership in 1946, only to be arrested as counterrevolutionaries a few weeks later and deported to forced labor camps.

In addition to the abovementioned categories of deported and interned Balts there are also prisoners. While there was no interrogation and confinement to prison in cases of mass deportations, an arrested person was sent to prison after a few months of interrogation. From Latvian and other Baltic prisons these persons were transferred to Soviet prisons designed specifically for political prisoners.

As an anachronism of the October Revolution, one may mention that prisoners designated as political offenders are exempt from work in the Soviet prisons. Considering the frightful lot and brutal ex-

plotation of millions of forced labor camp inmates, the exemption of prisoners from work sounds paradoxical.

There is no reason to regard inmates of the forced labor camps as anything but prisoners. They, too, have been sentenced to serve the various terms provided in the Soviet Criminal Code, but in their case the Soviet authorities have refrained from imposing the strict isolation provided by a prison regime.

A survey of the terms imposed on Balts confined both to forced labor camps and prisons shows that most sentences run for 10 to 25 years. Only a very few prisoners serve seven year terms. On the other hand, there are also persons who have received 25-year terms and an additional five years. In these cases the extra punishment is similar to the "loss of rights" as understood in the West, since it does not mean an extension of the sentence. Still, there are Baltic deportees who have been sentenced to 25 plus 25 plus 25 years, all sentences being imposed under Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code.

When sentence is pronounced under this section of the code, the selected victim is usually charged with several offenses. For instance, Latvian and Estonian soldiers who fought against the Red Army are accused under Section 58.4 and also under Section 58.11 (counter-revolutionary activity). Normally, those sentenced under Section 58.11 are not pardoned, and the general amnesty did not apply to them. Additional reprisals are provided in their case.

By a May 26, 1947 ukase of the Supreme Soviet, capital punishment was abolished in the Soviet Union. Although there is no reason to view this measure as one prompted by purely human considerations — since the Soviet Union uses other means which render its political opponents harmless — the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet reintroduced capital punishment on January 12, 1950, for high treason, espionage and sabotage. A ukase of May 6, 1953 increased the number of crimes punishable by death.

A characteristic feature of the Soviet judicial system is that it devolves upon Soviet interrogation authorities to prepare writs of indictment against assumed enemies who have not even had the opportunity to oppose the Soviet regime. Although in such cases the

fate of the arrested is settled in advance, the Cheka and Soviet public prosecution offices take great pains in preparing the indictment. A Latvian who was tried in Leningrad in 1948 has stated that the writ against him filled 400 typewritten pages. Only from the writ did he learn what the charges were and why he was sentenced to 25 years of hard labor in prison, combined with forced labor camp.

Punishments provided for in Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code also include lifetime exile from the Soviet Union. If this provision were applied, the accused and sentenced person would be happier than most Soviet citizens. However, this punishment has not been applied.

In addition to tribunals which summon the accused to appear in court, there are other tribunals which pass sentences *in absentia*.

Special three-men groups, called *osoboye soveshchaniye* (special deliberation), have been set up to try partisan activity and other serious counterrevolutionary crimes.

If during the first mass deportations of Balts only a few actively opposed the Soviet regime and everybody tried to avoid Soviet provocation, since 1945, when the Soviet occupation was again forcibly imposed in the three Baltic countries, the attitude and tactics of the oppressed citizens changed in all three countries, as large sections of the population began an active and fearless fight against the hated Soviet regime. A resistance movement sprang up spontaneously, and there was large-scale partisan fighting. Baltic partisans attacked Soviet ammunition trains and arsenals, passed death sentences on Soviet functionaries, and eliminated local executive committees. Unabated, this struggle went on until 1949, when it was dealt a decisive blow through the collectivization of farms. The farms had been the supply bases of partisans and, in the winter months, their hideouts. Still, on a reduced scale, partisan fighting has been reported in Latvia as late as 1957, and news of well-organized resistance groups has also been received concerning the other Baltic countries. In addition, there is a tenacious passive resistance which the Soviet power has not been able to break.

It is therefore natural that since 1945 new contingents have increased the number of Balts sent to the deportation areas. In addition

to the previously mentioned "socially dangerous elements," which in many cases are dangerous only in the Soviet imagination, the new deportees include actual active opponents of the Soviet occupation and bolshevism.

While it is true that the amnesty announced by Soviet President Voroshilov in September of 1955 applied to a part of the Baltic deportees, and at least invalids among them have been released, the Soviet power in the post-Stalin era has shown no mercy to its active adversaries; they serve full terms, even in cases where a term calls for 25 years or more.

Although punishments for opponents to the Soviet regime are provided for not only in the Soviet Criminal Code but also in a special code dealing with the "re-education of socially dangerous and a-social elements through work," on October 23, 1956, the Soviet Council of Ministers decided to replace the previous forced labor camps with a severe punitive regime of forced labor in special "colonies for the re-education of citizens through work." Only the future will tell whether this measure will bring any real changes as compared with the previous forced labor system.

The fact remains that the Soviet regime has been fighting "anti-Soviet elements," "socially dangerous elements" and "class enemies" ever since the October Revolution, but has been unable to eliminate these "undesirable elements" even in the second generation. This alone should suffice to expose *the ideological bankruptcy of the Soviet system*. The Soviet political, economic and legal system — if one can speak at all of a Soviet legal system — rests in legislation and administration on terrorism — a terrorism which was introduced under Lenin, reached its peak under Stalin, and has not been eliminated in the era of Stalin's epigones.

Behind the deceitful façade of bolshevism, a constant "voluntary recruitment of labor" is going on; it is a masked method of deportation which affects heavily the Baltic youth. The Soviet Union chose this new procedure after having hypocritically adhered to the Slavery Convention of 1926 and Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery 1956, the Forced Labor Convention, 1930, and the Genocide Convention of December 9, 1948.

The compulsory recruitment of youth for the cultivation of virgin soil in Siberia and Central Asia — and other work — looks more promising to the Soviet economic planners than indiscriminate deportation of people of various age groups. Experience acquired in the use of slave labor has prompted the Soviet regime to adopt more efficient methods for achieving the economic aims of the five-year plans. Accordingly, Moscow has begun to recruit from among youths and various specialists the necessary labor force for exacting work under primitive conditions. The true nature of this “voluntary” recruitment is revealed by the reprisals which follow upon non-compliance. Baltic students of highschoools and universities are ordered to refund their scholarships at short notice, if they refuse to “volunteer” for work in Siberia. On the eve of final examinations, university students are required to sign long-term contracts for work in the icy deserts of northern Russia. If a student declines, he is barred from the final examinations and any other further education, and he and his family members are also subjected to other reprisals.

“Voluntariness” and “release” do not represent any essential change in the Soviet system of terrorism or the process of decimating and enslaving smaller nations. If the cloak of “voluntariness” has now been donned, it only indicates that the bolsheviks have not been able to conceal their acts of violence and the mendaciousness of their boasts of “social progress.” This boasting has not freed and cannot free *bolshevism from the wretched role of being a 20th-century slave state and an unprecedented annihilator of people and free nations.*

PART I

EUROPEAN RUSSIA  
AND THE ARCTIC REGION

PART I  
EUROPEAN RUSSIA  
AND THE ARCTIC REGION

## Slave Labor in the Arctic, Tundra and Swamp Regions of Russia

Not all of the forced labor camps are found in Siberia, Central Asia or the Far East. For economic and strategic reasons, the Soviet regime has also been showing keen interest in the Arctic regions and other sparsely-populated, remote areas of European Russia. The Kremlin has had no qualms about sacrificing the lives of millions of people in an effort to conquer these areas from merciless Nature.

In the punitive districts of Ukhta, Inta, Abetz, Vorkuta, Archangel and Salekharda there are now cities which were non-existent before World War II. Railroads, airfields, harbors and large industrial plants have been built, and today these represent one of the mainstays of the Soviet five-year plans. Economic planning and strategic programs are linked there so intimately that it is impossible to say which of the two carries the greater weight.

From the Soviet viewpoint, achievements in the Arctic regions are truly colossal. New oil fields and new coal and ore mines have been opened. The industry of Leningrad and the northern territory of the Soviet Union depend on these for raw materials. Waterways and ports — both commercial and naval — have been built to relieve overland transportation and pave the way for possible further expansion. Troops stationed in the polar zone, and personnel assigned to guard political prisoners and to quell uprisings, have become acclimatized and seasoned for still undisclosed tasks. We shall not dwell on the extremely thorough research in meteorology and other fields being conducted in the Arctic, since it has no bearing on our subject. We merely wish to note that an extraordinary activity is underway in

the Arctic region since World War II, that vast natural resources are being exploited with the aid of slave labor, and that areas which seemed inaccessible in the recent past have now been opened up.

All this could be achieved only through slave labor - through compulsion and punishment - through the maiming and annihilation of countless people. And it could be achieved only by extinguishing every human feeling and through savage cruelty. Thus, every forced labor camp represents a mass concentration of invalids and sick people. And every camp represents, also, a mass cemetery.

## VORKUTA

Vorkuta is one of the largest forced labor camp areas, with a high percentage of Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians among the prisoners. In one of the Vorkuta camps - in which the number of political prisoners ranged between 3500 and 4200 before 1956 - the breakdown of prisoners by ethnic groups, according to a Serb who has returned to the free world, was as follows:

Ukrainians . . . . .	40	percent
Balts (Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians) . . . . .	32	„
White Russians (Byelorussians) . . . . .	15	„
Germans . . . . .	4	„
Poles . . . . .	2	„
Rumanians and Czechs . . . . .	2	„
Russians . . . . .	2	„
Yugoslavs . . . . .	1.5	„
Jews . . . . .	1.0	„
Various Asiatic peoples . . . . .	0.5	„

The Vorkuta forced labor camps, surrounding the city of Vorkuta, cover an area of about 31 square miles and belong to the Autonomous

Komi Soviet Socialist Republic. The city of Vorkuta, which was still a village in 1936, lies at the foot of the Urals, some 25 miles northwest of the mountain range. On clear days, the prisoners can see the mountains.

Vorkuta is situated in the polar zone, only 60 miles from the Arctic Ocean. This influences the climate of the area. In winter months, the temperature averages 40° F below zero. At times, it drops to 60° or even 75° below zero. Summer generally starts the second week in May and lasts 12 weeks. There is practically no spring or fall - the remainder of the year is winter.

The sunless polar night is 20 days long. But during the short summer, the midnight sun is seen. Summer comes rapidly; within a few days, the snow cover is replaced by a sizable growth of green grass. Tundra surrounds Vorkuta for hundreds of miles. There are no trees, only low, dwarfed bushes and grass, so that summer brings no real freshness and nature is void of charm.

Two rivers, the Pechora and the Vorkuta, wind through the Vorkuta region. The slave labor camps have been built along the banks of the Vorkuta.

The Vorkuta is the same region of which a Russian Czar said in the first half of the 19th century: "You cannot force anyone to live there."

The Russian Czar and Stalin both realized that the region contained rich coal deposits. Human considerations kept the Czar from exploiting these resources, but the Red Kremlin despot worked hundreds of thousands of people to death and turned even more into human wrecks in order to transform Vorkuta into the Arctic's largest mining district.

Vorkuta now supplies Leningrad with coal, which is shipped by rail and, to some extent, by sea.

Before 1936, the Vorkuta area was sparsely populated, as was the entire Komi republic. Like in other Arctic territories, generally only nomads could be found there, roaming with their reindeer herds. The local nomads call themselves Komi, and this name has been given to the autonomous republic. Another nomadic tribe also inhabits the

Komi republic but the total number of indigenous inhabitants is very small.

If Komi is a frequently mentioned place today, this is only because of its work slaves - Balts, Germans and West Ukrainians - who have changed the economic pattern of the region and have built up its industries. This transformation involved sacrifices out of all proportion to the results, and was linked with a deliberate annihilation of human beings. The clearest evidence in this respect is furnished by eye-witnesses.

The few fortunates who have succeeded in getting out alive from this "mill of human bones" - as a former prisoner termed Vorkuta - have supplied detailed descriptions of conditions prevailing in its slave labor camps.

The city of Vorkuta is the headquarters of the coal mining *kombinat* known as *Vorkutugol* - a *kombinat* which operates in conjunction with the Soviet Coal Industry Ministry and the MGB (*Ministerstvo gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti* - the Ministry of National Security). The *kombinat* controls 45 labor camps, most of them engaged in coal mining. There are two brick-kiln camps, while a few camps are engaged in construction work. Not all of the 40 numbered coal mines are in operation today. Some have been discontinued; others have been merged.

A particularly high number of Balts is concentrated in coal mines number 1 (known as Kapitalna), 4, 6, 7, 8, 9/10, 12/14/16, 19, 27, 29, 32 and 40. Many Balts also work in the TEZ (electric power plant) camp, or have been assigned for some time to the 62nd disciplinary camp. The number of Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian women is especially high in the 2nd brick-kiln camp (*kirpichna*).

From time to time, the Soviet administration transfers prisoners from one coal mine to another. This is done mainly for political considerations - to prevent the possible formation of resistance organizations as prisoners learn to know and trust one another. After a time, prisoners are even moved to other punitive areas for the same reasons. Vacancies are filled by newcomers. Thus, the camps witness a constant flow of new workers selected for slave labor.

Near each coal works are located wooden barracks for prisoners who work in the mine. Each barrack contains 140 double-decker plank beds (actually sleeping places), although the normal capacity is a maximum of 80 beds. As a result, the cots are only 31 inches wide. Since 1950, every prisoner is issued a blanket and a piece of cloth which serves as a sheet.

In the corridor between the rows of bunks are narrow tables, benches and stools. In some barracks, prisoners have tiny lockers to store personal belongings. Those who have no lockers keep their possessions in their bed or under their mattress.

Each barrack is heated by two iron stoves. It also contains a loudspeaker which relays mainly the programs of Radio Moscow, and is kept playing until one o'clock in the morning. The prisoners are so weary, however, that they hardly hear the sound, nor are they interested in the transmissions. On only one occasion did they listen with interest: when the first news of Stalin's illness was broadcast. No man was more despised by the prisoners than Stalin. And now the loudspeaker announced he was in agony.

"Would the tyrant die?" This question was in everybody's mind. This and other questions: "Will we and the world be saved?" "Will there be a struggle for power in the Kremlin?" "Won't Stalin's death shake the very foundations of the Soviet system?" And in answer to these queries, one thought occupied the men and women: even if nothing is changed, it will be easier to live knowing that Stalin is dead, knowing that this tyrant and man-hater who covered one-sixth of the globe with forced labor camps and Cheka dungeons is no longer among the living.

When the loudspeaker announced Stalin's death, old men and believing women fell on their knees to thank God for the death of the most infamous of all men and tyrants. It was difficult to conceal one's joy, and only a very few did.

The next day, when the time came for the periodic cleaning of the barrack, the prisoners eagerly threw boiling water on their bunks to kill the bedbugs. Such "cleaning actions" were taken once a month, and normally were carried out by the orderlies on duty that particu-

lar day. This time everybody joined in; they felt an imperative need for cleanliness.

How does a Soviet labor slave in Vorkuta spend his day?

A 48-year-old Latvian who managed to leave Vorkuta with a group of released German war prisoners in the fall of 1955, tells the following:

"In our camp, we worked in three shifts. The first shift arose at five a.m. Directly from bed we hastened to the drying room, which the Russians call *sushilka*. The night before we had left our wet clothes there for drying. When we fetched them, they were still damp. In addition, it was a real nuisance to look for one's clothes in that huge pile. Sometimes it took half an hour before you found your half-wet *bushlat* (a long-sleeved waistcoat lined with wadding) and other articles of clothing. It was just as bad when our foot-swaddles (a band of cloth worn in place of stockings - Transl.) and felt boots (*valenki*) had been placed too close to the heated stove and were scorched. Then we washed ourselves hurriedly. Some did it outside in the snow, while others hurried to the washing-room to wet their hands and faces in the trough. When we had finished our "morning toilet," we went to the mess. The seats were usually occupied and we had to wait in line. If we got our food late, we had just enough time to gulp down a bowl of thin soup und swallow a piece of bread and a small oversalted, foul-smelling fish. The Russians called this fish *komsa*. It was neither a stickleback nor a gudgeon, just some disgusting sort of fish.

„Then we went to the gates and joined our work brigade. We had to wait a full hour at the first gate for the roll-call and check. Then we passed through the gates to the work zone. The miners stayed there, while the rest left for other work outside the zone.

"We could either walk down the 900-foot shaft or use the elevator. We miners first went to the bath to change. Then we hurried to the lamp-house to get our safety lamps. Our work began around 7 o'clock in the morning. When the shifts changed, our men went to their posts in the galleries. My job was to pour coal from small wagons into a bunker. Each wagon held about four metric tons of coal, and moved in close succession. We worked according to the assembly line system. The coal was eventually emptied into freight cars holding 60 tons.

As many as 30 loaded cars left our shaft daily, which meant the daily output of the shaft could reach 1800 tons. The brigadiers and the shaft administration saw to it that the production quota was fulfilled. The two remaining shifts worked more or less in the same way. A source of constant annoyance was the water which penetrated into the mine; as a result, the miners had to move about in a morass of slimy coal dust.

"By 5 p.m. the miners had washed themselves and were again standing by the gate. After a thorough body-search, the guards let us in slowly, one by one. When purga - the snowstorm - came, the long wait before the gates was extremely unpleasant. Why did the guards check us so thoroughly? Well, we were always cold in winter. So we decided that if each of us took one lump of coal out of the mine, we would have enough fuel. This coal was taken from us; later, the guards used it themselves.

"Not all of the prisoners worked in the mine. One group worked on house and railroad construction, at that particular time at a place a couple of miles distant - two or three miles from mine No. 40. The task of clearing snow from the railroad tracks was assigned to partially disabled people. Working all day in wet snow or rain, they quickly succumbed to the hardships. And God save us from purga. We called it the 'white death.'

"Purga, the Arctic blizzard, is an elemental force against which all human effort is in vain. Coming from the Arctic ocean, it sweeps across the tundra with irresistible force. In a matter of minutes it blankets roads and paths and sweeps avalanches of fine-grained snow against any work brigade which happens to be out in the fields. You can hardly see more than a few feet ahead, and you completely lose your sense of orientation. You feel smothered. As you gasp for breath, your saliva freezes with the moisture running from your nostrils. Your chin is covered by a crust of ice, and your eye-brows become frosted from your breath. Your tears are frozen before they can run down your cheeks. Your face and skin feel feverish. No matter what you are wearing, icy prickles penetrate every seam.

"Being buried under the snow or seeking shelter and rest behind a snow bank means certain death. If a man sinks to the ground, his

comrades help him to his feet immediately. If his fall is not noticed, a man is lost in the snow swirl.

"When summer comes, corpses of people frozen to death are found in Vorkuta and everywhere else in the Arctic. The purga is the greatest danger of the tundra region.

"Frozen limbs are a common occurrence in winter. On their way to and from work, men watch each other for white spots on the face. Only timely warning can save a man's life.

"Frostbites on the face and limbs are a part of life in Vorkuta, as are the *bushlat*, barbed wire and sub-machine-guns,' said a former prisoner.

"When they go to work, the prisoners tie scarves around their faces, exposing only the eyes and the mouth.

"The people who clear snow from the railroad track earned a pittance, getting only 20 rubles a month.

"Another category of prisoners are the office workers: index and table compilers, planners, engineers, accountants, bookkeepers, and mine section chiefs. Bookkeepers were paid 150 rubles a month. Their salary was higher, but the remainder was deducted for various reasons.

"Officially we worked eight hours, but going to and coming from work, and waiting everywhere, filled the rest of the day. We waited not only for breakfast, but also for supper. And never was the waiting time less than half an hour. We shaved once or twice a week, but those who went to the barber had to wait two hours. There were only three barbers for the 4000 men in our camp. Taking a bath meant another hour of waiting. In the bath you also changed your underwear. However, I got a new change of underwear only after working for 20 months. And to give you a clearer idea of our daily routine, I can tell you that we had to wait in line also in the canteen, where, in recent years, we could buy a few small articles. On one occasion the canteen received four boxes of candies - and one thousand men came to buy them. Whenever a wagon with canteen supplies passed through the gates, dozens of men would not let it out of their sight until it was emptied. Our daily routine was not the only cause of waiting. From time to time we were summoned to the camp chief. This hap-

pened when the work plans had not been realized, the norms not fulfilled and on other similar occasions. Then, too, we lost an hour or so.

"Even in Vorkuta, Soviet regime is not feasible without waiting and lines," said the Latvian, concluding his description of conditions in Vorkuta.

A woman who worked in brick-kiln No. 1 in Vorkuta states:

"Of 1800 female prisoners in our camp, half were Ukrainians, about 150 were Germans, and the rest were Balts, mostly Latvians and Lithuanians. The break-down by nationalities was somewhat the same in brick-kiln No. 2 and in the so called *predshakhta* (ante-shaft) camp. We had to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning. At six came the *razvod*, that is, the check-up and distribution by work places. We returned from work at 5 p.m., after 11 hours. The work was hard. Each woman had to carry 1900 bricks a day out of the kiln to places 200 or 300 yards away. Work on the railroad, or building, was hardly an easier job. The women had to lift and fasten rails. The overseers saw to it that we fulfilled our norm. The norm was a ghost which pursued us wherever we worked. To our great surprise, the Baltic and Ukrainian women usually fulfilled the norm. They did so because of their ingrained love of work. Peasant women were particularly unsurpassed in this atrociously hard work. Occasionally we would discuss whether it was right to be overly diligent and fulfil the norm, since actually we strengthened our adversary by doing so. The women who fulfilled the norms admitted this, but still maintained their pride in working. Prisoners of other nationalities, especially the Russians, derided the Baltic women. At times the diligent workers even had to do the share of the slovenly ones. Only the Ukrainians who had lost their farms during the Soviet occupation of Poland, and had been deported to the same places as the Baltic women, matched the work output of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian women. These women from the West Ukraine secretly hoped that because of their good work they would be considered for amnesty. They were bitterly disappointed."

All eye-witnesses tell of frequent accidents in the mines, brick-kilns, construction-sites and other work places. In the Soviet view, a work

slave is not worth the expenditure involved in various safety measures and appliances. Those sent to the coal mines are required to read a number of self-protection regulations, printed in Russian. Since not all prisoners know this idiom, which is also unfamiliar to the younger generation in the Baltic countries, the practical effect of these "work protection regulations" is negligible.

Accidents with fatal results are therefore common, and work disability is widespread. Work cripples are numerous, but they are not exempted from further work.

Gas explosions in the shafts are also common. In Vorkuta the monthly average for every 2000 prisoners was 110 to 130 accidents, of which at least two or three resulted in fatalities. In 1951, 130 men were killed in a gas explosion caused solely by the lack of safety appliances and the failure to observe safety regulations. The frequent breakdown and failure of machinery increase the accident rate.

Work is not suspended even if the temperature drops to 60° F below zero. Frostbite resulting in amputations is therefore frequent.

The number of victims is further increased by the brutal treatment of the prisoners.

The Vorkuta camps are surrounded by a 12-foot high barbed-wire fence. In addition, there are watch-towers, spaced at intervals of 100 to 200 yards, from which guards keep a lookout day and night, always ready to fire machine-guns and sub-machine guns. Along the inside of the fence runs an 18-foot-wide prohibited zone. No prisoner is allowed to enter it. If he does, the guards fire without warning.

An eye-witness states that a Latvian who was cleaning the camp yard inadvertently stepped into the death zone and was immediately shot down.

This was not an isolated case. Prisoners have also been shot for failure to comply with camp regulations on their way to work. The ground along the barbed-wire fence is mined and searchlights are posted at intervals of 15 yards. At night, in fog and in snowstorm, the prohibited zone is illuminated by these searchlights.

The watch-towers, known as *vysbki*, are connected by telephone with each other and with the main guards room. Running along the

outside of the fence is an additional watch zone, with sentry dogs. Now a few words about the solitary confinement cell.

Prisoners are placed in solitary confinement for disobeying the camp administration, refusing to work, and similar offenses. The cell is a narrow, dimly-lit room without a bed, table or chair. The inmate can sit only on the clay floor. Every morning he gets 300 grams of bread and a cup of ersatz coffee, and every second day a small bowl of porridge. A man is seldom released before spending less than a week in the cell.

In addition to the solitary confinement cell, there is the *bur*, which almost every prisoner gets to know sooner or later. *Bur* stands for *barak usilenovo rezhima* (barrack of sterner regime). While in the *bur*, prisoners are subject to more rigid control and are assigned particularly hard work.

Mention should also be made of a special disciplinary institution which the prisoners call the *shtrafolp*. A man named Gerulis, a former Vorkuta prisoner, says of it: "Our disciplinary barrack, OLPS 62, remained the only one for isolation of political prisoners after 1953. As a rule, it housed 220 men and was guarded very closely, its guards being changed frequently. It was a camp in itself, consisting of a narrower zone with three minor barracks with barred windows, and a larger zone which also included wooden sheds and stables. Depending on the offense, prisoners could be confined in either zone. The food was terrible.

"The composition of the inmates of this camp was unique. From individual work camps the MVD sent all those who, even behind barbed wire, had the courage to oppose bolshevism. Here you found leaders of secret resistance groups, murderers who had killed for vengeance, saboteurs who tried to lower productivity by wrecking mine equipment, and so on. Their actions and their attitude clearly showed that the spirit of sacrifice among communist-enslaved nations is much greater than that shown by people in Western Europe. If we could gather more such people in Western Europe there would be no reason to fear communist infiltration . . ."

Those who consistently refused to work were also placed in this camp. After undergoing various punishments, they were sent to the

solitary confinement cell. Men who organized sit-down strikes were imprisoned and later moved to some other camp area.

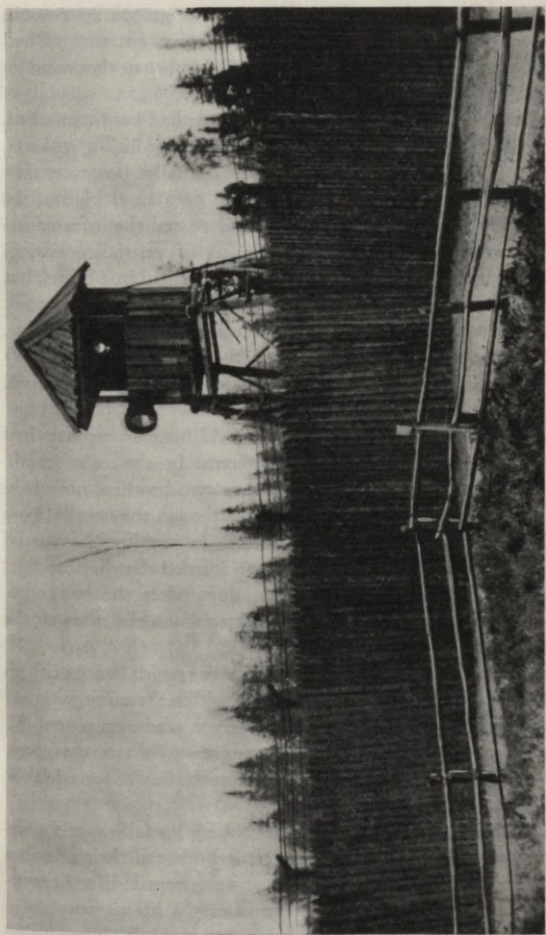
The camps are guarded by MVD men. Prisoners call them the "Reds," because their uniforms include a red cap. In addition to the "Reds," there are the "Blues," who came into the camp and tried to find out the feeling prevailing among the prisoners and to uncover any possible attempts to form secret organizations. The MVD men live in military barracks, while the political officers are lodged in private apartments in Vorkuta and the neighbouring villages. It has been calculated that there is one MVD official or guard to every 12 prisoners. The guards are usually young people of military age. Actually they are also prisoners, since they suffer from the severe climate as much as the camp inmates. Not all of them are communists.

The camp administration includes the following officials:

1. The camp chief;
2. Two deputy camp chiefs;
3. A political officer, who checks the political reliability of prisoners;
4. A so-called "regime chief," responsible for enforcement of internal camp regulations;
5. A special division chief, in charge of prisoners' documents and the card index file;
6. A cultural division chief, who supervises the recreation room;
7. A chief of the sanitary division;
8. A chief of the supply division, and
9. a varying number of "commissioners" - MVD officers who interrogate prisoners concerning whom they have received denunciations.

If one adds to these the minor officials and the large number of guard personnel, it becomes apparent that the administrative apparatus of a camp is truly oversized.

Before 1951, the Soviet Ministry of Justice was responsible for maintaining order in the camps, but later this task was entrusted to the MVD. One reason for this change was the fact that the MVD officials not only checked information furnished by informers, but also tried themselves to obtain from morally undermined prisoners evi-



*1. Vysbka — watchtower in a Soviet forced labor camp. Inside the camp wall, the camp is surrounded by the so-called "death-zone" which is illuminated by searchlights at night. Guards armed with machine and sub-machine guns are on lookout in the watchtowers day and night.*

dence against still-unknown members of resistance groups. As a result, interrogations were underway continuously. It was not easy to find stool pigeons and so the MVD officials would resort to threats in an effort to recruit new informers.

When the MVD learned that one of its agents had been unmasked, he was transferred to another camp area. Stool pigeons, or *stukachi*, were the most hated of the camp inmates. Normally, however, they were left alone. When a man was found to be a stool pigeon, the prisoners merely warned their comrades and passed the information on to their work brigade through members of resistance groups. Occasionally, stool pigeons were beaten or even killed in a brawl, but in general the prisoners avoided taking reprisals in their own interests. Since it was clear that the MVD could not operate without informers, the prisoners preferred to have known rather than unknown MVD agents. One could dissemble and be on guard against a known stool pigeon.

An informer could cause great harm. A Lithuanian woman had received a food parcel from relatives at home. In a piece of candy she found a smuggled note stating that her two brothers now held positions of trust under the Soviet regime, although they really were members of a secret resistance organization. In her joy, she shared the news with her room-mates. It was soon learned that her brothers had been arrested by the MVD a few days after she had mentioned the note. Evidently, some one had passed on the news to the Soviet spy system.

In addition to the general Soviet rule of terror which had sent them to Vorkuta, another kind of terror, exercised within the camp, weighed heavily on the prisoners. This internal terror was aggravated by the *blatnois* and the *suki* - terms denoting two convict categories which are almost an inseparable part of life in the Soviet forced labor camps.

A *blatnoi* is a convict who lives from robbing his fellow-prisoners. He does not work. Most *blatnois* are men who began their criminal careers during childhood and have not known a normal life. Accordingly, their guiding principle is to have as easy a life as possible in the camp. If a *blatnoi* would start working, he would risk being killed

by another *blatnoi* at any moment. The brigadiers and the camp administration have become reconciled to the idea that they cannot change the ways of the *blatnois*. A attempt to force a *blatnoi* to work could cost a brigadier his life. Any prisoner who opposes some wanton action runs the same risk. If an article has been stolen, simply accept the fact. If a *blatnoi* occupies two sleeping places at the expense of other inmates of the barrack, his neighbors simply have to put up with it. Most *blatnois* are Russians. So far there is no evidence that Balts are included among them. This is understandable, since the deported Balts are political prisoners, while the *blatnois* have been sent to a camp for a criminal offense.

The political prisoners are harassed mainly by the *blatnois*.

The latter concentrated their interest on prisoners who from time to time got food and clothing parcels from relatives at home. Up to 1949 - the year when compulsory farm collectivization was carried out in the Baltic countries - these fortunates included Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians. So long as their families had farms, the deportees were assured of receiving help. After 1949, food parcels became rare, since Baltic farmers, deprived of their land, had to live on a starvation diet themselves.

Parcels from the Baltic countries were eagerly desired by the *blatnois*.

The Balts shared the contents of the gift parcels among themselves, and at times also felt compelled to give something to their unpleasant barrack companions. Failure to do so involved risks. A farmer from Zemgale (southern Latvia), whose wife and two children lived in Latvia, was killed by envious *blatnois* because he regularly received food parcels. Pl., a Latvian from Riga, who after World War II had accepted the invitation of the Soviet repatriation officer and had returned to Latvia from Germany, but who soon found himself in Vorkuta, suffered much from the *blatnois*.

Deeply tragic was the fate of a Latvian Evangelical Lutheran clergyman, Provost Pauls Rozenbergs. Former Vorkuta inmates describe him as a priest of God's grace, for whom the Christian virtues were the true meaning of life. Provost Rozenbergs had served a ten-year forced labor sentence in 1954. This did not mean returning home. It was not permitted by the Bolsheviks. Nor did he want

to go back, since his wife, too, had been deported to Siberia. After long years, she obtained a teacher's position. Provost Rozenbergs decided to join his family, going from the Arctic to Siberia. Before leaving Vorkuta, he wanted to say good-bye to a Volga German. The latter, a school principal before his deportation, was a close friend of Rozenbergs. The priest had less than a mile to walk to the place where his friend lived. He set out, but he had not covered even half the distance, when he was ambushed by the *blatnois* and killed.

"We were dismayed," says a young German physician who also looked on Provost Rozenbergs as his friend. "Why? We could not understand why it was he who was killed, a man who only helped, comforted and uplifted others, and showed respect to everybody, even to those in whom a cruel fate had deleted the last vestiges of humanity. We had seen and witnessed a great deal, but this tragic event was beyond our comprehension."

In the misery of everyday life in Vorkuta such tragedies are usually overlooked. They are overshadowed by famine, hunger, work norms, biting frost, coercion, countless accidents, and spying. Still, it is impossible to understand why humans are being sacrificed in our time, unless one looks into the innermost corner of this inferno — unless one sees the maze of strange forces and interests — unless one beholds madness and despair. Acting and reacting upon each other, these forces show the face of a poor wretched man.

The feeling of being deserted and exposed to the rule of terror in the camp lurks in every Soviet work slave. His normal rhythm of life cut, torn from his country, from the affectionate intimacy of his family and friends, from his home, from his customary work, and from humane and Christian relationships, a man is seized by despair. He feels he is lost, but is unable to help himself. And even if he summons whatever strength is left in him and tries to remain loyal to himself and to the spiritual inheritance of culture and civilization, of the Gospel and the eternal values, he feels like a grain of dust before that merciless Colossus who is ever intent on stamping him into the ground, on defiling and maiming him. One man proves too weak. It is good to have somebody to help. Moral cooperation

alone can enable a man to offer defiance, to exist and endure in spite of everything. Although he is turned into a mere number in accordance with the regulations, he knows that man should not lose man.

Incited against each other, the weak lose ground.

Even the strong do not feel secure unless they find support and reassurance in one who shares their fate. All of them are work animals in the eyes of the bolsheviks, and are treated accordingly. The Soviet camp regime aims at obliterating every trace of individuality and personal impulse. The Soviet system as such accepts only the mass man, but in the camp even the man's soul and mind are smothered.

Keeping together in small groups, even two by two, can help those stricken by the same fate to preserve their vitality and build a wall against the imposed environment — against those in power, the guards, the stool pigeons, the *blatnois*, against all that is vile.

This is self-defense.

A transport of Latvians, which reached Vorkuta sometime before 1953, was attacked by the *blatnois* on the night of arrival. As soon as they had reclined on their wooden plank beds, the barrack was invaded by 12 rowdies, armed with long home-made knives. They were trying to snatch the newcomers' parcels, in which, at the moment of deportation, everyone had put what seemed useful.

I was told of this incident by an eye-witness, a non-Latvian:

"When one of the 120 newly-arrived Latvians got to his feet and whistled, all of them jumped out of their beds. They knew well what their fate would be if they gave in the first day. They grabbed boards from their beds and charged the attackers. The fight was short. In a few minutes the *blatnois* were overwhelmed and took a terrible beating; one of them did not rise again. Swiftmess and determination had helped the Latvians. As an old hand in Vorkuta, I knew that henceforth no one would bully them. And so it was. These good people were saved from other rotten practices by their solidarity. Even the guards had respect for them."

The camp regime being what it was, it was quite impossible to attack prisoners without the knowledge of the guards, who often backed the *blatnois* and shared the loot.

In addition to the *blatnois*, there was another category of evil-doers in the camps. They were called the *suki*, and like the former were criminal prisoners. But unlike the *blatnois*, they worked, although not hard. They ingratiated themselves into the favors of the camp administration, securing easier jobs. Their attitude toward the political prisoners was unfair and harsh.

There was constant strife and clashes between the *blatnois* and the *suki*. The *blatnois* resented the fact that the *suki* worked, thereby violating their strict and unalterable code which prescribed the shirking of work. The fights between the two groups were usually bloody, with fatalities on both sides.

The political prisoners suffered severely at the hands of the convicts until the Soviet authorities separated the two categories. A few years ago, Moscow decided to collect the political prisoners in special regime camps. They were moved from the general camps to the special regime camps of which Vorkuta was one. Since that time, the number of Balts in Vorkuta grew. Conditions improved considerably.

Beginning in 1954, individual prisoners had completed their terms of 10 or 15 years and were due for release. However, the Soviet authorities permitted only those who already had family members in Siberia to leave Vorkuta, while the rest had to remain. As "released" prisoners, they were settled outside the barbed-wire fence. Even that was quite a problem in Vorkuta.

To have a roof over his head, the released prisoner had to build himself a shack. A Riga lawyer requested and was given discarded boards for this purpose. The filling was cinders, of which there was no lack in Vorkuta. Where spikes were lacking, rusty wire was used. So this man got his "home." Prisoners, released in 1955 did not find a new dwelling place of their own, and stayed in one of the camp barracks.

The "released" continue their old work and are listed as belonging to the Vorkuta forced labor camp as "labor," although under a milder regime which will be described later in this book.

The "released" are not permitted to move outside a certain area.

They remain under the supervision of the Soviet authorities, except that the control is less conspicuous.

Less than 14 miles from Vorkuta lies the sanitary settlement or *sangorodok* of the camps. Such *sangorodoks* have been established also in other forced labor camps, and thus the name is not a place name. The Latvians called it the "death city," since only patients considered incurable were sent there as a rule.

The milder cases were treated in the hospitals of individual camps, of which there were usually two: one for patients with suppurating sores, the second for the others. The *sangorodok*, on the other hand, received those who had small chance of recovery, or were entitled to extended hospitalization.

An eye-witness who worked as a male nurse in one of the *sangorodoks* tells the following:

"The local hospitals had 800 beds. When I was there, we had an average of 100 Estonian, 100 Lithuanian und 60 Latvian patients. I worked with Dr. J., a physician from Riga. He had been mobilized for service in the Latvian Legion in 1943, was released from Soviet imprisonment in 1946, worked in a Riga hospital for a few months, and then was arrested and deported to Vorkuta. First, he worked as a coal miner, but later was transferred to the sanitary settlement as a specialist. He was a wonderful man and an excellent physician. His patients trusted him. Several invalids who worked as servants in the hospital were trained by this Latvian doctor for male nurse work.

"Compared with the Vorkuta mining camps, conditions in the *sangorodok* were catastrophic. Since only the most serious cases were hospitalized there — in other words, people whose recovery and future working capability were highly doubtful — the barracks were utterly neglected and looked miserable. The bolshevik principle was: he who does not work, shall not eat. The food served there was quite inferior compared with that received in the work camp. Before 1952, no high-grade expensive medicines were supplied by the Soviets. We tried to get them elsewhere. It is not surprising that 420 patients succumbed to these dire conditions in 1952. During the first five months of 1953, there were 158 deaths. The number of deceased

males was much higher than that of females. Around this sanitary settlement grew mass graves. The sick knew, at least before 1953, what moving there meant. Those doomed to death whispered good-bye to their comrades. At the outset, the patients were forced to come here on foot, even if they had fever and collapsed of exhaustion."

## INTA AND ABEZ

The names of Inta and Abez are much less familiar in the West than that of Vorkuta. The two form a group of camps in the Komi Autonomous Republic 120 to 160 miles southwest of Vorkuta. Although the Balts are not segregated in separate camps, the Soviet punitive camp system requires the intermingling of prisoners of various nationalities. Because of the large proportion of Balts, Inta and Abez may well be called Baltic camps.

Inta and Abez are located along the Kotlas-Vorkuta railroad. This punitive area is bounded by Usa, a tributary of the Pechora, on the north; by Koshyma, an affluent of the Kosyu, on the south; by the Urals on the east; and by the middle course of Usa and upper Koshyma on the west. The only inhabited places in this area are Inta and, some 120 miles north, Abez. This area, too, is surrounded by tundra, and is a desolate region where nature is alive only during the short summer. Inta and Abez are situated in the Arctic zone, and except for somewhat shorter winters have about the same climate as Vorkuta.

Inta has coal mines and tundra forest growth. Their exploitation was begun in 1942 when the northern railroad reached Inta, and was expanded particularly since 1946, when large numbers of work slaves were sent there. In 1946, conditions in Inta were about the same as in Vorkuta. The organization of the camps was still going on, the construction of the barracks had not yet been completed, and the first inmates lacked both blankets and mattresses. The only place which boasted of these "civilized" articles was the local sanitary settlement.

Today, the Inta coal mine region has six camps: four mine camps, one women's work camp, and one transit camp which also serves as

the central hospital. Abez, too, has six camps: one men's work camp, one transit camp, one women's work camp, two invalid camps and a hospital camp. In addition, there is a mine camp in Koshyma.

Able-bodied persons are sent to Inta, while invalids and the aged are transferred to Abez, where they are required to do relatively lighter work.

Coal mining is the main industry in Inta. The shafts are 600 feet deep. In addition there is a machine repair workshop (R. M. S.), a brickyard, a sawmill and a stone quarry. Women work in the quarry and also on the railroad, which requires some repair every second month.

In addition to political prisoners, there were also criminal convicts in Inta and Abez up to 1953. After Stalin's death the latter were amnestied, and this punitive district thus became a cluster of concentration camps for political prisoners. It is also known under the name of *Minlag*, while the Vorkuta mining area is referred to as *Rechlag* by the bolsheviks.

The prisoners live in wooden barracks, 100 to 200 persons in each. The barrack frame, built of tundra tree trunks, is covered with moss or peat, and has a board revetment on the inside and outside. The barracks have wooden-shingle roofs. Brick furnaces are used for heating. In Abez, steam obtained from a discarded locomotive is used to heat the barracks. During the past few years the prisoners have not complained about lack of warmth, but the invalids and old people suffer in the summer when they are sent out into the tundra to make hay. There they live under the open sky for weeks and feed mosquitoes with their blood.

The inside of the barracks is reminiscent of Vorkuta. Even here one has double-decker wooden bunks with a narrow corridor between the two rows. To fight bedbugs more effectively, iron-frame beds have been placed in some barracks. The mattresses (actually bed-sacks) and pillows are filled with sawdust. Each prisoner is issued a blanket and, if there are any in stock, a sheet.

Every tenth day prisoners may go to the bath, where they also can change their underwear. Prisoners shave twice a week.

The rest of the premises — kitchen, mess, canteen, workshops and warehouses — are about the same as in Vorkuta. The mess seems to be even less roomy. For disciplining prisoners, there are the solitary confinement cells and the *bur*.

Before 1948, the Inta camp had a fence, nine to twelve feet high. There were also the usual *vysbki* (watch-towers) with armed guards in the corners of the enclosure. For a time, prisoners serving short sentences were used as guards. Subsequently, the guard was reinforced. As in Vorkuta and other forced labor camps, the wooden enclosure was replaced by barbed-wire fences, prohibited zones and sentry dogs. If, at the outset, there were five guards to every 100 prisoners, then in 1948 the porportion was 30 to 200, even if the prisoners were women.

After 1949 the political prisoners were segregated from the criminal prisoners. A ukase promulgated at that time called for strict isolation of those sentenced under Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code. This category included all Balts. Also, the general regime in the camp was extremely bad. Because of poor food, mortality was high until 1953. After Beria's death conditions improved. A new ukase provided for conditional remission of the remaining part of the sentence. The Balts (reportedly with the exception of the Lithuanians) were not allowed to return to their countries. They were not even permitted to join their families in Siberia and other deportation sites. A German intellectual who spent many years in Inta together with Balts claimed that Latvians and Estonians were watched by the Soviets more closely than other groups.

The German eye-witness stated:

"They were constantly followed by informers and always regarded with suspicion. The spirit of solidarity in the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian national groups and the good understanding between the three groups worried the MDV, and its local chief, Lt. Col. Babikov, launched a counter-action.

"He tried to inflame the national feelings of individual prisoners, to create discord, to incite Latvians against Latvians, Estonians against Estonians, Lithuanians against Lithuanians, Catholics against Lutherans and one nationality or group against another. This was the secret

instruction which Babikov gave to all his aides and agents in the camp. The action had little success, and the MVD requested that the political prisoners be promptly transferred to other Soviet camps and deportation areas. The transfer of some prisoners was an effort to undermine resistance groups and to arouse distrust against newcomers."

It would seem that once "elements dangerous to the Soviet system" are put behind barbed wire, the MVD has completed its task. If this were so, only guards and overseers would be needed. However, the activities of the MDV officials in prisoner and deportee camps show that the task of this organization ends only with the death of the Soviet captive. The MVD goes on spying, watching, eavesdropping, provoking, persecuting and imposing new punishments, and therefore prisoners meet the MVD everywhere in the camp.

The distrust in which the MVD holds the prisoners is clearly manifested on Soviet holidays. When May Day, the October Revolution anniversary, and similar occasions come, the most suspect among the prisoners are held in custody for several days. Among the suspects are many Balts. The MVD does its utmost to arrest the leaders of the Baltic resistance groups. Those branded as such are usually sent to solitary confinement cells. They are also charged with sabotage.

The fulfilment of the work norms was required in all cases, although they were excessively high. A collier's daily norm was eight metric tons (in the German Ruhr area the norm is three and a half tons). Men assigned to take coal to the wagon were forced at times to crawl through the low galleries. Most of the galleries were 120 to 150 feet below the surface. Water seeped into them and clothes became soaked, and after work men went in their wet clothes out into temperatures of 15° to 20° F below zero.

As soon as a work brigade failed to fulfil the work norm, or its output dropped below 80 percent of the prescribed quota, the camp administration charged sabotage and, to justify itself in the eyes of Moscow, arrested one of the interned. The camp administration was intent on proving that a "culprit" had been found. The word "culprit" is applied to men who are more or less known to enjoy authority among their comrades, or at least within their own national group.

A former prisoner claims to have seen special cards made out for the Balts. The cards were marked by green or red lines. One of the colors designated "especially dangerous individuals" who were threatened by preventive custody or worse.

Usually preventive custody meant the *shtrafolp*, the disciplinary barrack. In the fear that they might harm the Soviet regime, they were not required to work. This also implied that they got worse food and were not allowed to write and receive letters.

The interned Balts are said to have helped each other. A feeling of solidarity demanded that aged people be supported. Among the prisoners in Inta and Abetz were people of 70 years and older. Backed by the younger ones, they found easier jobs, such as those of barrack orderlies in charge of heating and cleanliness in the barrack, or of clothing- and-tool keeper. The latter made 60 rubles a month, which was of considerable help to them. In Abetz, people who did not work because of age or lack of strength did not receive any money at all.

The same was true of the sick. Up to 1955, Latvian physicians and nurses who also were prisoners worked in the central hospital of Abetz. The head nurse was a Latvian medical student whom the bolsheviks had arrested in 1948. German physicians who worked in the Abetz hospital speak highly of their Latvian colleagues. In Inta, Abetz and Vorkuta, Latvian physicians spent of their money on streptomycin and other medicines needed in the hospital. Being skilled physicians,

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2. *Baltic women, deported and sentenced to 25 years at hard labor at the Inta camp in the Arctic zone in 1955. Third from the left in the first row is a Latvian who was wounded in the leg by MVD men. Fifth in the same row is a Latvian whose husband was killed by the MVD and whose three children were deported. First from the left in the row is a Latvian girl who was last (upper) struck by falling tree while on lumbering work in the camp and whose mind was affected as a result of it.*



they saved the lives of many prisoners. Examples of self-abnegation were also given by the Latvian nurses.

At the end of 1954, most Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian women — with the exception of a few dozen — were transferred from Abez to other Arctic camps. They were replaced by Russian women from Kursk.

The interned were frequently moved from one camp to another. Transportation in trucks, each loaded with about 50 persons, was exceedingly trying. On one occasion, prisoners were taken from the Arctic to Central Asia in open trucks, the floors of which were not even covered with straw, spending 40 days underway in biting cold. While in transit, the prisoners received 800 grams of bread or dried bread and smoked fish daily.

Like inmates of other Soviet forced labor camps, prisoners in Inta and Abez also experienced famine, especially before 1953 when conditions were appalling. A former prisoner states:

“One day in 1952, when marching in columns from the Inta camp to the mines, we were halted. The Russian guards watched us from all four corners. There was a garbage can quite close to us; people who belonged to the camp administration had thrown food remnants there. A Latvian who belonged to our work team left the ranks and ran to the bin to snatch a crust of bread. The moment he held that miserable piece of bread in his hand, a guard fired. Seriously wounded, the Latvian sank to the ground, but tried to crawl back to his comrades. The guard who had fired from a distance of some 30 yards came within a few yards and shot the unfortunate to death.”

According to the regulations no one is allowed to leave the ranks, but it is permitted to talk while enroute to the place of work. In case of non-compliance, the guards fire without warning.

Most incidents occur when the place of work is outside the camp area. When work has to be done under the open sky, the guard marks the work area by placing a cord around it, or else simply by drawing a line. Then he takes his position by the line and lets the prisoner work. If a prisoner is employed at the same place for any length of time, he is placed in a pen enclosed with barbed wire. In such cases, he is watched from the camp towers. The road to the work place often

recalls a country road along which cattle are driven to the fields. There is barbed wire on either side. This road may be used without guards.

A work brigade does not have the same guards for any length of time.

They are changed at least once a week to prevent the guards from becoming friendly with the "enemies of the people," a label which follows the political prisoners wherever they go.

Sweeping changes took place in Inta and Abez in the fall of 1955. About 80 percent of the interned became "free." One should not misunderstand this "release." The Inta prisoners remained in Inta. As early as February of 1955, they were persuaded to sign work contracts. What was the significance of these work contracts?

They meant that persons who signed work contracts with a mine for the remaining time of their sentence were pardoned. Each mine wanted to have as large a labor force as possible. In this way, under the guise of voluntary action, the Soviets secured even the labor of amnestied people. All this had been carefully planned before the amnesty was announced. Basically, the change was slight, — even if the "released" were no longer confined behind barbed wire, they were attached to a mine and to their previous forced labor camp.

For clarity's sake, it will be noted that the economic system of the Soviet forced labor camps grants some autonomy to each mine and to each undertaking within the camp system. Each mine and each economic unit prepares its own production plans and keeps its own accounts. An autonomous economic unit is also authorized to sign work contracts on its own.

This was not the only method used by the Soviet administration to bind prisoners to work in the Arctic.

Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin issued a decree concerning the granting of building credits to the "released." Individual credits usually amounted to 15,000 rubles.

The "released" lacked lodgings. The credit seemed to come in handy to assure a shelter. However, building even a small house cost between 60,000 and 120,000 rubles. Since the assigned credit was quite inadequate for its stated purpose, some of the released spent it on warm clothing and other articles. For squandering Government money,

they were sentenced once more, this time for life. Others managed somehow to build a hut, but found themselves bound. Before paying their debt, which was possible only after many years, they could not leave the punitive district.

Had there been a genuine release, only a very few would have stayed in the Arctic. However, neither the Inta, Vorkuta nor the other mines and enterprises which play an important part in Soviet five-year plans could reduce their output, let alone shut down. Moscow knew the true conditions, and every Soviet functionary in the Arctic regions realized his responsibility. Every Soviet official, whatever his position, could overnight become a prisoner himself, even if his task was to control and exploit the prisoners as fully as possible.

A man who found shrewd methods for securing new labor was considered a worthy Soviet functionary.

When the Baltic women were taken to other areas, Russian girls began to gather in Inta and Abez. They came from the kolkhozes in Russia, where there were eight women to one man. With Moscow's authorization trusted Soviet officials in the Arctic went to the Russian countryside to recruit women for work in the polar regions. They told the girls enthusiastic stories about progress in the exploitation of Arctic regions, about new cities and various improvements. They stressed particularly the prevalence of single men in those regions, and the fact that only the lack of women prevented them from founding families. During the more recent recruitment campaigns it was also pointed out that the prisoners were now free, had decided to stay in the Arctic regions, and wanted to find a life-partner.

The true purpose of these moves should be clear to everybody. We need not dwell on the clever Soviet methods of enticing their own citizens to go to work in the Arctic. It is merely noted that Baltic women had earlier been sent away from the same region. The aim of the Soviet regime is to alienate the deportees from their native country and their people.

Inta has grown rapidly in ten years. Its rich coal mines and its economic lifeline — the Kotlas-Vorkuta railroad — made it a city of 45,000 inhabitants by 1955.

Inta even then had large trusts, a number of six to eight story

houses and a trolley-bus line. There were also a swimming pool, a theater and a club-house frequented by the local Soviet aristocracy — MVD functionaries and other officials with their families.

Construction was started on a highway linking Inta and Abetz. Midway between the two, a new shaft for ore mining was opened. The highway ended at the airport. Women living outside the camp built the road. Cinders, still warm, were used as a base for the road.

The changes which took place in Inta and Abetz in 1955 do not present a clear picture in all details. However, it is reliably known that some of the people released from the forced labor camps were concentrated in Kochmes, about 130 miles from Inta. They were urged to sign a pledge to stay "voluntarily" in the Komi republic. Those who did, were promised wages. They are now working in sovkhoses. Reindeer and dog sledges are the only means of transportation in winter.

The last news from Abetz dates from December 12, 1955. It states that despite amnesty, the Soviet administration once more was strengthening the camp system. Many who had obtained some degree of freedom through amnesty, were reported to be back in the camps. They included an Estonian professor. By the end of 1955 the situation in Abetz had again become quite hopeless, especially for aged people who were not fit for work.

A former prisoner states: "All of the 58 men who were released, returned to Abetz in December, 1955, a few days before Christmas. They were placed behind barbed wire. The Soviet officials spoke of the need to clarify their records. An investigation committee, known as *osoboye soveshchaniye* and having the authority of a tribunal, arrived in Abetz and interrogated the men. The charges were again made under Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code."

## UST-UKHTA

The Ust-Ukhta area comprises several camps in the Autonomous Komi Republic between Ust-Vym and Pechora. Its name is derived from the Ukhta river, a tributary of the Izhma. Ukhta is not a

mining area but a naphtha exploitation and refining region, and to a lesser degree a lumbering district. Industry is concentrated in two towns, Ust-Ukhta and Izhma. The area has a much better climate than Inta and Vorkuta, and accordingly even camps for mothers and children have been set up there. In general there are many women's camps here, but the number of Baltic women in them is not large. On the other hand, the men's camps have a large share of Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians. Their number was augmented by the arrival of those "released" in 1955.

People who have returned to the free world in earlier years have stressed that in Ukhta the regime was less severe than in other forced labor camps of the Arctic zone. On the other hand, recently released prisoners say the regime is not milder, but merely different; a different pattern of work is followed in Ukhta. Still, it has been noted that when a prisoner petitions the Soviet administration in Ukhta, his petition gets results, while nothing can be obtained in Inta. In Ukhta, the Balts hope to have more chances of providing for their existence, and they do not regret being transferred there from other camps. The Balts began to flock to the Ukhta region in 1952.

The prison camp has been in existence since 1926. The first political prisoners of Latvian origin were sent there in 1937. They were the so-called Latvians of Russia who were affected by Stalin's purges; they worked in the stone quarries of Chibira and on camp construction work. Like other Arctic forced labor camps, Ukhta grew rapidly after the building of the Kotlas-Vorkuta railroad. In addition to the cities of Ust-Ukhta and Izhma, there are settlements in Yarega and Vodny. Non-amnestied prisoners, or political captives whom the Soviets consider especially dangerous, have been concentrated in recent years at a place some 20 miles from Yarega. Prisoners excluded from amnesty could only choose between Norilsk and the Ukhta region. Those who left Inta and Vorkuta, went to Ukhta. In 1951, on the other hand, many Balts were transferred from Ukhta to Inta and Abez, which — according to people who should know — was a change for the worse. In Ukhta the Balts are, it is true, together with convicts from whom they had been separated in recent years.



*Graves of the martyrs. In winter the dead are covered with snow, and are buried in the tundra the following summer. Those graves are not marked by a cross, but merely by a stake hurriedly driven into the ground.*

According to the testimony of a returnee, the Ukhta region has 30 work camps, each inhabited by 3000 persons. A part of the workers are employed in oil shale production. Lumbering has been recently mechanized, and the wood is used for pulp and in the chemical industry.

## VOZHAEL

Vozhael belongs to the Ust-Vym punitive area. We have singled it out since reportedly its camps had an extremely severe regime and a considerable number of Balts were interned there.

An Austrian states that Vozhael had 12 punitive camps, all surrounded by barbed-wire fence. Up to 1951 the political prisoners were kept together with criminal convicts and suffered a great deal from them. The interned Balts included numerous persons deported in 1945 and later. There were also Baltic partisans who had actively opposed the Soviet occupation authorities. The latter did not regret the sentences imposed, although all of them had to serve 25 years. For continued resistance to the MVD inside a camp, one of them had his sentence successively raised to 175 years.

Such penalties are quite unfamiliar in the free world, but the Soviet administrative justice quite frequently sentences "by the centuries."

The political prisoners clashed with the Soviet administration, especially during the "courses of political education." Men who voiced dissenting views — and there was no lack of such people — received additional sentences.

In addition to the Balts, the Vozhael camps also included Ukrainians, Germans, Austrians and Russians. Normally, the latter did not appear in any large number in camps of political prisoners. Here, however, were whole groups of Russian students who in one way or another had opposed Soviet rule. Each nationality had its representatives and organized leadership, even though prohibited by the camp rules. If the organization was discovered, the culprits could be sure of punishment.

The Balts included many intellectuals, some of whom found employment in the camps' accounting office, general office and sanitary service. A man could hold on to a good job if he signed up for the Soviet internal loan bonds. The majority, however, worked as lumberjacks. Since only very few had earlier experience in this work, accidents resulting in serious mutilations were frequent. Besides people killed in serious work accidents, there were also prisoners who committed suicide, throwing themselves under falling trees, to escape further suffering. Up to 1953 many fell victim to the cold. After 1953, when an energetic physician succeeded in obtaining a ruling that inadequately clad men should be sent back to the barracks, the number of frostbite victims decreased. Some 45 miles off was a hospital, but prisoners from Vozhael were not readily admitted there, since Vozhael camp inmates served long sentences and the Soviet administration would not let them mingle with prisoners undergoing lighter punishments. There were frequent cases of dystrophy, from which many Balts were saved through food parcels sent from home. Since 1950 cemeteries have been permitted but crosses on tombs were not allowed until 1953. Since the ground was frozen, the dead were buried only one foot beneath the surface.

A man who had been in one of the camps of this punitive district until 1948, has stated:

"I was placed in a political prisoners' camp known as 'Simka,' which had a particularly stern regime. Among the Latvians were many simple people — workers and farmers, from 30 to 50 years old. From 1945 to 1949, about 30 000 political prisoners perished in the Ust-Vym punitive camps. The Soviet officials told us to our faces: 'We are going to destroy all of you.' We were made to do the most exacting work. Those who could no longer move or work, were bound ten at a time to a horse, a rope tied around their feet. At the end of their journey, in the forest, their heads had been smashed. Then they were tossed in the fire. The 18th barrack in the Simka camp, about 75 yards long, was built on corpses dug 3 feet into the ground."

In the Ust-Vym women's punitive camp, known as *komendantsky lagher* were Baltic girls and women, all of them sentenced to 25 years. In many cases that term had been commuted from death sentences.

Twenty-five years in an icy desert was "mercy." Life in that camp was so beyond endurance that 60 women hanged themselves in 1948. After this tragic event, a Soviet investigating committee arrived, but it found little left to investigate.

A German who had been in the Ust-Vym punitive camp until 1953 remembers the MVD guards cynically saying in broken German: "Wir nix Gestapo. Wir sie nicht erschießen. Sie fallen selber um!"

## UST-VYM

Ust-Vym lies along the Leningrad—Vologda—Kotlas—Vorkuta railroad, southwest of Ust-Ukhta, in the Autonomous Komi Republic. It is one of the many links in the Soviet forced labor camp system in the Arctic. Both deported "politically and socially dangerous elements" and criminal convicts are interned here in 22 camps. Most political prisoners are Balts and West Ukrainians.

The city of Ust-Vym is situated between the rivers of Vym and Vycheгда, two tributaries of North Dvina, the large stream of northern Russia. Naphtha distillation and woodworking are the principal industries in the city. Inmates of the near-by forced labor camps are employed in lumbering, woodworking and timber transporting. Women also work in the woods. Timber is floated down the Vycheгда, and prisoners are employed in pulling and hauling the logs ashore.

Failure to observe safety regulations causes frequent accidents and subsequent incapacitation.

One of the Ust-Vym camps is known as the Veslyana labor camp.

The first deported Balts arrived there in 1945; an eye-witness who came to the camp in 1950 met about 30 Latvians who had worked there for some time. In 1950, 32 nations, including the United States, were reportedly represented among the prisoners of the Veslyana camp.

The treatment of Balts in the Ust-Vym and Veslyana camps became more severe in 1951, and they were moved to Karaganda and other areas. The prisoners praise two Latvians — a physician and a

women dentist — who unselfishly tried to help their sick fellow-prisoners. The Latvian physician was serving a 25-year term commuted from a death sentence. Through his work in Ust-Vym, he had acquired great authority, and in some cases the camp administration would give in and accept his opinion on exempting some prisoners from work.

## SYKTYVKAR

Syktvkar is the capital of the Autonomous Komi Soviet Socialist Republic. Although it has several woodworking enterprises, there are no forced labor camps in the city. The slave workers are employed in the construction of the Syktvkar-Piniuga railroad sector, as well as in lumbering and the local brickyard. Among the prisoners are many Latvians, men and women, deported in February and March of 1945. Some of the women were sent to Vilgort, four miles from Syktvkar. Close association with Estonian and Lithuanian women who share their fate proves of great value. Specialists, artists and first-rate athletes among the prisoners are employed in the city of Syktvkar. The Soviet administration has found such skilled persons also among the Balts, exempting them from physical work.

The rest of the interned Balts view the privileged workers with distrust. Experience shows that transfer to Syktvkar is possible only with the aid of a Soviet official.

A special Latvian commission came to Syktvkar in 1953 to consider complaints addressed to the Supreme Soviet Council in Moscow by "released" Latvian deportees in the Komi Republic. The petitions had pointed out the trend toward exterminating the Latvians as a national group and suppressing the Latvian language. Such practices, it was said, were at variance with the Soviet Constitution.

The commission sent from Moscow included several Russians, but Latvian communists were invited to join in the investigation. The commission studied living conditions of the "released" prisoners, and subsequently, civilian officials from Soviet Latvia and Soviet Estonia made on-the-spot inquiries.

The petitioners were asked the following questions:

"Why did you join the anti-Soviet partisan movement?"

"Do you recognize Soviet Latvia?"

"Do you regret your actions?"

"Do you pledge to disclose dangerous elements among your nearest surroundings?"

"Do you have any relatives outside the Soviet Union?"

"If so, what are their names and where do they live?"

"What positions did you and your relatives hold before 1940?"

"Do you have relatives in Latvia, and what is their present occupation?"

"Does any of your relatives hold a position within the communist party?"

It is not known whether the inquiry had any favorable results. People familiar with conditions believe that the "correct" answers could contribute to the prisoner's inclusion in the "free" category.

In 1954, individual Balts were reportedly summoned by Captain Lavrinenko, known in Inta as a political officer. He asked them to furnish detailed information, including addresses, on relatives in the West.

## PECHORA

The Pechora camp cluster was set up in 1935 when the Kotlas-Vorkuta railroad was built. Originally, the area was called *Pechorstroi*. Part of the camps lie in the Autonomous Komi Republic, while the rest, the northern camps, are situated in the Archangel administrative district. The climate is continental with short summers. There are many swamps.

Prisoners were employed in building railway embankments and bridges required by the swampy region, in timber cutting, stone chipping, and mining. People interned in the Ust-Usa camp were engaged in naphtha production.

In Pechora, political prisoners were segregated from criminals as early as 1948, while in other forced labor camps this was done later.

After 1947, the number of Baltic prisoners dwindled. Earlier, the Balts and the Ukrainians were the largest groups and some camps could be considered as Baltic camps. Poles, Caucasians, Czechs, Hungarians and Russians were much less numerous.

In 1947 and earlier, Balts were sent to Pechora from Murmansk and Archangel, but later they were moved to other camps. In 1947, members of the Latvian and Estonian Legions, some of whom were considered to be Germans, were also sent to Pechora.

Until 1949, Pechora was the gathering point for all deported and imprisoned persons sent to the forced labor camps of the Autonomous Komi Republic. A great number were transferred from Pechora to Kozhva, Inta, Ukhta and Vorkuta. The prisoners were happy if they were sent away, as conditions in the Pechora camps were miserable. Prisoners lived in shacks which offered little protection against the cold. Steel drums were used for heating in place of stoves.

The NKVD rules revealed clearly the Soviet attitude toward the deportees. For instance, a watchdog was fed 250 grams of meat a day, while a prisoner's ration was 22 grams. Sleuth-hounds were given as much as a pound of meat a day. The lack of meat was to be compensated by double rations of vegetables issued to the prisoners. The interned suffered from dysentery, pellagra and other diseases caused by lack of vitamins.

In 1955/56, when political prisoners were released from punitive camps on a large scale, some of them were settled as "released" in the Kozhva region and Edzhid-Kyrta.

## KOTLAS

Kotlas is an important railway junction of northern Russia. Here the Leningrad—Vorkuta line branches off southward to Kirow. Kotlas has a continental climate. Here tundra has been replaced by a growth of trees, mostly pine and birch. Kotlas is therefore a lumbering area, exploited with the aid of slave labor and, in recent times, also the "released". In general, many deportees who had served their terms

or had been amnestied were settled in the Kotlas-Pechora-Ukhta region.

The first Latvian deportees arrived there during the mass deportations of 1941. It is known that since 1954 other Latvians have been sent there from the neighboring forced labor camps, but they are not compelled to live in regime camps.

Kotlas is a busy place. In addition to woodworking, it has shipbuilding yards, as both the North Dvina and the Vychegda are navigable. As of recently, the northern railroad is being provided with a double track; prisoners are employed in this work.

Kotlas is one of the principal centers for distribution of work slaves. By ships or rail they are sent from here to different destinations.

Worn-out barges are being used for river transportation.

## ARCHANGEL

Unlike other Arctic cities mentioned so far which were built by Soviet slave labor, Archangel has long been known as an important lumbering center and port. The North Dvina links it to the White sea. Archangel has shipbuilding yards and docks, but its economic backbone is the woodworking industry. The port of Archangel is ice-bound for six months. Its climate is maritime.

Deportees are employed in woodworking, harbor and railroad construction, and other work within the city.

Up to 1950 there were many Latvians and Estonians and a number of Lithuanians in Archangel. The deportees included both men and women of various age groups. Beginning in 1949, the Balts were transferred to Vorkuta. A year earlier, war prisoners were taken away. The Balts reportedly had good relations with the Germans, whom they helped with food, so long as they still received parcels from home. The Latvians also got along well with the Jews. The Russians did not like the Latvians and Estonians, and called them aristocratic peoples. Work conditions were not easy. The Russian overseers saw to it that work norms were fulfilled. Even sick and



*Deported Latvians in the Archangel punitive area. A Latvian small-holder, sentenced to 25 years, clad in fufaiika, is flanked by two released men who wear clothing sent to them by their relatives at home.*

weakened people were forced to do hard work. Persons with plump faces were quite badly off. A Soviet brigadier shouted at a Latvian prisoners who had collapsed of exhaustion: "A bull like you can work," although the prisoner's weight had shrunk from 200 to 95 pounds. The mortality rate was high. Tuberculosis was the most common cause of death. Among former soldiers, high-ranking officers succumbed more quickly to the hardships than others.

"Not for one moment could we lose heart," states a former prisoner. "Whoever did, lost also his power of resistance. Even when faced with the greatest difficulties we knew we could not give up and abandon ourselves to despair. Panic and depression meant death."

East of Archangel extends the Nenetsk national territory which forms the littoral belt of the Arctic ocean for several hundreds of miles, facing Novaya Zemlya. In this territory lies the Naryan-Mar punitive area for Balts, with a particularly high number of Lithuanians who were deported in 1941. Because of the Arctic climate life is very hard here and has exacted a heavy toll of human lives.

## MOLOTOVSK

Molotovsk (now Severno-Dvinsk) is a new city of northern Russia which has grown rapidly during the past few years. It lies on the White Sea coast, west of Archangel; a railroad links the two cities. Like all new Arctic cities, Molotovsk has been built by slave labor. Of great significance is the local naval shipyard. Deportees are employed in various construction activity and heavy stevedoring work.

German returnees describe Molotovsk as a place with a high percentage of Balts, brought there, according to them, in two stages — in 1945 and 1948. Wartime cooperation with the German occupation authorities was the charge against the first group, which included a high percentage of officials. In turn, farmers and their wives were numerous among the deportees of 1948. The farmers were charged with having made the compulsory deliveries of farm produce to the Germans, but actually they were deported under Soviet instructions as former owners of collectivized farms. Besides being deported, they were handed hard labor sentences of 10 or 20 years.

At one time one of the Molotovsk camps had 6000 Latvians. They were employed in harbor improvement work, including installation of pipe systems, digging and other hard labor. They were also used in forestry work.

Part of the deported Latvians, including former legionaries, were sent to a White Sea island. This group, which included people of advanced age, served sentences of from 15 to 25 years.

In addition to the Balts, there were many Volga and Ukraine Germans, German war prisoners and members of the Vlassov army.

## POVENETS AND MEDVEZHEGORSK

These localities of East Karelia belong to the *Belomorstroi* camp system. After World War II, several thousands of Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians were sent there to repair the White Sea canal and erect a paper mill at Seguezh. On their arrival, the Balts met a small number of Finns. A Latvian eye-witness says there were 2000 Latvians in his camp and approximately the same number in the neighboring camp. In addition, there were many Caucasians in Povenets and Medvezhegorsk. There also were women deportees; among these the Baltic and German women were on good terms. Women were employed in forestry work.

Medvezhegorsk has coal, copper and nickel deposits. A large part of the deported worked in the mines.

The prisoners included many legionaries who had received sentences of from 7 to 15 years and were employed in rebuilding the Povenets canal which the Russians themselves had blasted during their war against Finland. New dams and installations were constructed. An additional 300 Latvians were sent there in 1945. In the Soviet records they were listed as soldiers, since the Soviets had mobilized them in the fall of 1944. They came to Povenets directly from their barracks in Riga, and lived under more or less the same conditions as the deportees. Many died of starvation. Medical aid was lacking and there were epidemics of dysentery and typhus. The unfortunates swelled up with hunger. The swelling began in the legs and moved upwards, and water accumulated in the body. This, in turn, affected the heart and the blood circulation. Huge cemeteries appeared. The dead were buried alongside a hill in light-colored, loose sand and soon coffins containing corpses were washed up by the rains. Later they were found at the foot of the hill, near a garbage pit. Burying the dead was a simple matter. The guards were accompanied only by the men who dug the graves; there were no funeral rites.

Survivors suffered from serious diseases and became apathetic. When moral breakdown seemed to have seized everybody, a Latvian veterinarian took the initiative to help his fellow-sufferers: he obtained an increase of the porridge ration. Moreover, through his

efforts a book was improvised of plywood and wire for listing Latvians deceased in the camp. A small cross was made opposite each name. The prisoners promised each other that someday they would take this record of deaths to Latvia.

Since the Finnish border is comparatively near, the more enterprising among the prisoners escaped.

## MURMANSK

Murmansk lies in northern most Russia. An icefree harbor makes it an important commercial center. It has a naval base and is also used as a base for scientific polar expeditions.

Deportees are employed in the iron and nickel mines which abound in the Kola peninsula.

It is known that Balts have been deported to Murmansk, but it has not been possible to ascertain their number and employment. As far as is known, the last of the Baltic deportees, and those sentenced under Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code, arrived there in 1949.

## NOVAYA ZEMLYA

This Arctic Ocean island, lying between the seas of Barents and Kara, is invariably mentioned with horror. An unhealthy climate makes it a graveyard of both voluntary and forced settlers. Eternal ice covers one-sixth of its 35 400 square miles. Novaya Zemlya has copper and coal deposits. The aborigines hunt fur-bearing animals and engage in fishing. Storms are frequent and the temperature at times drops to 84° F below zero.

Several thousand Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians were brought to Novaya Zemlya after World War II. Most of them had belonged to or had some connection with the group led by the German General Jäckeln<sup>17</sup>), who together with 52 other fighters of the Kurzeme (Courland) front was sentenced to death. An additional 455 were sent from the Riga Central Prison by way of Kirov, Inta and Vorkuta

to the port of Anderma, from where they were shipped to Novaya Zemlya. Not only soldiers but also female translators, charwomen, kitchen helpers and other wartime workers were considered by the Soviets to be members of the Jäckeln group.

All of them came to Novaya Zemlya, where Soviet security authorities send only those whose death sentences have been commuted to life terms at hard labor.

Among the prisoners was also a considerable number of Latvian partisan leaders whose bravery had caused considerable losses to the Soviet regime. A prominent Latvian partisan chief who was sent to Novaya Zemlya in 1948 boarded a ship in Anderma, some 70 miles north of Vorkuta, with 200 other prisoners. Their nationality is not known, although returnees say that there had been Balts among them.

The prison camps are situated in the northwestern and southern part of the island. In 1946 and later, the northern camp had 3000 deportees and German war prisoners. All had been sentenced for life. Living conditions were atrocious. Reportedly, there were even cases of cannibalism during the first postwar years because of hunger. The camps were supplied by aircraft, but unfavorable weather often caused disruptions. Prisoners tried to secure food for themselves by trapping reindeer.

Primitive dugouts were used as lodging, and criminal convicts served as guards. A German has stated that Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Poles and other Slav nationals remained when he left the island in 1952.

Between Novaya Zemlya and the mainland is a small island which, also, is used as a deportation site. This has been verified by a Latvian female physician, G., who had been interned there. The name of the island is not known.

## CHUVASHIA

Information on the punitive camps in the Chuvash region has been obtained only from Latvian deportees who were there until 1952 and were then transferred to the Krasnoyarsk region where they lived

under a deportation regime. Judging from their sentences, Latvian farmers and intellectuals were sent to Chuvashia during or about 1945, since ten years later their term had expired. The deportees included forest rangers accused of aiding Latvian partisans.

## POTMA

As Vorkuta and Inta, Potma is one of the largest Baltic deportee concentration areas in European Russia. A large number of Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians were sent there from the Arctic camps in the fall of 1955.

Potma lies some 280 miles southeast of Moscow, in the Autonomous Mordva Republic. The Mordvas or Mordovians are a Finno-Ugrian people. Potma has somewhat the same climate as Moscow, with an average temperature of 13° to 22° F below zero in winter. Swarms of mosquitoes, thriving in the swampy region, are a real nuisance in the summer. Potma prisoners say they cannot sleep in the summer because of the mosquitoes. Wolves and bears roam the vast forests and swamps around Potma, which is not a city but a large village. The forced labor camps exist here since 1929 and are officially referred to as *Dublag*. Like other Soviet camps, it mixed, from the outset, political prisoners with murderers and other criminals. In 1950, the Potma camp cluster comprised 36 individual work camps; in 1955, their number decreased by one-half. There were both men's and women's camps. Moreover, many invalids have been gathered and some camps are thus called invalid camps.

A returned German prisoner who had fought together with Latvian partisans in the Kurzeme forests after World War II has stated: "Because of the many invalids the Potma forced labor camps are an appalling sight. In Potma as in Yavas, which belongs to the same camp administration, one meets tuberculosis patients and people with amputated limbs everywhere. These invalids hobbled on crutches or leaned against chairs. Legless invalids moved around, gliding on a piece of board fastened to their bodies. Nobody assisted them; they had to help themselves. But they managed it, their eyes shining as they

made some progress in overcoming their tragic handicaps. It was depressing to watch people with backbone injuries. Except for those who already had artificial limbs when they arrived in the camp, no amputee had any.

"There were people who had lost their arms below the elbows. The camp administration found work for them, too. I made friends with a Latvian partisan. Captured after being shot in the foot, he had been interrogated rather than given medical aid, and his foot had not healed properly. However, this Latvian boy had no regrets. He had fought against a hated regime and had made sacrifices, and this thought comforted him."

Invalids and tubercular persons are employed in lumbering and in the peat bogs. They fell trees and clear forests. The camp operates sawmills, furniture factories, workshops which make wooden cabinets for radio sets, and brickyards. Most of the women are employed in shops making underwear for the Soviet army. Even women with children live in this camp. Some of the women are employed in agriculture, construction and road-repair.

Since the workshops are very close to the barracks, and going to and from work takes only a short time, the daily work hours have been fixed at ten. Those who try to meet the norm, work even longer. All work is based on norms, which at the outset were more or less reasonable, but were increased annually, of late even in mid-year. So now the norms, at record highs, can be fulfilled by very few. In 1948, volume was the main concern, and the percentage of worthless output was high, but after 1948, attention was also paid to quality.

Until the summer of 1952, there was no payment for slave labor, unless one could count as payment extra rations of porridge and bread, and preference in footwear and clothing allocation. Even now, remuneration is often only nominal. While a factory hand may get 100 rubles a month, after numerous deductions, his fellow prisoner, employed in other work, may earn only 10 to 20 rubles. For this sum one can buy neither additional bread nor *makhorka* (coarse Russian tobacco) in adequate quantities. After 1950, conditions improved somewhat only because of food parcels received primarily by German prisoners, who shared them with the Balts just as the Balts earlier had

helped the Germans. The overall improvement in diet was of little significance. Prisoners transferred from Vorkuta claimed the food was much better there than in Potma. This is attributed to Soviet efforts to maintain or even raise coal output in the Arctic. The Potma industries — the making of furniture and underwear — received much less consideration. Since the Soviet food supply in general is strained, preference was given to strategically important industries.

Therefore, prisoners transferred to Potma felt disappointed. While the climate is milder and winters are shorter, the diet in Potma was poorer and mosquitoes were a real plague in this swampy region close to the Oka river. Nevertheless, as stated by some returnees, working and living conditions in Potma camps were much better than in kolkhozes of deportation areas. With the exception of a few model farms, famine and shortages of all kinds prevailed there.

Conditions in Potma improved somewhat after May 1, 1954, when prisoners were paid what they had earned, although even then they had to spend some of their money on Soviet internal loan bonds, thus actually lending money to the Soviet state.

Clothing was inadequate at the outset, but has been improved in recent years. Those who fulfilled the norms were issued both winter and summer clothes. The winter garb consisted of trousers and a long-sleeved waistcoat, both lined with wadding, while the summer outfit, also two pieces, was made of lighter material. Shoes were issued and every two or three years prisoners were given two changes of underwear. Those who worked full norms received new clothing and underwear, while the rest, including invalids, got used clothing. Jacket, trousers and cap were marked with numbers. The camp administration provided laundry service, and recently began to supply adequate amounts of soap. Prisoners were allowed to go to the bath every tenth day.

Obviously, the best clothing, shoes and underwear were given to stool pigeons, whether they worked or not. They also received larger food rations, at the expense of other prisoners.

Disobedience or other offenses resulted in transfer to the punitive brigades. This meant harder work, confinement after work, being prohibited from attending the camp cinema, and the like.

Just as in Vorkuta and other forced labor camps, special punitive barracks have been set up in Potma, where those interned received starvation food rations and had to live in unheated rooms.

Life in the customary wooden barracks was anything but comfortable. Every barrack was overcrowded. The narrow sleeping places (some returnees estimated them to be 30, other 24 inches wide) hardly permitted relaxing the body. Even in this respect, MVD favorites and stakhanovites had privileges. Since the barracks had double-decker bunks, they were not well-aired. Illumination was adequate, but the incessant playing of the loudspeaker was deafening.

Medical care in Potma was satisfactory. It was provided by physician-prisoners. One of them, Dr. P., deported from Riga in the summer 1940, was highly regarded. For many years he had belonged to punitive brigades, doing strenuous work. He has reportedly said: "It won't be so easy for them to work me to death. I like physical work. It strengthens my physique." In recent years, Dr. P. worked as physician in the main hospital of Potma, and as a specialist in nervous afflictions he helped a great many prisoners.

Much depended on good relations between dispensary and hospital physicians. If a patient was refused treatment by the dispensary doctor, the hospital physician could not help him either. It was even worse: if the camp administration interfered — which it often did — the patient did not receive aid in time, his condition rapidly deteriorated, and he perished.

Before 1949, frequent epidemics ravaged Potma and the death rate was catastrophic. The bolsheviks were not seriously concerned until labor became short and replacements failed to arrive in time; only then did they start treating prisoners more humanely. The annual death rate in recent years was 20—25 to every 1500 prisoners. Medicines were available from private sources at high prices, while high-grade medicine was lacking in the Soviet Union in general. German war prisoners received it from their relatives at home.

There was also a lack of medical supplies. V., a Latvian, was hospitalized in Potma. A grave malady seriously impaired his eyesight. In the winter of 1956, his relatives sent appropriate eye-glasses to the Potma hospital, but they did not reach him. The Soviet

authorities said it was not permitted to send optical articles to the Soviet Union. This was not the only case of callous treatment.

Religion was ruthlessly suppressed in the camps. On no occasion were divine services or sermons tolerated, let alone religious groups. Aged people therefore went to the courtyard, lay down in the grass and read the Holy Scripture, which they had managed to smuggle into the camp.

"These old men once caught my attention," says a returnee. "They went down on all fours and started to read the Gospel. They thought they were safe there, but the enemy had noticed them. Guards in the watch-towers had observed them and had telephoned to the guard room. A few moments later they were rounded up and taken to the solitary confinement cell. Later they landed in the punitive barracks or *bur*, as we called it. This happened in the fall of 1955."

The Balts prayed individually or in private, while the Poles said their morning and evening prayers openly, at least while in prison. Latvian priests used to discuss religion with their fellow prisoners. Christmas, Easter and other religious holidays were observed in an inconspicuous manner.

From time to time the camp administration carried out searches, looking for Bibles and religious pictures; possession of religious writings was punished. At Christmas and Easter, prisoners would bring home a pine twig or birch branch, but if a guard saw it, he threw it out. Open deriding of the believers was one of the ways to fight religion.

The general regime in the camps was especially severe until Stalin's death. Camp officials and officers would not converse with the prisoners. Afterwards their behavior became more lax. When intoxicated, Soviet officers would make sarcastic remarks about the political regime; if reported, such remarks could prove fatal to them. When Stalin's death was followed by Beria's fall, the grim authority of bolshevism was shaken, and the prisoners were treated with more consideration. It was not permitted to beat or insult them; offenders against this rule were punished. These changes were felt also in the prisoners' work.

Potma began to receive orders from various ministries which actually had no control over the camps. Disorganization grew. Clashes of jurisdiction between the ministries took place before the eyes of the prisoners.

When Soviet Prime Minister Malenkov amnestied the criminal prisoners, the forced labor camps of Siberia and the Far East region were greatly depleted. To make up for the losses, eastbound transports of labor speedily left Potma in 1953. This affected the Potma factories which employed political prisoners, and their managers went to Moscow to complain against the camp leadership. Also the MVD made its power felt.

Persons who since 1954 had been taken to Potma as "released," were again turned into prisoners and subjected to the rules of regime camps. Ninety-five percent of all prisoners in Potma were political.

There were Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Balts, as well as a number of Hungarians, Rumanians, Yugoslavs, Germans, Caucasians, Jews, Turkmens and Russians. The prisoners were on good terms with each other - especially Balts with Germans and Hungarians. Returned Germans say that Latvians would at times argue among themselves, but not with the Germans. For unknown reasons, the Latvians had numerous conflicts with the Moslems.

To improve the general morale, the prisoners formed musical and similar groups. A German and Hungarian orchestra, with both brass and string sections, proved a great success in 1955. It was intended to cater to the needs of the prisoners, but was soon noticed by the Russian camp administration and its families. To secure a seat at the concerts, the Russians would even climb through windows. The main purpose, however, was to give encouragement to the interned, and this aim was largely reached. The musical instruments were received by the German prisoners from Germany.

The Balts, too, had music. The camp had a reading-room and library, but the only reading matter in Latvian was *Cina* (the organ of the Latvian communist party, published daily in Riga) and communist literature.

As for the right to exchange letters, there were different categories. Some were granted this right as late as February, 1955. Those

sentenced without court trial could not correspond even then. While Germans could write to the West, Balts were allowed to correspond only within the Soviet Union.

One letter per month was permitted. Parcels sent from the West were delivered also to the Balts.

The "released," who lived outside the camp, did not gain much from their release. Finding shelter was not the only problem. Whenever they wanted to buy something, they had to wait in line. They were poorly clad and, as observers state, their standard of living was low.

For the sake of clarity, it will be noted that the Potma regime camps also include the Yavas camp, which has a high number of Latvian and other Baltic invalids. In 1955, Latvians were the largest group in camp No. 11. As late as 1957, Baltic political prisoners were interned in Yavas.

There is also a special labor camp for youths in Potma.

The practice of sending criminal convicts to Potma was resumed in 1956 and, as had been the case in many camps before 1951, political prisoners were again thrown in with convicts. It meant a change for the worse, as the political prisoners were bullied by the *blatnois*. Those brought to Potma were, in addition to everything else, drug-addicts. The *blatnois* made drugs themselves - from poisonous mushrooms, tea extracts or medicines.

The food was still poor in Potma. Bread rations were increased in 1956 and 1957, but other food was inadequate or spoiled. The diet in a sovkhoe attached to the Potma punitive camps gives some idea of the general food situation. In this sovkhoe, interned women, most of whom had recently left the hospital and were listed as convalescents, received in addition to bread, oat flakes cooked in water or a soup of foul-smelling fish twice a day. These women, together with invalids and sick persons, worked from 7 to 12 a.m. and from 2 to 5 p.m.

Because of these conditions three Lithuanians tried to escape in the summer of 1956. They were hunted down with dogs some five miles from the camp. To escape pursuit they had climbed trees. Surrounded the fugitives vainly begged their pursuers not to shoot at them, since

they had to surrender anyhow. One of them was shot down from the tree and died, the other was beaten to death with rifle butts, while the third got a bullet obliquely through his forehead. Nevertheless, he survived. All three were university students under 22 years of age and had been in the camp only one year. Their offense was active opposition to Soviet occupation authorities in their country.

In the summer of 1956 there was a major moving of political prisoners in the Potma camps. Those serving minor terms - that is, up to 10 years - were either pardoned or had their terms reduced in proportion to their fulfilment of work norms. Only those Balts who had been sentenced under Section 58 for "anti-Soviet propaganda" were allowed to return home, while those punished under Section 58.1 - for "high treason" - were sent to Central Asia. As stated by numerous eye-witnesses, many Balts were moved in 1956 to Karaganda. Baltic political prisoners were reported to be in the Potma camps as late as the end of 1957.

## MARFINO AND KUCHINO

Both places are shrouded in mystery. However, returnees arriving in Friedland, West Germany, were able to lift the veil somewhat.

Marfino is in the northern part of Moscow, about one and a half miles from the terminal of a streetcar line. Before 1953 this camp had 300 prisoners, of whom 10 percent were Germans and the rest were Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians, as well as a few people of other nationalities. All of them were selected specialists - chemists, physicists, electrical engineers and mathematicians. This specialists' camp was closed in by other structures. The group of buildings was officially known as "Low-Voltage Technical Institute," but its actual name can be translated approximately as follows: "NKVD Institute for Secret News Transmission." The institute was girdled by a broad prohibited zone which prisoners were not allowed to enter, while free workers had special entry passes. All were closely watched. Alongside the Institute was a small plant which made electric light bulbs and windings, and did precision work. The institute was

assigned tasks connected with the production of devices for scientific research and news transmission.

At the outset, only war prisoners and political prisoners were employed there, but later an increasing number of free people was engaged.

In November, 1952, 24 Latvian, five or six Estonian and five Lithuanian specialists worked in Marfino. In 1953 these and other prisoners were taken away and replaced by free workers.

A considerable number of Baltic specialists landed in Kuchino, another Moscow suburb, where they were employed in the High-Frequency, Radar and Radio Research Institute.

From December, 1949, to September, 1951, Kuchino employed 800 political and war prisoners, more than 200 of whom were Balts. In the winter of 1951/52 the Latvians alone numbered 70 to 80.

It is believed that in 1953 all political prisoners were removed also from Kuchino.

# THE URALS



THE GREAT

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## THE URALS

The Soviet forced labor camps serve to exploit natural resources and colonize new areas. For strategic reasons, the Soviet Union has built large industrial centers east of the Urals. Although there are forced labor camps on either side of the mountain range, their center of gravity lies now on the Asian side. New inhabited centers where the Soviet labor slave and politically-persecuted man has done pioneering work have risen so rapidly that it would be useless to locate all these places even on fairly detailed maps.

One of these places is the Fabrichnoye punitive area, located on the Tavda river, which dates from 1947. Its labor force at times totalled 50 000 prisoners, mostly Ukrainians, Balts, Tartars, Caucasians, Chinese, Hungarians and Poles, in addition to a lesser number of Rumanians, Germans and Yugoslavs.

It has been ascertained that in 1947—1951 the area included the following ten individual punitive camps:

1. Fabrichnoye, with the central administration (in 1953 the camp included 5000—8000 male prisoners),
2. Smytsk (men and women; after 1953, men only),
3. Yelosovo,
4. Novy Marken,
5. Stary Marken (with an especially severe regime and solitary cells),
6. Pyatistenka (women),
7. Sharyguino (women's camp with a large number of Latvians),
8. (name unknown),
9. Podgornaya (later moved 40 miles northward), and
10. Okunyeu (with a severe punitive regime).

W., an Austrian returnee, who was well acquainted with conditions in these camps, has stated that camps Nos. 3, 5 and 10 were for political prisoners only, and that for several years all the ten camps were numerically dominated by the Latvians. The camps lie amidst

virgin forests and the interned have no contact with the outside world.

The same eye-witness has given the following description of working and living conditions in the Fabrichnoye punitive area:

"The prisoners were employed only in forest work and barrack building. They chopped down trees, sawed and hewed logs, made charcoal, and erected barrack villages according to a certain plan. As a practical engineer I was inducted in planning the settlement of these new areas. The Soviet administration worked out a so-called 'general plan.' What did it mean? It was carried out by sending a certain number of people to a specific area. They came to a place which was nothing but thick forest. Their first job was to fell trees and build a guardhouse of rough logs; then they were allowed to build their own lodgings. Other barracks were built around the first one. As soon as this first group of lodgings was completed, they began to build houses for the MVD officers and the camp administration at some distance. These were quite decent houses. When everybody had a roof over his head, sewerage and lavatory facilities were installed in the officers' homes.

"The general plan demanded rapid progress. More than a thousand buildings had to be erected within a year, while at least two thousand buildings were constructed in two years. After a certain time a new settlement area was chosen. And, under the general plan, everything began over again in that corner of the forest.

"The hardest fate was to be sent to a new place as part of the first group, without shelter, inadequately clad, without any of the things needed to endure the cold and get some rest. They were openly and cynically driven to death. For this killing work the Russians mostly selected Balts and Hungarians. Accordingly, their death-rate was higher than that of other ethnic groups. By 1948 the number of dead exceeded 50 percent. Ninety percent of the deaths were caused by dystrophy. It began with swollen feet and diarrhea, and after that there was little chance of survival. We considered dystrophy as an epidemic. In addition, many froze to death or died of lung inflammation. Tuberculosis was not widespread among us. In 1948 the food was improved and the death rate among the surviving

greatly decreased. Actually, there was no real improvement in living conditions until 1953. Beginning in June of that year everybody was paid what he had earned, even if the wage computation was done by Soviet officials. Up to 1953, the prisoners received no wages at all. They had to work 11 hours a day, although officially a shorter work period was provided. Much time was spent going to and from work; in some cases, one had to walk five or more miles. In place of Sundays, there were free days known in Russian as *vykhodnoi dyen*. In the camps of severe regime such a holiday was granted every 2nd or 3rd month."

Close to the Fabrichnoye lies the Turinsk punitive area, about which information is scant. It is known only that the number of Balts in the Turinsk camps was much smaller than in Fabrichnoye.

Baltic political prisoners are known to be in four camps of the Sverdlovsk punitive area. Some of them are employed in armament factories. Balts work also in brown-coal mines, bauxite and ore mining, the woodworking industry and in kolkhozes in the Krasnoturinsk area. It has been learned that a considerable number of Baltic women were transferred in 1954 from Kotlas to Krasnouralsk, where they are not kept in camps and have limited freedom of movement. Other Baltic transports from the Arctic regions went to Pervouralsk. Baltic war prisoners have been seen after 1945 in Orsk and Dniepropetrovsk (European Russia), the Latvians coming from the Kurzeme (Courland) front where they had fought for the freedom of their country to the very end.

A large number of political prisoners, both men and women, were brought to Karabash, not far from Chelyabinsk. They worked in coal and copper mines, a chemical industry *kombinat*, and construction work in the city. In addition to the Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians, slave labor in Karabash also included after World War II members of the voluntary units of Finns, Germans and Norwegians who had fought against the Red Army. In 1947, some of the German soldiers extradited by Sweden to the Soviet Union were sent to Karabash. Significantly, Baltic refugees in Germany who had followed the Soviet invitation "to return home" are serving 25-year sentences in Karabash.

Deported Balts also have been sent to the Kungur chemical plants, and particularly many Lithuanians and other Balts came to Tavda, 200 miles northeast of Sverdlovsk. These included soldiers and civilians, men and women. Most of them served 10-year terms. In 1954/55, when their terms had been completed, they were released from punitive camps, but were settled in a compulsory manner in other regions of the Soviet Union. During their terms, they worked in forests and peat bogs, timber floating and sovkhoses. Part of the Tavda area lies in the taiga belt, the rest in the steppe zone. The Tavda camps belong to the *Urallag* forced labor system.

A fairly large number of Latvian deportees was in Asanka, working mainly in sawmills. Of 1600 people, the largest number were Latvians.

In the northern Ural region which spreads east of Vorkuta lies Salekharda, linked to Vorkuta by a railroad. The vast Salekharda punitive area, with numerous forced labor camps, is in the Arctic zone, stretching across the mouths of the Ob and Taz toward the Yenisei. Administratively, it belongs to the Yamalo-Nenetsk national territory and extends east-west for 700 miles.

The labor force of Salekharda is composed of Ukrainians, Balts, Russians, Poles, Czechs, Finns, Hungarians, Rumanians, Mongolians, and, until recently, Chinese, as well as German and Japanese war prisoners who have now been released. The camps known as *Stroi* No. 501 alone had 48 000 prisoners.

Political and war prisoners in Salekharda are mainly employed in the construction of railroads and power stations and in various industries.

Only a few eye-witnesses have returned to the free world from the Ural region punitive camps, so that information on some of the region's punitive areas is scant, and on others there is no reliable data at all. It is true that beginning in 1955 transports of released German war prisoners have arrived in Germany from Sverdlovsk and Sukhobezvodny. However, these returnees did not come from the forced labor camps of the Ural region, but were merely gathered there in transit camps and therefore their testimony contained little factual information.

## SOLIKAMSK AND THE PERM REGION

Solikamsk lies on the Kama, the largest tributary of Volga, west of the central Ural range in the Perm region.

The camp administration of Usollag-Solikamsk controls 50 individual camps, each with 1000 to 1500 inmates, both political prisoners and convicts. Most of the former are Ukrainians, Balts and Caucasians. Because of their large number the Balts have organized their own work brigades.

Solikamsk is surrounded by valuable forests which are exploited with slave labor. The deported are also employed in coal and potassium salt mines and in limestone quarries. Women work in kolkhozes. They live behind barbed wire and are escorted to the kolkhozes by armed guards. They work 10 hours daily, excluding time spent enroute. The political prisoners were kept behind barbed wire as late as 1956. Solikamsk has chemical plants which also employ prisoners.

S., an East Prussian returnee from the Perm area, has given an account of all the local forced labor camps up to the spring of 1957. His testimony shows that north of Solikamsk are two punitive camps at Borovsk. Between the cities of Solikamsk and Perm (formerly Molotov), in a 120-mile-long belt, is a chain of maximum-severity punitive camps for political prisoners: Kizel, Shesovskaya, Nizhny Uralsk (with the Verkhny Uralsk prison nearby), Polovinka Stvor, the central administration of the *Kizellag*, and, on the left side of the belt, Berezniki and Sisvetskaya Stvor. While Berezniki presents small interest for the Balts, thousands of Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian political prisoners are concentrated in all the remaining camps. The East Prussian has stated:

"I was in the 11th individual camp of Sisvetskaya Stvor, but I knew fairly well what went on and what nationalities were interned in camps Nos. 10, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 24. I also knew what happened in Kizellag, Hubakh and other camps. From early 1955 to February of 1957, there were about 2200 Latvians, 850 Lithuanians, 500 Estonians, 1400 Germans and 2100 West Ukrainians in Sisvetskaya, which was called Little Berlin because many Germans had been interned

there during the first postwar years. Many Latvians were sent to this area in 1951, and many died in subsequent years. I know that in Kizel, where the political prisoners were employed in the chemical industry, a very large number were poisoned by gases in 1948 and 1949, and about 820 or 830 Latvians and Estonians died during those two years alone. In addition, because of the deficient diet, a heavy toll was exacted by dystrophy and tuberculosis. In 1953, up to 20 people perished in a day. Very few have been released from these camps; most of them have died. In the death-barracks of Sisvetskaya,



*Between the Urals and the Soviet Far East extends the taiga — the vast regions of Siberian forests and marshes. Huge numbers of women slave laborers are used in the exploitation of the taiga forests. With primitive tools, inadequately fed and clad, in a cold of 40° F below zero, the politically persecuted women are forced to fell and cart massive trees. Their excessively hard work is supervised by uniformed guards, young, healthy men who also have the right to impose punishments.*

I saw Latvian partisans whose arms had been broken by Chekists. The same method had been followed — usually the arm was fractured in three places. Since medical treatment was not allowed, the bones had not knit as they should and they often bulged. Likewise, many prisoners lacked fingers and toes, or else had them truncated. A Latvian officer, Ernest K. of Riga, had his arms and legs broken and could not stand up. His friends had made a wheeled cart in which, from time to time, he was pushed out from the death-barrack into the sun and fresh air. Total cripples like him are still found in Sisvetskaya by the hundreds. Most of them can only lie down. From long lying, their sides are blue and their feet numb.

“I can also tell how the dead are disposed of. Under the Soviet system, no coffin or shovel is needed to bury a corpse. In Sisvetskaya, the procedure was quite simple. In winter they were tucked away in the snow. When spring came and the snow melted, the remains were chlorinated and then thrown into the river. That settled it, although at times there would be an epidemic of plague. In the Kizel camp cluster alone, one has counted 6000 victims, mostly Balts, who were ‘buried’ in this manner.

“While in Vorkuta, Inta and elsewhere the camp regime became somewhat lighter after 1953, and political prisoners were also allowed to live outside barbed-wire fence, nothing of the kind was known in the camps of the Perm area even in early 1957. Only a very few live in the ‘free’ settlement, which means that they can circulate within a radius of 12 miles. Amnesty did not apply to them. Revision of sentences is rare. On the other hand, the imposing of new additional sentences in the camp is a common occurrence. A man who comes to the Perm punitive region with a 25-year sentence, for example, five years later sees his term extended to 35, 70 or even 100 years. No prisoner escapes being confined from time to time to the solitary cell — a cell three feet long and two feet, four inches wide in a stone hut with a clay floor always covered with water. One can only stand or sit there, but cannot lie down.

“Up to 1957, new political prisoners arrived in the camps of the Perm region. No large transports came from the Baltic countries, only smaller groups of individually arrested persons.”

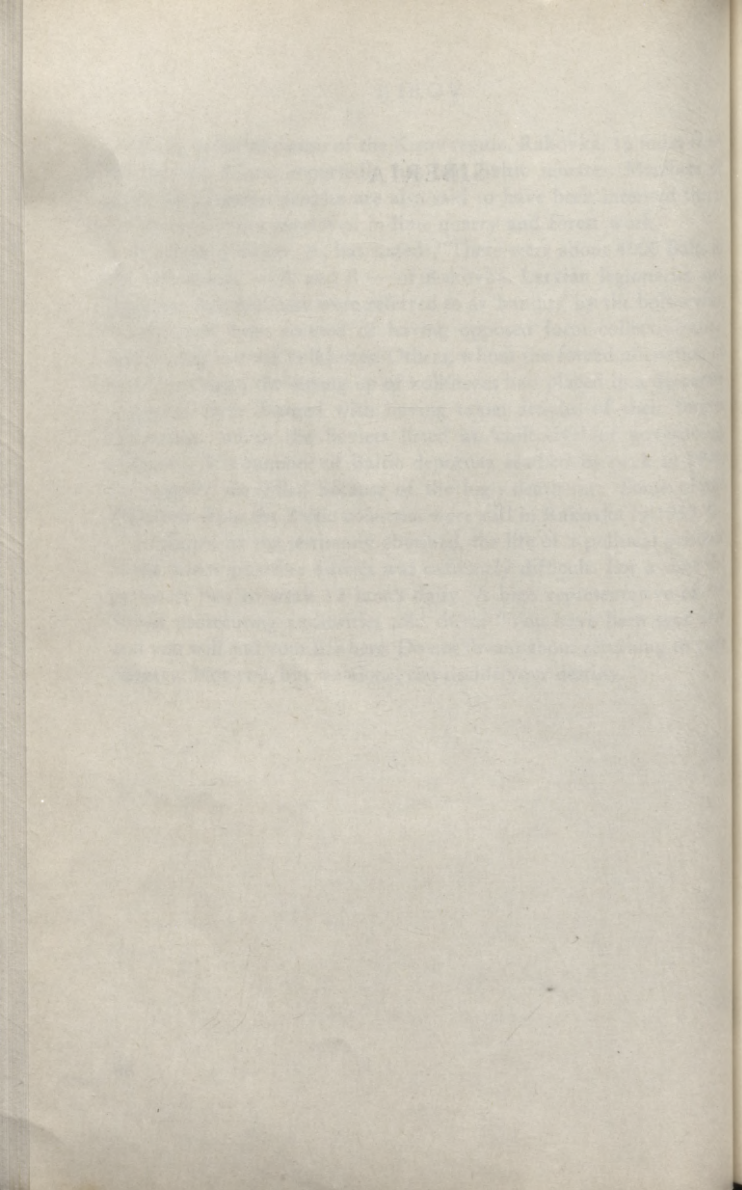
## KIROV

Of the punitive camps of the Kirov region, Rakovka, 16 miles from the city of Kirov, reportedly has had Baltic inmates. Members of other non-Russian peoples are also said to have been interned there. All of them were employed in lime quarry and forest work.

A former prisoner, S., has stated: "There were about 4000 Balts in the two camps — A and B — of Rakovka. Latvian legionaries and partisans interned here were referred to as 'bandits' by the bolsheviks. Several had been accused of having opposed farm collectivization and having burned kolkhozes. Others, whom the forced alienation of their farms and the setting up of kolkhozes had placed in a desperate situation, were charged with having taken articles of their former belongings, which the Soviets listed as 'collective' or government property. The number of Baltic deportees reached its peak in 1948, but rapidly dwindled because of the high death-rate. Some of the deportees from the Baltic countries were still in Rakovka in 1953."

As shown by the testimony obtained, the life of a political prisoner in the Kirov punitive district was extremely difficult. For a time the prisoners had to work 12 hours daily. A high representative of the Soviet prosecuting authorities told them: "You have been sent here and you will end your life here. Do not dream about returning to your country. Not you, but we alone, can decide your destiny."

# SIBERIA



## LATVIANS IN THE FORCED LABOR CAMPS AND DEPORTATION AREAS OF SIBERIA

Cynically sacrificing nationals of captive peoples, Moscow has already turned Siberia into the warehouse of the Soviet Union, to which work slaves are daily adding new assets. Siberia is the key to far-reaching Soviet strategic plans.

From Moscow, across the Urals to Kansk, Tayshet, the Baykal lake and Amur, stretches the northern border of the so-called Soviet strategic zone, whose southern limit extends along a line marked by Kursk, Voronezh, Saratov region, Aktyubinsk, Karaganda and Ust-Kamenogorsk to the border of Outer Mongolia. A line linking Moscow—Chelyabinsk—Irkutsk is the axis of this strategic zone, whose main artery is the Trans-Siberian railway. This zone is about 3440 miles long and 500 miles wide. It borders on regions where virgin soil is now being turned into grain fields; that is, the area between the Urals and eastern Kazakhstan.

Development of new agricultural areas takes place alongside industrial expansion, and is being carried out at an excessively rapid rate, disregarding sacrifices of human lives. In addition, new railway trunk lines and gigantic power stations are being built.

The entire area comprises 1 737 400 square miles, about one-fifth of the total Soviet territory, and is inhabited by about one-half of the total Soviet population. Siberia is sparsely settled and its industries require ever new reserves of labor.

Siberia and the rest of the regions east of the Urals provide the Soviet economy with important raw materials. They furnish the Soviet heavy industry with non-ferrous and other metals, such as nickel, cobalt, lead, copper, aluminum, vanadium, chromium, titanium, platinum, uranium and osmium.

The sixth Soviet five-year plan has moved the center of gravity to Kazakhstan and the Altai and Baykal regions. Just as in the 4th and 5th, slave labor\* also plays the principal role in Siberia in the 6th five-year plan.

In our survey of forced labor camps and deportation regions in Siberia, some areas will be treated in greater detail, others less extensively, depending on how much material was contained in testimony by returnees concerning individual places.

## NORILSK

Norilsk lies in the polar desert, not far from the mouth of the Yenisei. The city of Norilsk is surrounded by punitive camps which belong to the Krasnoyarsk region although the latter extends for 750 miles south. More appropriately one could speak of the Yenisei river region, which occupies an area of 1 045 000 square miles. A small village in 1945, Norilsk is situated in the Taimyr peninsula on the coast of the Arctic ocean. By 1953, through slave labor, Norilsk had expanded to a town of 50 000 and was granted city rights. It has grown further during recent years.

The climate is extremely severe. During the eight winter months the temperature ranges between 40° and 50° F below zero. Europeans can tolerate the cold only with great difficulty.

Nickel, platinum, cobalt, silver, gold, and copper ore are mined in the Norilsk area. There are also rich coal deposits. Accordingly the prisoners are employed in mines, a brickyard, a cement plant, railroad work, road-building and factories. The nickel *kombinat* started operations in 1939 and has subsequently been expanded.

The first Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians, mostly army officers, were deported to Norilsk in 1940 and 1941. Returned German war prisoners have stated that as a result of inadequate food, disease and the execution of several officers, very few of these first deportees have survived. They were employed in building barracks for prisoners of various nationalities who were captured and deported after World War II. "What Katyn was for the Poles, Norilsk is for the Balts," well-informed returnees have stated in the Bonn (West Germany) journal *Das Parlament* in 1956.

In 1945, Latvian Legionaries were brought to Norilsk. As in Inta and Vorkuta, Balts are the second largest group next to the Ukrain-

ians. B., an Austrian, has stated that in the Kaierkan punitive camp, 12 miles from Norilsk, which belongs to the 2nd camp cluster, the largest national groups were the Ukrainians and Balts. In addition, there were Chinese, Japanese, Caucasians, Poles and a smaller number of Rumanians. The political prisoners include many specialists, and therefore some of them work as engineers, designers, geologists, technical draftsmen and bookkeepers. Some prisoners do not reveal their skills, as the Soviets are reluctant to release persons with higher education. Reportedly such education means, in effect, that a man's term is prolonged.

With the aid of slave labor, the Soviet power has succeeded in developing Norilsk into an important center of heavy industry. There are copper works. A plant established in 1950/51 is shrouded in mystery. While the numerous remaining labor camps are enclosed only by barbed wire and wooden watch-towers, this particular plant is surrounded by a massive brick wall with a peculiar type of watch-towers.

The main ore mine is called *rudnaya* and occupies a large area. In general, an ore mine is called *rudnik*.

The Norilsk cement plant has been built on the pattern of Berlin's largest cement plant at Riedersdorf. Raw material for the cement plant is available locally. In addition there is an oxygen plant.

Norilsk also has large repair works, known as RMZ (*remontny mekhanichesky tsekh* — mechanical repairs plant) and a power station TEZ (*teplo elektricheskaya tsentral* — thermo-electrical plant). The plant supplies power to mines, industries and the city. The coal mines are mechanized.

The Norilsk punitive camp system consists of individual camps. One is known as Medvezha, where recalcitrant and additionally sentenced prisoners are sent from other camps. Another individual camp is Kakhrakan, whose prisoners and "released" work in coal mines. The latter are numbered. Mines Nos. 16 and 18 are known. In 1953, mine No. 16 was wrecked by a disastrous methane gas explosion which halted production for a time. In the same year, mine No. 18 turned out 2200 metric tons of coal daily. Norilsk coal is known for its high quality.

The third individual camp comprises brickyard workers who include many officers. The 4th camp is for construction workers. Factory and construction workers employed in the city live in the 5th camp. Most Balts belong to the 4th and 5th camps, whose internal administration is therefore in their own hands, and also work in nickel and copper mines near the city.

The five aforementioned camps are for men, while the 6th is for women who are employed in brickyards and building work.

There are also "camp points" (lagherny punkt) Nos. 6, 7, 10 and 21, some of which employ up to 12 000 persons, both men and women. These, too, are employed in Norilsk industries, railroad building and lumbering.

There is a total of 35 to 40 forced labor camps in Norilsk, which also employ those "released" in recent years.

Norilsk also had a men's camp, whose inmates were taken to work in chains. In addition, there is the prison which existed even before Norilsk grew into a city. The prison, in which also Balts had been confined, is mentioned by returnees who had been brought to Norilsk soon after World War II. The prisoners had been taken there from Molotovsk, stopping at Dudinka. The trip from Molotovsk to the port of Dudinka had taken 10 days. The Kara sea which is used for these transports is open to navigation only during the three summer months. Prisoners and food are therefore shipped only in summer.

Before 1949, many died of starvation. Bread issued to the prisoners was doughy. The distasteful porridge (the low quality *kasha* mentioned by returnees) and oversalted fish soup were eaten only because of hunger. A man's weight often dropped to 105 pounds. Conditions began to improve at the end of 1953. An Austrian states that two or three prisoners died daily in his camp during the famine years, while in 1953 and later the rate dropped to only two or three a week. Epidemics raised the death rate. The prisoners of Norilsk were affected mostly by high blood-pressure, heart diseases, dystrophy, tuberculosis, jaundice and scurvy. All suffered from lack of vitamins.

Prisoners who came to Norilsk after World War II met there Latvian deportees from 1941. At that time the only building which had provided protection against the cold had been the prison. These

outside it, had had to sleep in tents. Later the prisoners had built barracks for themselves.

Norilsk can be reached only by two routes — the ship route by the sea, mentioned above, or the Yenisei river, flowing from the southern region of Krasnoyarsk.

In recent years Norilsk had only political prisoners. They had been separated from criminal convicts much earlier than in other forced labor camps — as early as 1948, according to one testimony. While the two groups were together, the convicts were less closely watched than the political prisoners.

A great relief to the Norilsk deportees was the decision to pay wages. According to the same testimony, also this measure was introduced in Norilsk earlier than elsewhere, namely, in December, 1947. The first wage rates were very low. A woman received 80 rubles a month, while a small bar of soap cost 20 rubles. Life was embittered by constant efforts of the MVD to turn some of the prisoners into informers. Some gave in to threats and did report on their comrades. The interned tried to make the best of their plight by enforcing strict mutual discipline. Returnees speak highly of Mrs. D., a Latvian, who gathered around her Latvian girls, creating a good atmosphere and turning her brigade into a model for the entire camp.

In Norilsk, women employed in fisheries were the worst off.

The ground under the Norilsk tundra is constantly frozen. Trees have only a shallow layer of soil in which to take root. Bent by violent winds, they look more like dwarfed bushes. A hundred-year-old tree reaches only to a man's waist. In winter purga sweeps across the tundra.

Soviet propagandists always speak of the "gilt tundra." Actually, with the exception of a few weeks in the summer, which begins in June and lends it some life, the tundra has a pale-brown tinge or is covered by a crust of ice. Only a shallow layer loosens in the summer over the hard, icy earth through which no water can drain. During the spring thaw, one can walk in the tundra only in waterproof boots. After half a mile, one feels as tired as if one had walked 10 miles along a road.

The bolsheviks have set up kolkhozes even in the tundra. If the indigenous nomads, accustomed to local conditions as they are, cannot be induced to stay in them, one can imagine what hardships the kolkhozes mean for Europeans forced to live there. Frosts occur even in summer. Short polar summers fail to bring forth any normal vegetation. The swampy region is an ideal breeding place only for mosquitoes. If Moscow prides itself on achievements in these regions, one should not forget that the road to these achievements has been paved with the bones of countless martyrs.

Under murderous conditions the prisoners build a railway to Kharpich. In another sector, its construction moves toward Norilsk. Returnees have stated that for strategic and economic reasons the Soviets are building a second Trans-Siberian line as part of a project known as *Kharpichstroi*. The new line will extend from Norilsk to Kharpich and from there to Yakutsk and Vladivostok. Individual sections have already been completed.

The prisoners are also employed in boring tunnels for this line. Uranium has been found in some places where the rocks were blasted.

According to a returnee, there are 476 "camp points" between Norilsk and Kharpich. Each of them has between 1000 and 2000 slave laborers. Living conditions are grim. One can understand why the area between Norilsk and Kharpich was the scene, in 1953, of the largest uprisings ever experienced in Soviet slave labor camps. This question will be treated in another section of this book.

After the mutiny, its leaders were transferred to Magadan, Karaganda, and other forced labor camps. Some were sent from Norilsk to Potma or the Irkutsk and Vladimir prisons, while the wounded were brought to Norilsk camp No. 4 where the hospital regime and general conditions were about the same as in other camp hospitals mentioned so far.

Political prisoners are guarded by fairly large MVD units armed with machine and sub-machine guns, and trench mortars. There are also artillery units. In addition, aircraft are based on the Norilsk airfield to suppress possible new risings.

A number of political prisoners were already declared "released" before the amnesty of the fall of 1955. The Soviets need not fear

that the "released" might escape; this is precluded by the polar climate and tundra. Nor does the Arctic ocean provide any opportunities of flight.

A larger number of political prisoners was freed from the camp regime in late 1955 and early 1956. Invalids and people over 70 years old were permitted to return to the Baltic countries.

## IGARKA

The Soviets began to build the Arctic city of Igarka in 1929, in the midst of tundra, on the banks of the Yenisei. Today, through slave labor, Igarka is a large industrial center. The Soviets pay particular attention to the development of its harbor. An institute, known as *Ghydroarktika* of the Soviet Arctic sea-route administration, recently completed the general plan for the reconstruction of the Igarka harbor. The city area is being doubled by expanding the timber harbor and the woodworking *kombinat*.

Since the perennial ice underlying the soil must be considered in construction work, only low structures are built.

The first Baltic deportees arrived in the summer of 1941, via the sea route. Since then Igarka has become a deportation place of note for politically persecuted Balts.

## DUDINKA

Dudinka is on the estuary of the Yenisei, 160 miles downstream from Igarka. Also here Latvians and other Balts had already arrived in 1941. The deportees are mostly employed in railroad construction and woodworking. It has further been ascertained that deported Latvian women work on near-by Dikson island.

## KRASNOYARSK REGION

The Krasnoyarsk region has an area of 828 000 square miles, but is sparsely settled. In 1939 this vast territory had less than two million

inhabitants. To increase the population, large masses of deportees, including Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians, have been sent there. New transports of deportees have arrived also after 1945. In addition to having forced labor camps, the Krasnoyarsk region is a deportation area with a special regime for the deportees.

The climate is continental with severe winters. The region includes both taiga and steppe areas. The taiga region is covered with virgin forests of tall coniferous trees, which grow so thick that not a ray of sun can penetrate, so that eternal twilight reigns in the Siberian forest. Moss covers the ground and there are many swamps. The largest stretches of forests are found in the river regions, while the valleys are covered with marshes. As is in the north, eternally frozen ground — only the very thin surface thaws even in summer — dominates central and eastern Siberia. Coniferous trees, especially spruce, which do not need deep roots, grow here; in the Angara basin where the soil permits, there are also pine forests. In winter the taiga seems dead. At times not even wild animals are seen. The king of the taiga, the bear, hibernates. Only wolves and hares roam the taiga. There are, however, many more wolves in the steppe.

The city of Krasnoyarsk lies in the southern part of central Siberia. It is a port and an important junction of the Trans-Siberian railway. A new line has been built to Yeniseisk. West of Krasnoyarsk lies Razdolnaya, a city built by slave laborers, where most deportees are Lithuanians.

Between the cities of Krasnoyarsk and Reshoty lies the main part of the forced labor camps established for lumbering, coal mining, railroad building and general construction. These camps are known under the common name of *Kraslag*, and their central administration was in the city of Kansk in 1954. The subdivisions of the camp administration are called *olps*. Returnees have mentioned the following *olps*: 1—12, 14, 15, 18, 22 and 24. Each *olp* consists of four to five "camp points" or camps. Camp point No. 1 normally is the central camp. *Olps* Nos. 1, 5, 9, 11, 12, 15, 22 and 24 have male workers with the exception of No. 11, which also has one women's camp point.



*Latvian farmers in the Krasnoyarsk region, deported as part of the "dekulakization" or farm collectivization campaign. Some of them have been crippled in lumbering accidents in the camps.*

*Olp*s Nos. 3 and 4 are for women. Each *olp* has between 1200 and 8000 prisoners and their total number is estimated at 45 000.

Political prisoners were mixed with criminal convicts and war prisoners serving long terms.

The largest national groups were Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians, all of them political prisoners, and Ukrainians. In addition, there were Germans, Poles, Austrians, Hungarians, Rumanians and Finns.

Up to 1952, mortality was high in the Krasnoyarsk-Reshoty-Kansk punitive camps. Medical treatment was poor, since both physicians and medicines were lacking. The sanitary division chiefs were not allowed to exempt from work more than two percent of the total labor force. As a result, persons with fever and chronic ailments were also forced to work.

These camps were like bottomless barrels — they swallowed ever new masses of hapless people.

In the coal mines, as elsewhere, output was the only consideration, human life and health being a minor concern. Machines, if any, were much more precious than men. Because of the lack of even the most primitive safety devices, accidents occurred daily. These accidents in the less serious cases when life or limb was not lost, generally involved loss of fingers cut by a mechanical saw. Also forest work claimed numerous victims.

The Krasnoyarsk region also claims our attention as a deportation area. While in 1941 the deportees came without heads of families, after World War II, especially during the Baltic mass deportations of 1949, entire families were brought here in huge numbers and were sometimes, but not always broken up. This time the principal aim was to provide labor to a sparsely settled area and to carry out extensive internal colonization.

A very important testimony on the methods of this colonization has been provided by a Latvian Jewess from Riga who came to Krasnoyarsk late in June, 1941, as a deportee. After marrying a foreigner, she has now been released to the free world, and has described the deportation and the first movements of the deported Balts on the banks of the Yenisei, which were to be "opened up to civilization"

through their work. This testimony enables us to reconstruct the deportation technique of June 14, 1941:

"In Riga we were packed into cattle-cars, women and men separately, even if they belonged to the same family. My mother and I were left together, while my father was separated from us. Our train moved rapidly to its destination, Krasnoyarsk, with only short stops. We could not even get water to quench our thirst; at any rate, armed NKVD guards would not allow us to leave the train. There were pregnant women and sick people among us. Some died under-way. At a rail junction, one of the men's cars was attached to the women's and children's train by mistake. This car included my father, and so in Krasnoyarsk our family was united again. In Krasnoyarsk, where we arrived on June 22nd or 23rd, we were handed certificates stating we had been sentenced and were to remain deported for 20 years. The certificate pointed out that it was not permitted to leave the deportation site. And then, one day, we were embarked in a queer type of ship which previously had carried cattle, and we were brought in caravans down the Yenisei river northward. There were about 1000 of us.

"Soon people were set ashore in groups of ten or fifteen. No house, no man was seen in those places.

"Then came our turn. The river bank where we disembarked bordered on a virgin forest. For a while we stood there with empty hands, oppressed by despair and uncertainty, but then we began to explore our surroundings. Wherever we went, there was not a trace of man.

"Fortunately, it was midsummer, which is warm even in this region of the far north. Women started to pick berries in the woods. For quite a time berries were our only food. A few weeks later we met the first human beings — the indigenous Tunguzs. Later, a few miles further on, we found an establishment which the Russians call *faktoriya*. People working there loaned us saws and axes. When they saw we were city-dwellers and quite inexperienced in forest work, they taught us to handle these tools. Summers are short here and we hurried to build a shelter. Somehow we managed to do it. My old father, who had been a merchant in Riga all his life, soon learned

to fell massive trees, and between us we prepared the building material.

"This was the beginning of our life in exile, amid virgin forests and in Siberian cold.

"As we learned later, other deportees had been put ashore at Turukhansk, near Norilsk, in Igarka and Dudinka, mostly along the Yenisei and its tributaries. That entire region is filled with Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians. I do not know why, but some were released in 1945. They left with the permission of the Soviet authorities, but the communist officials in the occupied Baltic countries accused them of having come home illegally. When the contrary was proved, the bolsheviks placed the blame on some error of formality made in Krasnoyarsk, and the returnees were again deported to Siberia. Until 1950, families were not permitted to live together. But the individual deportees kept together as much as possible; that I can say about all deported Latvians. They helped each other and all of them hoped sometime to go back to Latvia. Only this hope kept their spirit alive.

"Nevertheless, many died during the first deportation years. In 1942, many were sent further north. And again, without any aid, they had to build lodgings for themselves and, in addition, perform the work assigned to them. Often one had to be content with primitive shacks built by women. The life of these deportees in the taiga was hard and hopeless.

"Nobody knew why we had been deported. It seemed that some error had been committed and many wrote to different Soviet ministries that they had been punished without guilt. In all cases the reply was that their sentence and deportation orders were correct. Such answers arrived even in 1956, fifteen years after the first deportations. The Soviet authorities and officials stressed: 'You are here for good!'

"Hearing it, some married women remarried and began a new life. Most of these marriages were concluded between the deportees themselves. Later transfers mixed women with men, and some were sent to a deportation area after having served their term. Russian officials and members of the communist party would not marry deported women, while the latter did not want to marry the local Tunguzs.

"The communist party regarded the deportees as second-class people whom a party member should not marry. When an 18-year old Russian communist youth fell in love with a Latvian girl, the communist youth organization told him: 'Either leave the organization or do not marry'."

The same eye-witness has also described the general living conditions and changes in the regime:

"The deportees were especially hard up before 1950. Many died of starvation. Then conditions improved somewhat and became tolerable after Stalin's death. Beginning in 1953, families were permitted to unite. If one's health was affected by the climate, he was permitted to move to another region of Russia. Teenagers were allowed to attend high school. School graduates, however, experienced difficulties. When applying for a better job, a boy or a girl had to fill in long questionnaires and to give a detailed account of his life, stating his father's former position and his own social origin. The principal consideration was the applicant's social origin, not his qualifications. If in recent years a specialist among the deportees obtained a better job, this meant a certain risk for the employer, that is, the chief of some office or works.

"The deportees had to be cautious in voicing their opinions. Before 1953 'plain talk' was severely punished. The sentences were imposed by the administration, as well as by the so-called *troika*. Terms of up to 25 years were given without hearing or trial.

"Passports were issued starting in 1955, at first to aged people and thereafter to high-school students. All deportees had not yet received passports by 1957. Those released in 1955/56 were required to sign, in the MVD office, a pledge not to return to their former residence and not to claim their arbitrarily nationalized property."

How many Baltic deportees are left in the Krasnoyarsk region? Their exact number is not known, but it is large. Judging from the testimony of a well-informed returnee, the region was the principal destination during the mass-deportation of Balts in 1949. Most of these deportees were farmers who had lost their land through the compulsory farm collectivization completed in that year. The same source says that Balts were brought to Krasnoyarsk region in large

parties and were settled in more or less compact groups. In some instances, it is said, they were even permitted to choose between various settlement places.

Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians, thus settled in compact groups, could keep together from the day of their arrival, assisting each other as much as possible. Indeed, many people decided to stick together while still in Latvia, when the deportation wave swept the country. All the inhabitants of a rural parish in the Liepaja district reportedly decided to join those whom the MVD had selected for deportation. The Latvian farmers would say: — "Today you are taken away, tomorrow will be our turn, so it is better to stick together."

Some single women and widows with children joined the deportees exiled to Krasnoyarsk for fear of difficulties which would beset them if they were deported at some later time, and because in 1949 living conditions had become so difficult in Latvia that remaining there did not hold out any promise. Similar decisions were also prompted by the news that, unlike 1941, family members were not separated, and that in some places in Siberia it had even been possible to form clusters of Latvian settlements.

To the Krasnoyarsk region had also come a large number of officers of the Latvian Legion whom the Soviet tribunals had sentenced to 10 or more years of forced labor without hearing or trial. Those who had completed their 10-year term were not allowed to return home, but were sent to eastern Siberia under a secret MVD order. They had asked the authorities in their former place of residence in Latvia to grant them residence permits, but for the above reason their requests had been rejected.

"Here they live," states a German returnee, "working in kolkhozes, machine-and-tractor-stations, and woodworking establishments, or as resin collectors and lumberjacks. A man whose health is not ruined and who receives help and gift parcels from home lives a quite acceptable life according to Siberian standards. Everybody has become more or less acclimatized and through diligent work has cultivated a small 'farm' of his own, hoping that some day he will be amnestied and allowed to return to Latvia."

The Krasnoyarsk region is so vast that one cannot treat it as a single unit. A description of the life of Baltic deportees must therefore take into consideration the peculiarities of individual areas.

In the Kazachinsk area, about 180 miles north of the city of Krasnoyarsk, some 20 or 30 Latvians are found in each of ten villages scattered along the Krasnoyarsk-Yenisei highway.

"The bulk of the deported Latvians," states a former German war prisoner, "is made up of persons charged with collaboration with forces 'hostile to the Soviet Union.' These have to serve at least seven or eight years of hard labor, and are exiled to Siberia for life. Many have asked their families to join them in the Krasnoyarsk region, where life seems more tolerable than in the Soviet-occupied homeland. The amnesty announced in the fall of 1955 for offenses committed in 1941—1945 and prosecuted under Section 58.1a or Section 58.1b (high treason), Section 58.6 (espionage) or Section 58.10 (anti-Soviet propaganda) of the Soviet Criminal Code, applied only to few Latvians, since most of them had also been sentenced under Section 58.11 (membership in resistance groups). The latter provision was not listed in the amnesty, and the MVD holds the view that persons sentenced under it do not come within the amnesty. It has been protested that neither Section 58.11 nor Section 17 (inciting or participation in a crime) envisages an independent offense, but instead one connected with offenses covered by other sections of the code. These objections are disregarded. The 'release paper' issued to amnestied has limited value, as it states, among other things, '... released under amnesty . . . as a traitor of the fatherland and member of the fascist occupation army.' These persons are issued permits to leave the Krasnoyarsk region, but experience shows that if they return to Latvia they are running new risks, or at least are threatened by hostility from the local Soviet agencies (executive committees, militia). Many hold that under the circumstances it is better to stay and wait for better times. 'Let us wait, until the weather improves in the home country,' I heard many Latvians say. Such was the situation in Krasnoyarsk at the end of 1955."

Latvians and other Balts settled in the Kazachinsk region are mainly employed in lumbering, and technically their employer is the Forest

Economy Ministry in Moscow. Jews from Latvia deported in 1941 have also been found there. While the heads of families of these deportees were interned in forced labor camps, their wives and children were sent to eastern Siberia.

All deportees in the Siberian deportation regions must regularly register with the MVD authorities from the very first day of arrival.

Many men deported in 1941 and placed in forced labor camps have died, and therefore most women deported at that time are widows who live with their children.

Youths who grew up in the Krasnoyarsk region, even those from deportee families, are allowed to attend Soviet schools, and some — who belong to the communist youth organization — have even entered universities.

Let us take a look at life in another village.

Five hundred miles from the city of Krasnoyarsk lies Yartsevo. In this village, too, there were several hundred Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians. In 1955, its total population exceeded 4000. Yartsevo is an old village which has grown rapidly in the past 15 years. When the first deportees came, it had two streets, but now there are five. Yartsevo has no railway connection, but can be reached from larger centers by ship. On especially important occasions Soviet officials come by plane.

In winter the temperature sometimes drops to 75° F below zero. A reading of 13° F below zero has been registered on May 22nd in individual years. Spring sowing is in June; harvesting in September. There are foxes and bears in the forests around Yartsevo.

Most deportees collect resin or work in lumbering, wood working, and farming. G., a Latvian, works in the village establishment which runs a joiner's shop and a flour mill. Before 1954, he built a small house for himself, his wife and two children. He does not own it, it is collective property which he is permitted to use. Since he lives by himself, he may keep a cow and two hogs. Another Latvian is allowed to keep even two cows. But keeping animals entails high taxes, and procuring fodder is a problem.

In Yartsevo have been gathered people sent directly from Latvia, as well as political prisoners who first were in a punitive camp or

prison. Those released from prison had to report to the MVD twice a month, the rest once a month. As of January, 1955, the deportees are exempted from reporting, and are allowed to choose another residence. Several Latvians have moved to the city of Achinsk with its reportedly better job opportunities. The Latvians are industrious, and even under the difficult Siberian conditions their diligence has secured them a relatively better living than the locals have. It has been even said that through their perseverance and intelligence the Balts, after 10 years, are better off than local Russians after 100 years.

In principle, the change of residence is a free choice, but in practice it depends on the employer. Without his approval it was until recently not permitted to change one's place of residence — in other words, one's place of work — in all of the Soviet Union, and especially in Siberia. The deportees are most eager to leave the poverty of the kolkhozes and sovkhozes, which would be left without labor if they were allowed to do so.

There is a public school with supplementary classes in Yartsevo. Attendance is compulsory, but some families cannot avoid having their children work, and this has an adverse effect on their studies. Since 1955, it is allowed to celebrate divine services. For the Balts, services were held by a Baptist pastor in a room. The nearest church is in Krasnoyarsk.

Yartsevo also has a home for the aged. Conditions are not satisfactory there, and many old people prefer to stay with the families of their children or else join another family. In such cases they are paid a small old-age pension by their former employer.

Under a special ukase issued in 1955, families in the Krasnoyarsk deportation region were allowed to unite. Prisoners "released" from forced labor camps may also move to the Krasnoyarsk region. Those released from Tayshet, for instance, joined their families in the MVD-supervised Mindalinsk sovkhoze in the Sukhovuzinsk area.

There are villages in the Krasnoyarsk region where all three Baltic nationalities together represent more than 50 percent of the population. Other nationalities are Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Mongolians and Buryats, with only a few indigenous nomads.

Since 1955, the Soviet authorities issue inland passports to deported Balts. Their nationality is stated to be, for instance, Latvian, Lithuanian, German. Only seldom did a Balt receive a passport before 1955. A passport holder is not required to report, although the MVD continues to watch him inconspicuously and spies on him.

Some deportee children do not speak their mother tongue. Latvian children of pre-school age talk in Latvian with their families, but in school they become estranged to their native language, especially if they have few Latvian school comrades. Children spend little time in their parents' company, as both father and mother are sent to work. Although work hours are limited, the Soviet authorities give the adults so many additional tasks that home is just a place for sleeping, and true family life is not feasible.

The Soviet authorities create conditions which promote mixed marriages, especially between non-Russian women and Russians or local men.

In addition to "political re-education" and the usual Soviet propaganda, the policy of russification is felt everywhere.

The youth is under constant pressure to join communist and atheist organizations. On November 7th, the October Revolution Day, all deportee children had to come to the ceremonies with red kerchiefs around their necks.

Larger number of Latvians are known to live in the following localities of the Krasnoyarsk region: the districts of Udereisk, Ust-Yeniseisk and Yeniseisk, the cities of Achinsk and Turukhansk, and the whole area of Turukhansk, about 750 miles north of Krasnoyarsk.

Deported Latvians have been met in Yeniseisk and the Evensk national territory, which is included in the Krasnoyarsk administrative region. Graduates of science faculties of the University of Latvia are working in the Evensk territory. Reportedly they had refused to go there voluntarily, and have been subject to reprisals. These Latvian specialists have been seen in Dubrovsk, Machanovsk, Bruksno and other towns.

The Krasnoyarsk central station features a marble plaque, stating that on March 4, 1897, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin arrived here as an exile of the Czarist government, and that on July 11, 1913 there came

as a deportee Yosif Visarionovich Stalin, whose settlement place was near Turukhansk.

The area where the leading bolsheviks spent their deportation time is now the place of deportation of the victims of bolshevism. Has not the same fate struck both the Soviet deportees and the political opponents of the Czarist regime?

It may seem so. Actually, there is a great difference between the former and present deportations. A vast difference.

Lenin had been deported, but he could remain unmolested in the house of the Krasnoyarsk book collector Yudin, and read his volumes. He enjoyed the host's hospitality, and could engage in his studies and dream of world conquest. The Czar and his police had only compelled Lenin to change his residence.

In the Lebedev street in Krasnoyarsk there still stands a small three-room house with large light windows. This house was once owned by Ivan Ivanovich Samoilov. He sympathized with the revolutionaries and gathered Lenin, Stalin and other conspirators for illegal meetings in his house. All those who were listed as deported to the Turukhansk area came here whenever Stalin invited them. Their freedom of movement was not restricted, friends sent them money for living and travel, they were not forced to work.

The Czarist deportee Stalin did not perform any physical work at Kureika on the Yenisei, where he lived together with Sverdlov. Stalin sat in a well-heated room, reading Karl Marx and newspapers, and translating a book by Rosa Luxemburg. After a hard day's work, local fishermen came to him for long chats.

Such was deportation in Czarist time.

What it is today — even for those who are wantonly designated as "socially dangerous elements and political enemies" — is shown by testimony on the sufferings of the Balts in the Krasnoyarsk region and in other Soviet deportation sites and forced labor camps.

## MARIINSK

A little but notable place of Baltic deportees with forced labor camps is Mariinsk on the Trans-Siberian line between Krasnoyarsk

and Novosibirsk. Its climate is continental, with harsh winters lasting more than five months. Most deportees are employed in lumbering, timber floating and kolkhozes, as well as in gold-mining, wood-working and papermaking.

The punitive camps belong to one administration, known as *Siblag*. Another group of camps is designated as Mariinsk-Ogorodniki, which has two men's camps (Nos. 1 and 4) and also two women's camp (Nos. 2 and 3).

Latvians are reported to have been also in camps Nos. 6 and 8. The largest known number of Balts was in the Suslovo and Orlovo-Rozovo camps, with considerable contingents also in Marrazpree, Marogorod, Berikul, Marotdelniye, and the 31st building camp.

The Mariinsk camp administration controlled about 20 forced labor camps, some of which were liquidated following the amnesty to criminals after Stalin's death. Prior to that the Mariinsk camps were referred to as corrective camps (*zaklyuchoniya laghera, izpravitelniya trudoviya laghera*). They were turned into regime or punitive camps for political prisoners only after the release of the criminals who were allowed to return home, while the political prisoners, most of whom were deportees from West Ukraine and the Baltic countries, had to stay. The same fate befell the Germans of Russia.

Some of the Germans of Russia who had served their term left the camps eventually, but were settled in the neighboring areas. Invalids remained under camp regime, working in sewing and weaving workshops. Their work norms were excessive, which made their situation very difficult. All invalids were political prisoners. They included a well-known Riga clergyman.

As late as 1953, the work hours varied from 10 to 12, depending on the brigade. To fulfil the norms one had to work overtime. This certainly did not mean additional remuneration, but only saved one from being labeled as a "saboteur."

Work in the kolkhozes was especially hard. At harvest time one worked around the clock, in shifts. Since winter came early, harvesting went on during snowstorm periods. "We threshed grain under the open sky," says one of the returnees. "We trudged to the fields three to five miles along snow-packed roads. After the fifth shift, I collapsed

and spent five weeks in the hospital, whose equipment was quite 'Siberian.' Also, one could rely only on the physicians who were political prisoners. Medicines were lacking. The hospital food was better than our usual diet, but still below subsistence levels. Only bedbugs, vermin and fleas were plentiful. Every tenth day we went to the bath. This raised our spirits and provided some degree of hygiene. However, soap and water were in short supply. We were given a minute dab of green soap and five to seven liters (a liter roughly equal to a quart) of water. A pail of water had to suffice for each man."

Two miles from Mariinsk was situated the transit camp "Razpred." Every deportee passed through it.

The deported Balts included, as an Austrian girl put it, "a lot of women." They clung together, because the Russian women criminals tried to push around the political prisoners. On the other hand, relations with the Ukrainian women were good. The small group of German women were soon on friendly terms with their Latvian and Estonian fellow-prisoners.

The women were separated from the men's camps only by barbed wire.

According to information available to the Latvian Red Cross, the Mariinsk punitive camp inmates included those deported in 1941 and later. Among them were farmers, fishermen, forest rangers, nurses, pharmacists, students and former soldiers. Most of them were in the age groups 22—60.

The women's camps included Latvians sentenced under Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code. Some served eight years, others longer terms. Even those whose terms were less than ten years were not allowed to return home after the expiration of their sentences. They were either transferred to the Krasnoyarsk deportation region, or else remained near Mariinsk as "released." Thereupon they invited their old mothers, who lacked other support, to join them.

The "released" women in the Mariinsk region reportedly earned 160 rubles a month in the winter, and up to 300 rubles in the summer. These rates were paid in sawmills. Women received the same wages as men for equal work.

Eye-witnesses state that earnings dropped in winter because Russian mill-hands would often fail to report for work, and the sawmills could not operate at capacity.

In the summer and in harvest time sawmill workers had to work in the nearby kolkhozes, as the kolkhoze people were apathetic and indifferent to their work. While working in the kolkhozes, the prisoners received wages from their sawmill. The Russian kolkhoze workers came to work at 11 a. m. and quit at 4 p. m. They openly admitted that they did not care about work, since they could not earn anything anyhow. Only the larger kolkhozes which were to be developed into model farms had tractors, and soil cultivation methods were generally primitive. The kolkhoze people were poorly clad. Many wore shoes made of bast.

With their normal salary the "released" could not provide for themselves, so they worked two shifts, or 16 hours.

A kilogram (2.2 pounds) of poor-quality bread cost 2.40 rubles; meat was 24 rubles a kilogram; potatoes fetched about the same price in winter, while butter was even more expensive. Instead of butter or margarine, the deportees as well as the local population used sunflower oil, which cost 9.50 rubles a liter (a liter equal to 1.056 quarts).

The food situation in the work camp before 1953 had been even worse.

A deportee who failed to fulfil the work norm was given only 300 grams of bread a day. Those who met the norm received a double ration. Soup was watery, without fats, and, as in Vorkuta, a broth of small salted fish was served here. Women who had the chance to drink some of the skimmed milk intended for hogs were considered fortunate.

MVD guards escorted the prisoners to and from work. Otherwise, the camp equipment and guard system was the same as in camps described above.

Most Baltic women had completed their sentence by the spring of 1956. Some managed to return home, but during the long years of prisonership they had contracted tuberculosis or heart ailments.

## KEMEROVO REGION

The Kemerovo region lies southwest of Tomsk, the headquarters of a special punitive camp administration which controls 14 individual camps. This region lies partly in the taiga, partly in the steppe belt. Coal is mined, and deportees are employed both in mines and the kolkhozes. Deportees include men and women. The Balts are not the largest national group, and are scattered over many camps.

A man from Riga who spent 1949/50 in the Novo-Ivanovsk sovkhose has stated: "The managers of our sovkhose were criminal convicts. They would maltreat the others. We were escorted to work by two armed guards mounted on horseback. One of them rode in front of the workers' column, the other behind it. In addition, there were sentry dogs. Escape attempts ended by being shot to death. I remember one fugitive who was riddled with bullets. Our camp was enclosed by barbed wire. This sovkhose engaged in animal husbandry. Until 1950, no wages were paid. The food was rotten. We lived in dugouts. Most of the prisoners were Moslems. Only a few Latvians were there."

The main resource of the region is coal. The center of the deposits is Stalinsk, and they are known as the Kuznetsk coal basin which belongs to the Ural-Kuznetsk *kombinat* and is the richest in the Soviet Union. It occupies a large part of the Kemerovo region. A considerable number of the deported Balts work in coal mines, and, until 1957, on the Stalinsk-Abakan railway line. The length of this new trunk line is about 235 miles. According to the Soviet plans, it was to begin hauling ore to the Kuznetsk metallurgical plants, and coal from the new Tomusinsk mines in 1958.

## TOMSK REGION

Together with Krasnoyarsk, the Tomsk region is one of the largest settlement areas of Balts after the mass deportations of 1949. Three thousand Latvians from Riga were sent to the Plotnikovo district as early as 1948. There they met Crimean Tartars and West Ukrain-

ians. The Baltic deportees were divided into work groups of 50 to 150 men, and were sent to various places. Specialists were used in skilled jobs, the rest in routine work.

Concerning a transport of Latvians to the Tomsk region, it is known that they were loaded directly from trains into a barge and were taken down the river to sparsely settled areas. It had been planned to put the deportees ashore at different places as the long voyage proceeded. But since the Latvians reportedly refused to go ashore on a desolate bank, the transport escort pumped water into the barge and forced them to abandon it.

In 1949, the Balts in the Tomsk region suffered from a mass epidemic. The number of dead is estimated at 20 percent.

In 1953, workers for Inta mines were recruited among the deportees of the Tomsk region. However, care was taken not to allow the deportees to join their families in the Arctic regions.

In the Tomsk region, Latvians and other Balts were assigned work in the sovkhozes.

In 1949, most deportees arrived with their families. Large Baltic centers were formed in the districts of Kolpachevo, Parabela, Asino, Kozhevnikovo, Kargasovo, Kologashevo, Karotinsk, Molganovo, Luganovo, Secharsk, Zyryansk and Teguldeisk.

In 1955, the Soviet authorities informed the deportees of a possibility of their returning to Latvia. There were, however, three conditions:

1. that none of the members of a deportee's family still had to serve a sentence imposed under Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code;
2. that three members of the communist party in Latvia guaranteed the deportee; and
3. that a Soviet Latvian kolkhoze or establishment was willing to sign a labor contract with him.

In practice it was almost impossible to satisfy these conditions.

The MVD declared itself willing to ease the return of prisoners who were prepared to become informers. Most Balts therefore demonstratively abstained from applying for repatriation.

Balts who had reached the age of 65 could return, provided they had someone willing to support them in Latvia. Since many relatives

were also deported, even in this case the return was beset with almost insurmountable difficulties.

Living conditions improved in the Tomsk region in 1953. New hospitals, cinemas, political clubs and stadiums were being built.

The Soviet authorities had declared that deportee children could attend secondary schools and universities. But even here reality was different. About 80 percent of the Baltic deportee children who wished to go to high school were rejected on various pretexts. The remaining 20 percent were allowed to compete for admission, but most of them were later screened under certain instructions.

The official work hours are eight. Usually, an additional four hours must be worked "for the people," that is, help to build political clubs, to arrange the so-called "red corners," and so on. Promises are made of better jobs, to induce the deportees to join the communist party or become informers.

## OMSK REGION

Omsk is the largest city in Western Siberia. It is situated on the Irtysh river and is an important junction of the Trans-Siberian line.

The city is surrounded by forced labor camps whose administrative headquarters are in Omsk. In addition, the local MVD handles deportee affairs in the whole deportation region. Together with Tomsk and Krasnoyarsk, the Omsk region is one of the principal Baltic deportation areas in Siberia.

Information about Balts in the Omsk forced labor camps is scant. It is merely known that larger numbers of Balts have been seen in the camps Nos. 122/2 and 122/5, which also had many Koreans and prisoners from Soviet satellite countries.

The Omsk region covers an area of 557 530 square miles, but is sparsely settled. From 1949 to 1954, the population of Siberia rose by about six million and the largest part of the increase was in the Omsk region. Large masses of Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians were brought there in 1949. The predominantly agricultural area needed soil tillers, and most of the deportees from the Baltic countries

were farmers. In recent years many political prisoners were also brought from the Tayshet and Bratsk forced labor camps, where they had built railroads.

So far the largest Baltic concentrations are known to be in the districts of Lyubinsk, Ilyanovsk, Sherbakul, Tarsk, Bolsherechensk, Pavlograd, Nazivayev, Maryanovsk, Krutinsk and Tavrichesk, as well as in the Vostochny sovkhoze near the Kaganovich railway station.

Captured Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian partisans were gathered in Cherlak and vicinity in 1947. In addition, there came large numbers of what the Soviets designated as "bourgeois." Under Decree No. 268 B, issued in March, 1947, a "bourgeois" was a Latvian whose property did *not* exceed the value of Ls. 10 000 (approximately 1940 U.S. dollars) in free Latvia. Those whose property was above this limit faced even greater difficulties. To be able to stay in the city of Cherlak they needed special residence permits. Such permits were issued only if guarantees were received from three communist party members and even then they were valid only for six months and required renewal.

An employer who engaged such a deportee had to report the fact to the militia within 24 hours.

If family members of a "bourgeois" had evaded deportations or had stayed behind in Latvia, they were left alone only if they could present a certificate from an industrial establishment stating that they "were absolutely indispensable for the work of the establishment."

The regulations concerning the "fight against the bourgeois" were applied also to those whose "record" indicated such origin.

In 1948, about 12 000 Estonians, 8400 Latvians and 4000 Lithuanians were gathered in Cherlak. All did not stay in the town. In groups of 200 or 300, most of them were sent to forest work.

When deported, they had been allowed to take along 160 kilograms (about 350 pounds) of goods, the children's quota being half of that amount. Transportation was in cattle-cars, as in 1941, but families were normally not separated this time.

This did happen, however, if a family member was sentenced under Section 58. After a time the prisoners obtained from the



*Latvian women with children born in Siberia. In the last few years, families have been allowed to unite in the deportation areas, provided the husband has served his term.*

security organs in Cherkak the permission to join the family head or other family member who had been sentenced under Section 58 but had served his term.

People in this deportation area were organized in work groups. For every 300 workers there were 40 invalids or persons unfit to work. The able-bodied thus supported not only their children but also family members who were unable to perform hard work because of age or general weakness.

In Cherkak the deported worked in lumbering, woodworking, synthetic gasoline production and auxiliary jobs. By working strenuously, one could earn 400 rubles a month.

In 1949, part of the Balts were compelled to go to the Yakutsk region to work. This semi-compulsory recruitment could not be

refused by those born in 1928—1935; they were given to understand they were doing this compulsory work instead of military service, which was not required from them for political reasons. In Yakutsk they were employed in railroad construction.

Deportee children were allowed to attend a seven-year public school.

In 1951, there began new deportations from Cherkov to the Irkutsk region. Deportees who had built a shack or house in their spare time lost it to the city.

At the same time new transports arrived from occupied Latvia. Some had joined the transports voluntarily for fear of denunciations, or because they could not make a living in their own country, which was invaded by foreign elements.

In 1953, three women and a man among the deportees decided to try to go to Moscow, without permission, to see Malenkov. They were arrested enroute and brought back to Cherkov under heavy escort. To their surprise, they were not punished. The Soviet authorities merely announced that unauthorized departure from the Omsk region would entail a sentence under Section 58.1 of the criminal code in addition to another provision which provided for ten years of hard labor as a minimum sentence. This warning was published in Order No. 4647.

Living conditions in the entire Omsk region are deplorable. Only seldom can sugar, butter and other high-nourishment foods be bought. People live on bread and margarine.

The daily life of the deportees is illustrated by this passage from a letter written by a 76-year old Latvian who lives with his children on the Irtysh river:

"I am a night-watchman in the kolkhoze. I always heat the stove and sit on it; this is the only way to escape the cold. I have arthritic rheumatism. I don't know what is wrong with my heart and liver, as a thorough examination is not possible. The nearby hospitals can't tell, their medical equipment is incomplete. In such cases people are sent to Omsk, but then we need a permit from the commandant's office, as we are deportees. Being deportees, we are not permitted to stay in Omsk, where we would like to be."

Another passage from the same letter also speaks of the fate of the deportees: "Vija (the writer's daughter whom the bolsheviks deported while she was pregnant) was three months underway to this place, spending most of the time in the *peresylki* (transit camps). The severe experience during the pregnancy affected the child. When he was a year old, he could not sit up. Before he was two years old, he had twice had serious lung inflammations with high fever. We were badly off for food then. When Vija earned a ruble or so, it was spent on medicine, vitamins and better food for the child. He was well over two when he began to walk. He does not talk, except for six or seven words now and then. The child is now four years old and there is little improvement. Our room is small and the child hasn't enough space to move around."

A new labor recruiting action for the Irkutsk region was carried out by the MVD in 1953. Two thousand Balts from the Cherlak region alone were marked for the transfer. In that region there are some 80 or 90 labor settlements (*rabochiye poseleniye*). The MVD officials chose single, completely able-bodied people up to the age of 35. According to information obtained later, they were employed in the construction of a Russian-Chinese railway line.

During other recruitment campaigns children were occasionally separated from parents and put into homes.

The Irkutsk deportation region was evidently considered better than the Yakutsk region. Those sentenced under Sections 58.2, 58.4, 58.6 or 58.8 of the criminal code were not accepted for Irkutsk, but were allowed to go to Yakutsk.

In the Omsk region, a considerable number of Latvian deportees work in *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoses* which are notorious for their miserable condition. Although bolsheviks consider the Omsk region to be especially suited for agriculture, the collective farming system produces poor results. In 1954, by September 20th only 50 percent of the harvest had been gathered. The rest rotted under the snow.

In the spring of 1957, *kolkhozes* of this region were converted into *sovkhoses* under instructions from Moscow. Peasants welcomed this measure, as they lacked both money and food in the *kolkhoze*, while the *sovkhose* worker receives a fixed wage. However small,

it is not dependent on poor harvests, incessant thefts, and other hazards which inevitably affect the kolkhoze members. The people felt particularly happy about having the right now to cultivate their own vegetable gardens and keep a domestic animal. Even if it meant deliveries in kind this gave a man a chance to secure food for himself and his family. The sovkhoe peasant was not even discouraged by the need to buy fodder, firewood and other necessities from the sovkhoe, or by the prospect of being required to pay for occasional use of sovkhoe horses. Although payment was demanded for every service and everything was strictly regulated, the formerly independent Baltic farmer preferred the status of a sovkhoe farm-hand to membership in a collective farm. Another improvement was the fact that work hours in the sovkhoes were fixed and Sundays at least were free.

A deported Latvian farmer has said of the changes of 1957: "Our kolkhoze was converted into a sovkhoe, and now we are government workers. We get wages which vary between 300 and 400 rubles a month. A party man told me that through this change we had come one step closer to communism.

"What is my opinion? Well, just that our life is still hard and gloomy, but since we base our life on hope, it is easier to endure now. Occasional tiredness is caused by our nerves. They are being ruined every moment and the best remedy is self-control, self-consolation and perseverance . . .

"During the past 15 years, like millstones life has ground us, but it has not been able to grind us to death. Faith and will-power helped me to overcome the difficulties and to escape death.

"In January, 1957, we sent a collective petition to the Soviet Latvian government requesting that we be released. We shall see what will come of it. One petition has already been turned down. Still, a few were permitted to leave Siberia.

"If we were released, we could not return this year. First we would have to save money for the fare and for food for us all. We two old ones and the small one won't be of great help in working. It would seem that it would be better to stay here — but we yearn so terribly to go back."

## NOVOSIBIRSK REGION

The Novosibirsk region is half the size of the Omsk region; its area is 234 000 square miles, but it is much more densely settled. This is due to its central location in Siberia. Novosibirsk is an important railway junction on the Trans-Siberian railway, from where a line runs to the Altai region, Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Northward transport is by navigable rivers, of which Ob is the most important.

The climate is continental, with a severe winter lasting five and a half months.

Novosibirsk and its nearest surroundings have forced labor camps referred to as No. 199 (494). The number of Balts interned there is not known.

Since the mass deportations of 1941, the Novosibirsk region is one of the largest deportation sites for Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians. The deportees after World War II further increased their numbers. At first they were supervised by the NKVD, later by the MVD.

The deported Balts are employed in lumbering and in kolkhozes. The kolkhoze management is in the hands of communist party members. Central surveys of the communist party show that every year a large percentage of the harvest is lost. Grain is lost in the fields and later, underway, the loss is estimated at 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of grain per hectare (2.47 acres). But much more of the grain is lost in the barns, where it is brought in wet and unsorted.

A considerable number of Latvians live in the vicinity of Narym, 375 miles north of Novosibirsk, as well as in Parabela.

The deportees try to leave the kolkhozes, seeking jobs in sawmills, but this is difficult, since nobody can take a new job without the permission of his former employer. The deportees have been officially informed they are deported for 20 years. They were taken to Narym in barges.

Neither in Narym nor in other districts of the Novosibirsk region has it been possible to organize medical assistance for the deportees, since there are no physicians among them. The mortality rate is high.

Although formally public school is compulsory, deportee children of 13 or 14 years are being forced to work. They are also under constant pressure to join communist and atheist organizations, and are subject to russification efforts.

## ALTAI REGION

The Altai region borders on Outer Mongolia and Kazakhstan. It has been mentioned in connection with the Baltic mass deportations in 1941 and similar Soviet-organized actions in the post-war years.

Germans who returned from the Soviet Union in the fall of 1955 cite cases where children of deported Latvian farmers have been sent to the Altai region, while their parents have been taken to the Krasnoyarsk region. Deported youths have been assigned to work in the Altai region. They had stated they could not feel secure in their home country.

## TAYSHET AND BRATSK

Although Balts are not segregated in separate camps, the large numbers of Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians justify description of Tayshet as a predominantly Baltic forced labor camp cluster.

The first Latvian deportees, a party of women, arrived in Tayshet in 1941. Until 1946 they lived on a starvation diet. A returnee of Latvian-German parents, whose nationality later enabled her to obtain her release and proceed to the free world, states that during the first deportation years they ate grass and potato stalks. Despite poor physical condition, they were forced to work on the railroad and in the forest.

The Tayshet camp inmates also include Latvian and Estonian Legionaries<sup>13</sup>) and other Baltic deportees who were turned into work slaves after World War II. On their arrival, they met German and Hungarian war prisoners who had replaced huge numbers of Japanese war prisoners employed in the construction of the 200-mile Tayshet-Bratsk railroad. The punitive camps are scattered along this line.



*A group of Baltic political prisoners in Taysbet, the Irkutsk region, in 1954. In front, an MVD Major.*

Tayshet is on the Trans-Siberian line, 370 miles northwest of Irkutsk and 1,744 miles east of Moscow. Bratsk is a port on the Angara river and the other terminal of the Tayshet rail line, having rail connection also with Komsomolsk. Bridges across the Lena and the Angara had to be built for this line.

The Tayshet-Bratsk camp cluster is known as *Ozerlag*. The camps lie in the taiga, in the midst of marshes, and in summer the prisoners are plagued by swarms of mosquitoes. Winter, following this summer plague, comes with temperatures as low as 67° F below zero. Only the large forests offer the prisoners' barracks any protection against snowstorms.

Of the original 54 camps, 46 still existed in 1955 — 36 for men and 10 for women. There were four hospital camps for both men and women, six invalid camps with male work groups, and three invalid camps with female work groups. Since the prisoners include many tubercular patients, some invalid camps are called tuberculosis camps. Illness does not exempt one from work, with the exception of a short stay in the hospital during the critical stage of a disease.

The first digit of the numbers of camp columns of political prisoners is "0," for instance: 01, 02, 03, 05, 06, 09, 010, 011, 012, 013, 015, 019, 020, 023, 025, 030, 031, 032, 033, 038, 043, 049, 051, 052 and 053 — as the Latvian Red Cross has ascertained with respect to camps with Latvian inmates in 1955 and earlier.

The work columns are subordinated to the common punitive camp administration in Tayshet, whose unified mail-reference number is 215 for correspondence within the Soviet Union and 5110/37 for correspondence with foreign countries.

Recent testimony indicates that in the spring of 1956 this number was changed from 215 to 90, and that in the numbering of the political prisoners camps "1" replaced "0" as the first digit.

Until 1955, Latvians had also been interned in a special camp known as CARM (tsentralniye avtomobilno-remontniye masterskiye). These motor vehicle and general repair shops employed 1200 prisoners, all specialists. Some earned up to 1000 rubles a month, but the full wages were not paid (in 1953, only about 100 rubles was paid; the remainder — after the prescribed deductions for food

lodging and guarding — was paid into the prisoner's personal account). Only a few made "big money," and wages were lower and provisioning poorer than in Vorkuta.

For the sake of convenience, the Soviet administration adds to the numbers of work columns the distance from Tayshet in kilometers (one mile equal to 1.6 kilometers). For instance: the camp known as 06 is 98 kilometers from Tayshet and therefore its designation is 06—98. For others it is 011—266, 019—145/46, 026/184, 033—129 and 053—74 kilometers.

In the course of time, these individual places have been given names; for instance, the camp area 54 kilometers from the city of Tayshet was called Nevelsk, another place was referred to as Vykharevka, a camp 105 kilometers from Tayshet was known as Parchum, and another 382 kilometers distant was called Zayarsk. An Austrian who was there until 1956 states that all these camps had Lithuanian, Estonian and Latvian inmates.

Considerable changes have taken place in the camps in recent years. The camp or work column 023 was converted into an invalid camp in July, 1955. At that time, there were only 400 invalids in the camp, while the rest were able-bodied persons who were declared "released" in the late summer of 1955 and were given employment in various places near Tayshet.

According to latest information received in the fall of 1956, the Balts were released from the punitive camps, but as "Soviet citizens" they were not permitted to return home, and in most cases were transferred to the Krasnoyarsk region. Prior to that, the Soviet administration used this ruse: In 1955, the political prisoners in Bratsk were told that if they undertook to sign a work contract and stay in the region from two to five years, they would be permitted to invite their families or fiancées to join them. When some prisoners signed the agreement, a special commission examined the cases of all prisoners and released from camps also all the rest. The released were required to report to the local security authorities on the 1st, 10th and 20th day of each month.

Those who had been persuaded to sign the work contracts began to escape in large numbers. Among the escapees were even members

of the communist youth organization, despite their good wages with the so-called "northern supplement" and free lodging.

The flights from the Tayshet and Bratsk punitive area — which by the end of 1955 had been converted into a compulsory work area — in other words, "unauthorized departure from place of work," were sternly denounced by party functionaries and the local press. The numerous escapes from Tayshet and Bratsk resulted in restriction of freedom of movement for all inhabitants, including the communist youth members. A pass was needed for every trip.

At the end of 1956, criminal convicts were brought to Tayshet as labor.

The local transit camp which the Russians call *peresylka* has a camp number, 020. The numerous camps of Tayshet have no permanent hospitals.

The inmates of the punitive camps work in lumbering and timber transportation, carpentry, brickyards, construction work and in motor vehicle, locomotive engine and electric motor repair shops.

Women work in lumbering, walking sometimes six miles twice daily, and performing excessively heavy tasks. They include Latvian physicians and intellectuals.

Many Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian women have been seen in work column No. 010, which is 800 yards distant from column No. 03. The inmates include Svetlana Tukhachevskaya, whose father, Soviet Marshal Tukhachevsky, was executed in the 1930's. Her mother died in the Archangel prison. Most of the other Russians were nuns, *monashki*, who refused to work for religious reasons. In the summer of 1954, one of them received back her Bible which the camp administration had previously confiscated.

The camp has a reading-room and a small library, consisting mostly of communist literature, newspapers and books printed in Russian and other languages. The Latvian communist party organ, *Cina*, is available in several copies. Communist pamphlets and propaganda literature in Latvian disguised as fiction, such as novels by Vilis Lacis, may be sent from Latvia. Strangely enough, the library also contains works by Byron, Goethe, Pushkin and Dostoyevsky, as well as other classics. The camp administration indirectly compels

the prisoners to read not only general but also communist literature. A political prisoner was asked why she showed no interest in "progressive literature." To avoid these interrogations, camp inmates now and then took home propaganda publications.

The Moscow editions of *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* are available in every camp and are subscribed to at the expense of the prisoners, although the prisoners read only news concerning Soviet relations with the Western world. Fellow prisoners are invited to read passages which appear to be significant, and all try to predict coming events in the light of foreign news published in these two large Moscow dailies.

Several returnees claim that political prisoners appear to be disappointed at what they consider the West's yielding attitude toward Moscow. Indignation is voiced in sarcastic remarks about what the prisoners call a weak attitude. News concerning the rearmament of West Germany is welcomed.

Since 1954, the attitude of the camp administration toward people who do not conceal their religious beliefs has become somewhat less rigorous. Informally, the camp management allowed observance of Christmas in 1952, provided it did not interfere with work, since December 25th was a working day like all others. The prisoners therefore gathered for the celebration after work. According to the instructions, this could be done only in small groups, and had to be over by 10 p. m.

"It was a long-hoped-for moment," states a German returnee from Tayshet. "We sat around a long table — and not an empty table. Since the first days of December, we had been turning over the remains of our bread ration to Elga, a Latvian girl from Riga. Twice before she had baked a Christmas "cake" for us, a festive piece of pastry, which we discussed in advance with childlike joy. During the whole period of Advent we had a conversational theme — what will our holidays, our ninth Christmas in Siberia, be like? We were no longer worried about a possible last-moment ban since in the past two years we had gotten together on Christmas Eve. We never obtained formal permission, but we still got what we wanted. After work we assembled in groups, spoke of the miracle of Bethlehem, and

recalled the Christmas trees of our childhood. A warm feeling crept into our hearts.

"We even had a Christmas tree, a tiny spruce, not more than 12 inches high. It had been sent in a parcel by friends in Germany. We straightened its branches and placed small candles on them. We had lots of Christmas candles; of the four candles — three white and one red — in the parcel, we had made several dozen of our own candles. Each of us put a candle on the tree, with her own silent thoughts.

"A long, silent prayer was the most precious part of our Christmas. Each prayed for herself, for our people, for our native country. It even seemed to me that we prayed for those who were responsible for our sufferings.

"And then we sang 'Silent night, Holy night!' The first verse was sung in a half-whisper, but then, despite the presence of the female supervisor, our voices rose and rose higher, uniting in full tone in the words:

"Silent night, holy night!  
Wondrous star, lend thy light!  
With the angels let us sing,  
Alleluia to our King!  
Christ the Savior is here,  
Jesus the Savior is here!"

In a tenacious struggle, the prisoners have won the right to observe Christian holidays without being sent to the solitary confinement cell. Neither the Balts nor the Germans would renounce them, and eventually they won.

The same applies to permission to place a simple birchwood cross with a name on the tomb of a dead comrade. Previously, only a stake marked a grave of five or more dead, who were buried naked because their clothing is considered to be the property of the Soviet government. The grave-digging was usually entrusted to two deportees. They dug the hole, placed the dead in it, and then filled it. No one was permitted to follow a dead person to the grave or say a prayer.

Sundays are not observed as holidays; instead, a day off is granted

on a weekday. On these days, one could sleep long enough, do his laundry and, in general, take care of himself.

Women are less susceptible to diseases than men, and the mortality rate has decreased in recent years. "We often asked ourselves," says a returnee who had been together with Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian women, "what the source of our strength was." The chief infliction of both men and women is tuberculosis, which — it can be said — attacks almost everybody.

In Tayshet, as in other forced labor camps, a few articles can be bought in canteens. Although prices are exorbitant, even butter and, from time to time, sugar are available there.

The regime in Tayshet camps was very severe until 1954, since political prisoners were considered especially dangerous offenders. This severity was reflected also in the availability of food and other supplies. Before 1953, prisoners slept on bags filled with sawdust, with only one blanket to each person. Later they were each issued a sheet.

While the wage system was introduced in other camps much earlier, no wages were paid in Tayshet until 1953, and prisoners received only food for their work. If the norm was fulfilled, the regular ration was increased by 100 grams of bread and 400 grams of porridge. If the norm was exceeded by 20 percent, the extra ration was doubled.

During the transition period leading to the wage system, a prisoner got no more than 100 rubles a month.

These earnings could be spent on food in the canteen, and since the end of 1953, it has been permitted to buy even wrist-watches and radios.

A returnee, who spent more than seven years in the different camps of the Tayshet punitive district, has stated:

"When I came to Nevelsk, some 35 miles from Tayshet, I met with political prisoners of 57 different nationalities. As good fellow-workers, I particularly remember the Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Poles, Rumanians and the Japanese. Not long before my arrival, the camp had had only Japanese prisoners. Soon I was transferred to the CARM motor vehicle repair shops. I was weakened with hunger during that period. As an experienced mechanic, I had to assemble

engines. I had owned a motor repair shop in Vienna and was more familiar with this work than the others, but still I could not fulfil the prescribed norm unless I worked overtime. I did manage to fulfil the norm by working 10 hours a day, but the others couldn't. This meant reduced food rations. When I complained to the 'boss,' he told me: 'We don't need sick people. We need workers. Do what you are told.' I felt so weak that for six kilograms of bread I bartered away my overcoat. I got an additional four kilograms for my blanket. I ate these four kilograms at a single meal. It's a wonder I didn't fall ill. I felt somewhat better. Still, a few weeks later I was put in the field hospital with dystrophy. This proved to be my great luck. I recovered in 28 days. Then I was transferred for a time to invalid camp No. 07, where I met again many Balts who had either been crippled by excessive work or had been hurt in work accidents. Invalids are not exempt from work, and I was soon sent to Parchum, in the 35th work column, to fell trees. If an electric saw was used, the daily norm was 75 cubic meters of wood materials, all piled up. A man using a hand saw had to turn out 18 cubic meters (a cubic meter equal to 1.3 cubic yards). Since it is quite impossible to fulfil such a norm, nobody received a full ration. On top of that, every day we had to walk five miles to our place of work, and then back again. Although I felt completely exhausted and worn out, I was declared physically fit in 1953. Fortunately, at that time prisoners began to receive wages, small as they were, and were permitted to buy foodstuffs in the canteen. It is true that at times there were arrears of two months in the payment of wages. Even candy was on sale in the canteen — it cost 12 rubles a kilogram — and makhorka (the cheapest brand of tobacco), which cost 0.55 or 0.60 rubles for 50 grams. Still, the situation had been much worse at the end of 1952, when one was permitted to buy only 25 rubles' worth of merchandise a month, and the assortment of goods in the canteen was smaller and of poorer quality than after 1953. Everybody was sick then, most of them with tuberculosis, scurvy or heart ailments.

A women returnee has stated: "A fever of 100.5° F did not exempt us from work. Only with a temperature of 101.4° F could one stay at home."

Since April of 1954, prisoners have been promised a reduction in their terms if they exceed the prescribed work norms.

Life in the camp was eased somewhat as the general regime relaxed, and the prisoners were spared gross injustices. While previously the off-days — usually a day other than Sunday — were cancelled at will if it was considered necessary to fulfil the norms, since the last half of 1954 prisoners have been regularly permitted to rest one day every week. What surprised the prisoners most of all was the fact that now they could complain against an arbitrary action of the camp administration, and could be redressed. Punishments meted out by the administration no longer included the reduction of rations to starvation levels whereas earlier the daily bread ration was in some instances cut to 300 grams. Likewise, when a column of prisoners was to be taken to their place of work, the guards were not allowed to shout out a series of warnings, such as: "No talking enroute. Keep to the middle of the road. Don't look around. Don't pick up things you drop. Don't eat while marching. I will fire without warning." Now the prisoners were simply told: "Whoever flees, risks being shot. Column, forward march!"

Since August, 1954, visits by family members are permitted. A guest barrack has been built adjoining camp No. 13 where visitors can stay with their interned relative who is granted three days of leave and is allowed to meet the guest for a few additional days after work. Two months later, it was permitted to let one's hair grow, a practice which had been strictly prohibited up to then.

The improvement in the regime came after the uprising of 1954, which will be discussed later.

## IRKUTSK REGION

The Irkutsk region covers an area of 347 000 square miles, bordering on the Far East region. Its forced labor camps are known as *Angarlag*.

The city of Irkutsk is on the Angara river. Northwest of the city are located the punitive camps, which at the same time are camps for coal mine workers. The region has uranium deposits which likewise are mined by political prisoners.

It has been ascertained that immediately after Lithuania's re-occupation in 1944 part of the arrested Lithuanians were sent to forced labor camps located between Irkutsk and Chita, in the zone bordering on Mongolia.

Reportedly there are two punitive areas for political prisoners, one designated as No. 245 and the other as No. 272. Latvian deportees are reported to be living both within and outside the camps. A Latvian who came to the Irkutsk punitive area in 1947 says the regime was extremely severe, even in the women's camps. Children were separated from their mothers on arrival in the punitive area. The heads of families had already been separated earlier. Separating children from their parents was a general rule. Only in some cases, through bribery, did mothers prevent it. In general, according to this and other testimony, the Soviet administration of the punitive area did not permit fathers to stay with sons, or mothers with daughters. There was one isolated case of two sisters who had vastly exceeded the work norms and were permitted to be together.

Other Balts, especially youths, were brought to the Irkutsk region and the Lake Baykal area from other Soviet deportation regions after 1953. Their places of residence are not definitely known. Likewise, those "released" from the Spask camps have been settled in the Irkutsk region. Beyond Lake Baykal, in the Buryat-Mongolian Republic, lies Ulan-Ude (formerly Verkhne-Udinsk), where deported Latvian families have been sent.

Latvian women deported to Outer Mongolia were employed on railway construction until 1947. The local climate adds an additional burden to the hardships of work. No cases of Baltic forced labor in Outer Mongolia have been reported after 1947.

Early in 1958, the largest concentration of Latvians in the Irkutsk region was reported to be in Nizhny-Udinsk, northwest of Irkutsk.

## KHANTIMANSK REGION

This huge but little known region of Siberia lies beyond the Urals, north of the Omsk and Tomsk regions. Since 1945 it has been one of the deportation areas for Balts. Larger numbers of Latvians and other Balts were brought there in 1947 and 1952.

Practically all of these deportees are farmers. Latvian farmers who were accused of assisting partisans, but who were not sentenced under Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code because of lack of evidence, were sent as settlers to the Khantimansk region. This campaign was known as the "kolkhoze drive."

Particularly large numbers of deported Latvian farmers were concentrated near Batovo, about 130 miles south of the city of Khantimansk, the capital of the region.

These deportees were permitted to take their belongings with them to a practically unlimited extent, since that facilitated the realization of the Soviet plans in this corner of Siberia. Work units, each comprising 25 to 30 men, were formed, and were assigned to the local sovkhoses.

Soviet authorities are keenly interested in the cultivation of this still undeveloped territory and in raising its population, and therefore every prisoner who is declared "released" is allowed to join his relatives in this region.

Here the deportees are faced with less restrictions than in other deportation areas. Work payment rates are based on the size of land reclaimed in each specific case. Latvian farmers here are pioneers who clear virgin forests and drain marshes to turn them into fields, fighting against a harsh nature.

The reclaimers of virgin land get their food supplies twice a year, always on credit. This is done because people in this region live in a permanent state of poverty, and also with the aim of involving them in debt and thus preventing their departure.

The usual distance between inhabited places in the Khantimansk region ranges from 130 to 200 miles. Settlers are allowed to build houses for themselves, as a sovkhose, spread over huge areas, cannot provide lodging for the newcomers.

According to one testimony, some deportees also work as gold miners.

## YAKUTSK REGION

The Yakutsk region, which Moscow calls an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, has an area of 1 170 000 square miles and is the least populated area of the Soviet Union, with 0.26 inhabitants per square mile. It is bounded on the north by the Arctic Ocean, and on the east by the Far East region. The Lena river traverses the entire region and empties into the Arctic Ocean.

As a move in the internal colonization of this sparsely settled and little explored territory, deported Balts were brought here after 1945. In the city of Yakutsk there are about 200 specialists, selected from among the deportees as early as 1941. Radio specialists are employed in the Yakutsk radio plant. Moreover, a considerable number of Balts hold minor positions in the local postal administration. Since the number of Latvians in Yakutsk is large, and they enjoy a certain freedom of movement of late, there is some social and cultural activity among them.

Deportees who are first-rate specialists are allowed to live with their families.

Latvian technical specialists earn up to 800 rubles a month. The Soviet authorities try to recruit new personnel among graduates of the University of Riga, exercising some pressure. This practice has been followed since 1949, with special efforts made to secure chemists and physicians. Specialists are even promised three months' annual leave.

This recruitment drive is a strange way to procure skilled personnel for the Yakutsk region. Since volunteers are rare, the recruitment, combined with a certain pressure, is being carried on in the occupied Baltic countries as well as among deportees in other parts of Siberia.

However, in many cases, Yakutsk is only a stop-over on a deportee's journey to the Kolyma region.

Work contracts run for five years, and of late they include a clause stipulating that upon expiration of the contract, the contractee has the right to choose his residence in any part of the Soviet Union with the exception of the Baltic countries. However, it is next to impossible to leave the Yakutsk or Kolyma region, since the Soviet authorities will always find some pretext for not honoring the stipulation.

The Yakutsk region has also forced labor camps, with administration headquarters in the city of Yakutsk. The number of interned Balts is not known. However, it has been reported that Balts are working at Chikhayev on the Arctic Ocean coast, facing the Novo-



*A group of Latvian women in Siberia, all sentenced to 25 years. They wear home-made "steppe-jackets."*

sibirsk islands, as well as in the Verkhoyansk punitive camps near the city of the same name. Most of the interned are Latvian Legionaries who had fought for their country against the Soviet invaders in 1945 in what was known as the Fortress of Kurzeme (Courland). There is little information on all these camps. One testimony states there are Latvians in the Batagay punitive camp, who live under a severe regime both in regard to work and confinement. This camp belongs to the Verkhoyansk punitive area, whose climate is extremely harsh, the temperature dropping at times to 94° F below zero. The prisoners work in copper, lead and gold mines on the banks of the Yana. The city of Verkhoyansk is about 660 miles northeast of Yakutsk. In general, with the exception of the above-mentioned specialists in the city of Yakutsk, Balts are scattered in places far from larger settlements. Those who work in the sovkhozes have more or less the same living conditions as the Latvian farmers deported to the Khantimansk region.

Forced labor camp inmates are released if they marry Yakut women. The Soviet authorities encourage such marriages through a regulation which stipulates that a man who marries a Soviet citizen "holding a passport" becomes free himself. The prisoners had no passports until 1955. After registering the marriage in the civil registrar's office, a prisoner becomes conditionally free — he may not leave the Yakutsk region. The only exception is provided for those who go to the Kolyma mines.

## THE FAR EAST REGION

... gold for its world conquest plans. It therefore  
... gold mining — practically monopolized by Soviet Russia  
... — in the eastern corner of Siberia, Mongolia and the  
... region, and also turned to the regions of Amur and  
... where the gold mines appeared much more promising. Using  
... labor, Moscow started gold prospecting and mining in  
... and the Far East region on a grand scale. (Initially  
... the sacrifice of large numbers of people, and guided by  
... to obtain as much gold as possible, the Soviets created the  
... one of the largest economic projects in the world.

... a special autonomous economic enterprise, has the task  
... all natural resources in the Soviet Far East region.  
... labor, it mines platinum, tungsten, tin, molybdenum,  
... iron ore, coal and, above all, gold. The Kolyvan has a keen  
... in gold production, because during other years have  
... on the rate of gold output in the Far East region.  
... the Kolyvan area and its key city, Magadan, are situated at least  
... to Moscow.

... began to exploit the Kolyvan gold mines in the early  
... 1,175-mile highway, linking Magadan on the sea of Okhotsk  
... to the far north, was built for this purpose. An ex-  
... harsh climate makes the shipment of supplies to Kolyvan  
... difficult. The region is accessible for its products by sea via  
... and for an even shorter time from the Arctic Ocean by  
... the Kolyvan coast. The isolation of the Kolyvan forced labor  
... therefore practically cut off from the outside world and  
... are extremely sensitive about the entire region.

... accounts for some 25 percent of the total Soviet gold  
... and is thus one of the most productive of the gold-mining  
... Although Moscow does not reveal any figures, well-informed  
... estimate the annual gold output in Kolyvan at 75 metric tons.



## THE MAGADAN-KOLYMA PUNITIVE AREA

Moscow needs gold for its world conquest plans. It therefore resumed gold mining — practically discontinued by Czarist Russia as uneconomic — in the eastern corner of Buryat-Mongolia and the Trans-Baykal region, and also turned to the regions of Amur and Kolyma, where the gold mines appeared much more promising. Using cheap slave labor, Moscow started gold prospecting and mining in all of Siberia and the Far East region on a gigantic scale. Cynically disregarding the sacrifice of huge numbers of peoples, and guided by the desire to obtain as much gold as possible, the Soviets created the *Dalstroï*, one of the largest economic projects in the world.

*Dalstroï*, a so-called autonomous economic enterprise, has the task of exploiting all natural resources in the Soviet Far East region. Employing slave labor, it mines platinum, tungsten, zinc, molybdenum, iron ore, coal and, above all, gold. The Kremlin has a keen interest in gold production, because numerous other plans have depended on the rate of gold output in the Far East regions.

The Kolyma area and its key city Magadan are therefore of major concern to Moscow.

The Soviets began to exploit the Kolyma gold mines in the early 1930's. A 1,125-mile highway, linking Magadan on the sea of Okhotsk with Indigirka in the far north, was built for this purpose. An extremely harsh climate makes the shipment of supplies to Kolyma very difficult. The region is accessible for six months by sea via Magadan and for an even shorter time from the Arctic Ocean by way of the Kolyma river. The inmates of the Kolyma forced labor camps are therefore practically cut off from the outside world and the Soviets are extremely secretive about the entire region.

Kolyma accounts for some 25 percent of the total Soviet gold production and is thus one of the most productive of the gold-mining regions. Although Moscow does not reveal any figures, well-informed sources estimate the annual gold output in Kolyma at 75 metric tons.

The Kolyma-Magadan punitive area lies between the 60th and 70th parallels and between 145° and 170° longitude. Winters are very severe, temperatures of 75° F below zero being quite common. Summer lasts only three months. Except for a layer of two feet which thaws in the summer months, the ground is eternally frozen. In winter the snow cover is very deep. Blizzards are the greatest danger of the region; even if a person caught by a snowstorm survives, he still suffers severe frostbite resulting in amputation.

A grim nature and inhuman work conditions have turned Kolyma into a huge cemetery. Eye-witnesses claim that the annual death rate among the prisoners exceeded 20 percent during the war and the first post-war years.

There are male and female forced labor camps in Kolyma. According to some estimates, the *Dalstroj* employs a total of about 5 million persons, scattered over a very large number of individual camps. For better orientation, the Soviets divide the camps into groups, and the designation of each camp indicates the distance from Magadan in kilometers.

After the mass deportations of 1945 from the Baltic countries, several Kolyma mine camps are populated almost exclusively by Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian inmates. But the largest contingents of Baltic Kolyma workers are made up of the Latvian legionaries and persons accused under Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code. Although these Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians had only defended their countries against the eastern aggressor — the Soviet Union — in the bolshevik view they were all “counterrevolutionaries,” and as such were sent in large numbers to the Far East region in 1945/46. From the Bukhta Nakhodka on the Pacific Ocean, north of Vladivostok, they were shipped in large parties to Magadan, where they were divided among the forced labor camps scattered in the far north, mingled with criminal convicts. Their principal work was gold-sand washing performed with the aid of special devices. The Soviet administration required every worker to obtain at least 20 grams of pure gold a day. Unless one struck a rich vein, it was very difficult to fill this norm.



*Only dugouts provide shelter against the severe cold in the Kolyma region. The photograph shows a Latvian school-teacher who was sentenced to 25 years at hard labor because he had observed Christmas with his pupils by putting up a Christmas tree decorated with candles. The Soviet tribunal described this as "anti-Soviet propaganda."*

In addition to the washing of gold sand, which can be done only during the 100 or so days of summer, the digging and blasting of the upper layers of ground requires much effort.

The sentencing of Latvian legionaries began later, after they had worked in the forced labor camps about a year. They were successively placed in prison for a few weeks of interrogation and were then informed that they had been sentenced under Section 58.1. The

terms imposed varied between 10 and 25 years, and no one could figure out why one prisoner received a harsher sentence than the other. Everybody knew that the chances of surviving this inferno more than a few years were slim.

The sentencing was suddenly discontinued by the middle of 1946, and those not yet sentenced were included, as is usual in the Soviet Union, into a "special contingent."

The meaning of the term "special contingent" is still not quite clear. It is merely known that men belonging to it were housed in special workers' barracks and were placed on the same footing as the so-called "free" workers in regard to work hours and wages; on the other hand, all of them had to mine gold or perform other prescribed work, and they were not allowed to leave either their work or residence.

However, some prisoners were subjected to the hard labor (katorga) regime. An eye-witness has told the following about the fate of these hapless victims of the Soviet rule:

"Kolyma camps have better and worse regimes, the worst being the hard-labor regime. Those subjected to it were kept in chains. They arrived here in shackles and they worked in chains. With their hands and one foot chained, they pulled wheel-barrow along a road flanked by high sand walls which pile up as large masses of earth are moved. They saw the sun only a few weeks in the summer when its rays fell almost perpendicularly. Behind the sand walls were triple barbed-wire fences and, further on, a zone with watchdogs. Several of the martyrs in chains were designated as 'war criminals' and were not allowed to write or receive letters. This regime was still in force in 1954 when I was fortunate enough to leave Kolyma, this accursed country about which it has been said that no one can return alive from it."

This account is supplemented by another returnee who was in Kolyma twice — in 1945/46 and for three years since the summer of 1952. He says:

"I met Latvians in the Kolyma coal, tungsten and gold mines, as well as in a brickyard. In the same places there were larger or smaller numbers of other Balts. Latvian partisans and former legion-

aries wore numbers sewn on the back, both knees, chest and cap. I saw them marked in this way as late as the end of 1954.

"While during the first years prisoners worked 12 or more hours if the norm was not filled during the normal time, in 1954 the work hours did not exceed ten, including time spent going to and from work. The first groups of the unfortunates had arrived in Kolyma in 1945. When I left my hapless comrades, those who were still alive had spent nine years in slave labor camps. New martyrs arrived every year. On March 27, 1954, I met in Kolyma 210 Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians, including three clergymen from Riga, sentenced in 1954. A Catholic priest was about 40 years old, while the two Lutheran pastors were elderly men. Most persons arriving with this particular party were Baltic partisans, all of whom called themselves nationalists or patriots. They had not lost their spirits. Likewise I admired an old man, a Latvian jurist, who, despite his age of 72 and invalidity, kept his comrades together, giving them friendly encouragement and preventing moral breakdowns.

"Imagine the feelings of a man who has been working despondently for almost ten years, becoming a cripple, a moral and physical wreck, because he fails to fill the norm, and is forced to work an additional three or four hours every day to fill it. Try to understand what goes on in the minds of those who despite all hardships and sufferings have completed their term of hard labor but are not allowed to return home. If a man leaves Kolyma, it does not mean making the 10000-mile trip back to Latvia, but only going some 650 miles west in order to spend some time in recovering his strength, and then returning again to the grim climate of Kolyma. I had a friend, a Latvian, who had been a work slave from 1945 to 1954. Because of scurvy, his flesh was falling from his bones. In Kolyma he was doomed to perdition. The Soviet administration deemed it appropriate to send him for some time to Chelyabinsk on sick leave. In Chelyabinsk he found out that his wife had also served the same time as he somewhere in Kolyma. This was the first news he had about his spouse in nine years.

"In the Kolyma camps I also saw deported Latvian women. When they arrived in 1945, their children were placed in homes. They

performed strenuous work and wore tattered clothes. Those employed in earth digging were especially unfortunate — they had to dig nine cubic meters a day (a cubic meter equal to 1.3 cubic yards).

“We slept in dugouts — this is the most appropriate name for the barracks in which 120 prisoners were confined after work. Only the barrack roof was above surface. The dugouts kept warmth better than other structures. We descended to them as in a cellar. Some called them ‘bunker-barracks.’ Hard-labor prisoners had triple-decker bunks with bare boards, and thus they had to sleep in their damp clothes. When a sawdust mattress and a blanket were given them after three years of work, it was considered an act of generosity.”

A fairly large number of Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians is interned in the Dzhegalsk camp, which belongs to the gold mines known as Zolotisty. Finns, Hungarians, Austrians, Rumanians and Czechs were brought there in addition to the Balts during the first years. This was called a ‘closed camp’ (zakluchonny lagher) where no outsiders were allowed to enter.

Among the most infamous camps were also the forced labor camps at and near Seymchan, about 400 miles northwest of Magadan. The cluster includes camps known as Dnieprovsky, Kasion, Laso and the Elghen camp for men. Some of the prisoners worked in chains until 1953. The camp administration treated the prisoners harshly; according to some eye-witnesses inhumanly. Failure to fulfil the norms was punished by reduction of food rations, solitary confinement, and handcuffing. The miners lacked masks which were needed as protection against dust. The number of sick persons therefore grew. Up to 1953, there was no payment for work. After 1953, one could earn up to 300 rubles a month. And until 1953 the working time was 12 hours; after that, eight hours to which was added a couple of hours spent enroute to work and waiting at the gates for the check-up.

The changes that have taken place in the Kolyma forced labor camps since 1953 have been defined by eye-witnesses in these words: “After Stalin’s death, conditions improved; after Beria’s death, one could live.”

Conditions did indeed improve, but still much depended on the brigadiers with whom the prisoners met daily and who actually determined a man's earnings. It was possible in Kolyma to fill and even exceed the norm — it all depended on luck rather than the amount of work performed. If, by chance, one happened to come across a rich deposit, the excess quota was there for the taking. Excess norm meant premiums, introduced already by Reinholds Berzins.<sup>15</sup>) However, a premium was often of little value, since the brigadiers squandered it in drinking bouts with the guards. So the premium was more of an "eye-wash." Likewise, a premium would dwindle if the gold output was stepped up too rapidly. An extra brigade would then be sent to the specific place by the camp administration, and prisoners would again have to work strenuously to fill even the usual norm.

Extremely hard working conditions existed in the following camps in which Balts and other nationalities worked as slaves: Orutukan, Levy Bereg, Osyomshik, Matrosov, Kinkanshe, Bukhta, Kristy, Buldvichak, Arkagal, Berlag (a code name for a group of camps) and the Indigirka camp cluster, as well as the camps of the Chukhotsk peninsula, about which little information is available.

Working conditions were not easier in the women camps of Elghen, Milga and Rybny. At Elghen, 335 miles northwest of Magadan, there is a sovkhوزه where women worked on both farming and lumbering. In either case, they had to work 12 hours in rain, snow and cold, always under the open sky. Some work even had to be performed at night.

The unfortunate women did not get out of this inferno until 1956, when they were declared "released." The Soviets intended to keep them as workers in the Kolyma region. There was a shortage of women in this area, and it was hoped that by keeping them there they could also induce the male prisoners, who had meanwhile been declared released, to remain. Some of them, taking advantage of the newly-acquired freedom of movement within the region and the peculiar, mostly corrupt, money-making methods inherent in the Soviet economic system, earned up to 2000 rubles a month. Moreover, the Soviet regime considers the stepping-up of production in this

region so important that it permits the deported Balts to earn five times more than they would have been able to earn in their home countries.

As for the *blatnois*, the prisoners are not spared their excesses even today. Especially those who earn larger wages are victims of frequent robberies.

Work slaves selected for Kolyma are shipped across the Okhotsk sea from ports facing the Sakhalin island to the Nagaiev harbor. There their distribution in the 390 000-square-mile area is decided by the *Dalstroj* administration at Magadan.

A special fleet handles the transportation of work slaves. It includes four transport ships: "Sovietskaya Latvija," "Feliks Dzerzhinsky," "Nogin" and "Djurma." From fall to spring, navigation is possible, if at all, only with the aid of ice-breakers. A ship known as "Dalstroj" reportedly blew up while in Port Nakhodka in the summer of 1946. At a time when the prisoners had not yet embarked and only a few crewmen were aboard besides the captain, the ship was completely destroyed by an explosion of amonal, an explosive used in blasting rocks in the gold mines, stored in the ship's hold.

The violent explosion destroyed houses in a radius of three miles around the harbor, and sent harbor installations hurtling through the air. Parts of the captain's body were found on a coastal rock about five miles away.

The prisoners' barracks were located some distance from the harbor, and therefore only windows were smashed. The concussion threw people to the ground, but nobody was seriously hurt. On the other hand, there was a heavy loss of lives in the harbor and city.

Nobody doubted that the explosion was an act of vengeance. The Soviet security authorities accused Latvians and Lithuanians of the so-called "special contingent," consisting exclusively of "counter-revolutionaries" and employed in the Port Nakhodka harbor work. Arrests made after the disaster also indicated that the perpetrators were sought among the Balts.

The catastrophe was not reported in the Soviet press, and is kept secret even today. This act of vengeance committed by Soviet-

persecuted people was known only to prisoners who were near Port Nakhodka in 1946 and to the surviving inhabitants of that city.

Kolyma is one of the punitive areas which have experienced almost incessant uprisings and hunger strikes since 1946. This subject will be treated further on in this book. Here it should merely be mentioned that the rising of the oppressed people against the hated Soviet regime did not fail to have some success. Since 1953/54 radical changes in the slave labor exploitation system have been introduced in the Kolyma and other Far East forced labor camps. Since 1954, the regime has been improved by "releasing" a fairly large number of prisoners. Also, the use of chains for those sentenced to hard labor has been abolished.

To conclude the testimony on the Kolyma region, a few words should be said about the Indigirka punitive district, which comprises 30 forced labor camps centered at Ust-Ner. It is about 560 miles from Magadan; individual camps are even further away. The camps are scattered along the Indigirka river, which has lent its name to the district. Returned eye-witnesses state that Balts are the largest group among the slave workers, in addition to former members of General Vlassov's army, Poles, Rumanians, Hungarians and Germans.

The polar climate precludes the exploiting of the Indigirka natural resources in winter, and therefore the camps operate to capacity only during the summer. During the rest of the year the slave workers are employed in other camps of the Kolyma region. New plans have reportedly been prepared for the economic exploitation of this icy wasteland with the aid of compulsory labor.

## KAMCHATKA AND THE KURILE ISLANDS

The *Dalstroi* economic system also includes the forced labor camps in Kamchatka with headquarters in the port of Petropavlovsk. Administratively, Kamchatka belongs to the Khabarovsk region. The peninsula has an area of 217 000 square miles, and its topography is dominated by two mountain massifs with still-active volcanoes, of which the 15 912-foot Klyuchevskaya Sopka is the highest.

Prisoners are employed in the construction of airfields and a naval base, and in other strategically important construction projects. Another part of the slave workers are used in mining and fisheries.

Employment of Balts in Kamchatka and the 36 Kurile islands — which separate the sea of Okhotsk from the Pacific Ocean — has not been reported by eye-witnesses, but by returnees who have heard about it.

## SAKHALIN

The Sakhalin forced labor camps are also a part of the territory which *Dalstroi* exploits economically. The island, 600 miles long, has a cool maritime climate which permits the growth of forest in some areas but turns the rest into a steppe of moss resembling the polar tundra. Sakhalin has long been known as a place of settlement of criminal convicts.

In the northern, central and southern parts of the island, bolsheviks have set up forced labor camps for their political adversaries.

Concerning Sakhalin, it is known that Balts have been sent to its camps (specifically only Latvians and Estonians have been mentioned), in addition to Tartars, Ukrainians, Poles and inhabitants of the Soviet satellite countries. All are employed in naphtha production, lumbering and the armaments industry.

The following testimony has been obtained on the prisoners' life in Sakhalin:

"Our food was rice, rice and more rice — sometimes supplemented with the meat of Siberian dogs. Our garb consisted of jacket, trousers, and cap, all lined with wadding, and wooden clogs. We worked both in an ammunition plant and in gold and platinum mines. We walked to the mines along an alley lined with barbed wire on either side. We were lowered into the 1200-foot shaft in an elevator cage suspended by a hemp rope. The rope wore out, and once the lift, with six miners in it, crashed to the shaft floor. Since then no one has dared to use the cage, but instead they followed the winding

paths leading down to the mine. This took lots of time — two hours down and two and a half up. Even so one of the men fell into the shaft. His corpse was hauled up with a rope.

"The overseers behaved brutally at the outset. They took the eye-glasses from the prisoners and sold them. The victims decided to stay underground for several days, as they did not dare to use the dangerous paths every day. Among the miners were some who had lost their sight in the war, and these were used in simpler work. In the ammunition plant I met six men whose legs had been amputated. There were no hospitals in Sakhalin; the serious cases were sent to Nikolayevsk, on the mainland, where young female physicians were sent for training. These trainees liked to watch the skilful work of the German surgeons, but nothing stopped them from taking over in the middle of an operation. During a serious operation, a German surgeon stood by helplessly while an erroneous procedure doomed to death a man who could have been saved. Most people died of trichinosis caused by infection from the meat of dogs. Between 20 and 30 prisoners died monthly in the Nikolayevsk hospital. Suppurating sores on the skin of the head were common. Only surgery could prevent the pus from penetrating into the brain.

"In addition to political prisoners, there were also German war prisoners in Sakhalin. All were housed in dugouts, 30 men in each. Up to 1948, they had no beds, but slept on the floor, covered with a thin layer of straw not more than six inches thick. The prisoners were plagued by vermin and bedbugs, and it is a wonder they did not contract typhus."

## KHABAROVSK REGION

The Khabarovsk region covers an area of about 1 000 000 square miles, but with an average of 1.6 inhabitants per square mile it is sparsely settled. This evidently prompted the Soviets to increase its population with deportees.

The punitive camps' administration, known as No. 228, is in the city of Khabarovsk. Nothing has been learned about the life of the

Balts in those camps. It has been reported, however, that Latvian political prisoners released from Vorkuta and other camps have been sent to the Khabarovsk region.

Lumbering and naphtha production are the main industries. The Soviet regime is interested in establishing kolkhozes which might make shipments of food supplies from other Soviet regions superfluous.

## AMUR REGION

The Amur region — the southern part of the Soviet Far East — is now one of the principal deportation sites of Latvians.

This region, too, is one of the most sparsely inhabited in the Soviet Union. Part of it was joined to Russia as late as 1860. The indigenous population is small, and Moscow strives to incorporate the region into its economic system through internal colonization. This is important, because the region has gold, iron ore, coal and naphtha, in addition to vast forests.

Brisk activity goes on here, as in all Far East regions controlled by *Dalstroi*. Plants, power stations, cities, canals and ports are being built, mines expanded and kolkhozes founded. All this cannot be accomplished without labor. Significantly, none of the towns of the southern part of the Soviet Far East region is older than 100 years. Most of them have been incorporated as cities only 10 or 15 years ago. With the exception of Komsomolsk, where communist youth members have also participated in the construction, the rest of the towns have been built chiefly by slave labor. In its economic plans, Moscow mentions the Amur region less frequently than the entire southeastern part of the Far East Region, which includes the southeastern mountain regions of Siberia with their centers in Amur, Khabarovsk and Chita, the maritime region with its center of Vladivostok, Sakhalin, and the coastal islands.

The Amur and Ussuri regions are described as the zone of cold monsoons, with heavy summer rainfalls but relatively small precipitation in the winter.

The Amur gold fields extend in several directions, one stretching toward the Amur-Seya region, another to Selemdja and a third to Bureya. Slave labor is used in the gold mines.

The methods used can be seen from the Nyuksha punitive area in the western part of the Amur region, near the Trans-Siberian railway. An eye-witness who was in the Nyuksha punitive area from 1948 to 1952 says:

"The history of this punitive region began in 1930, when the bolsheviks shipped here the so-called 'kulaks.' Thus, a settlement, known as Kulikan, about 30 miles southwest of Nyuksha, came into being. Deprived of their land, the Russian peasants were deported together with their families and placed in 70 barracks. The marshy region rules out escape. Gold is mined in a primitive way. The diggers are lowered into 36-foot-deep shafts, where they thaw the eternally-frozen ground with heated stones, as it was done during the early days of mining. The gold sand is then washed in special sifts."

The largest number of Latvians in the Komsomolsk forced labor camps was reported in 1947 (work columns Nos. 9 and 19); they had been sent here as political prisoners from the Riga Central Prison. The deportees included Latvians who had returned from Russia to their native Baltic region before 1945.

The same fate which the Russian peasants experienced in the 1930's, befell Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian farmers during the mass deportations of 1949. Those who were not sent to the mines were employed in the sovkhoses.

To make the Amur region more attractive to the Latvian farmer, the Soviets perfidiously try to reawaken the "déclassé" farmer's desire for a place of his own. They offer the deportees loans for construction of small houses, and allow them to keep a few domestic animals. The loan is usually 5000 rubles, repayable in six years. Since the first payment is due within a year after the house has been built, 1000 rubles must be paid every year. In addition, fairly heavy taxes must be paid for keeping a cow, a hog, and a couple of hens. An acre or so is allotted as a kitchen garden.

The payment of the loan and the taxes is so difficult that people become involved in debt and the Soviet regime can hold them in

permanent dependence, thwarting any hope of ever leaving the deportation site.

The largest numbers of Latvian deportees in the Amur region are reported to be in the districts of Tigda, Shimanovskaya and Zeya.

## CENTRAL ASIA

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## KAZAKHSTAN — A CONTINENT OF VIRGIN SOIL

When the large Baltic deportations subsided in 1953, Moscow urged Latvians and Estonians to abandon their homes and their country and to go to Kazakhstan to cultivate virgin soil.

On August 17, 1954, the Latvian communist party organ, *Cina*, published a decision which the Soviet communist party central committee and the Soviet Cabinet of Ministers had adopted concerning land reclamation. This marked the beginning of *Cina's* campaign in favor of Latvian emigration to Kazakhstan. Shortly after the first Latvian contingents had been shipped to the Kazakhstan steppes, *Cina's* special correspondent Adolfs Talcis made a trip to the region. He reported that "in these areas where virgin and fallow soil is turned into cultivated fields there live patriotic people who, far from their native places, perform an important task assigned by the Party and the Soviet government."

*Cina* frankly admitted that already at the beginning of April, 1954, a considerable number of Latvian farm machine operators and other specialists had been sent from cities and rural areas of Soviet Latvia to the Chkalov region, where they were soon joined by others.

A report on the Ora steppe and the sovkhoze Polevoi in the Chkalov region indicates that even pregnant women had been sent there to cultivate land (see *Cina*, No. 207, September 1, 1954).

The report said: "Many families have quite a number of children, and some children were even born here. On August 9th, a Latvian from Rezekne gave birth to a girl . . . After the building up of the farm, some will probably proceed further to fill new important tasks assigned by the Party and Soviet government, and will possibly return to their native homes, but many will stay here and will develop deep roots in the reclaimed land."

According to *Cina*, virgin soil and fallow land are being converted into crop-bearing fields also in Karaganda and in vast areas of Western Siberia.

As may be seen from the above, deportations of Balts are following a new pattern: compulsory exile under the perfidious cloak of "voluntariness" and in the full light of publicity. The former deportations, carried out at night and carefully kept secret, have been replaced by deportations under the guise of recruitment of specialists, which includes giving deportees a "send-off" complete with speeches and brass bands.

At the same time, the labor shortage in Latvia was aggravated, and so the exiled Latvians were replaced by Russians and other Slav nationalities.

The destination of the new deportation drive is Central Asia, chiefly Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan borders on China. Its area — 1 056 000 square miles — is almost as large as that of all other Soviet federal republics put together, with the exception of the Soviet Russian republic.

Moreover, Soviet Central Asia includes the federal republics of Turkmens, Uzbeks, Tadjiks and Kirghiz. The entire territory is known as Soviet Asia.

Economically, Siberia, Kazakhstan and the Urals form a unit, as is clearly revealed by the Soviet five-year plans and by the moving of the center of heavy industry from European Russia to this region. Its industrialization and the reclaiming of new land have inaugurated

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*Following the inquiries conducted by the United Nations and the International Labor Bureau, Moscow tries to disguise Baltic mass deportations under the cloak of "voluntariness." The following text, translated from a Latvian-language book, entitled *Neskarto zemju plāsumos* by Soviet news reporters M. Kroma and B. Burlaks, published by the Soviet Latvian Publishing Office, license No. JI 00700, shows that the Baltic youths are recruited and sent out to Kazakhstan not to help gathering in just one harvest, but to uproot them, to estrange them from their country and deport them for life: "People do not go to the virgin lands in order to return home to father and mother after a few years. No. People come here to stay for good, to spend all their life here."<sup>18</sup>)*

M.KROMA, B.BURLAKS



# NESKARTO ZEMJU PLAŠUMOS

Jāsaka tomēr, ka tamlīdzīgas kļūdas tiek ātri novēr-  
stas. Daži no «klejotājiem» ir jau nomainīti. Jaunajās  
graudkopības padomju saimniecībās, kuru skaits aug  
ar katru mēnesi, visam jābūt pašam labākajam — ka  
technikai, tā arī mehanizatoriem un vadītājiem.

Uz neskartajām zemēm brauc ne tāpēc, lai pēc divu  
tris gadu nostrādāšanas atgrieztos «mājās» pie tēva un  
mātes, ne, uz šejieni brauc uz visiem laikiem, uz visu  
mūžu. Tāpēc jaunieši liek lielas cerības uz katru vecāku  
cilvēku, kas ieņem atbildīgu amatu. Padomju saimniecī-  
bas direktors ir atbraucēju draugs, kas ir atbraucēju  
nieši dalās savos draugos, un draugu, skolo-  
bale...

Kroma, Monta Jāņa m.,  
Burlaks, Boriss Sergeja d.

NESKARTO ZEMJU PLAŠUMOS

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an unprecedented "great migration" of people. Its direction, it is true, has been reversed — it now goes from west to east.

Neither Siberia nor Central Asia would be able to expand economically had they not received as slave labor some 15 to 20 million Europeans. The nomadic tribes and peoples of these vast expanses are small, and have a low birth rate. The indigenous population of Kazakhstan, the Kazakhs, has dwindled catastrophically since farm collectivization: in 1926, they numbered 3 986 000; in 1939, only 3 099 000. The Soviet power tried to induct the Kazakhs into mining and heavy industry, but they proved to be unsuitable for such work.

Since time immemorial, Central Asia has been inhabited by Turkic and Mongol tribes and by peoples which today have been reduced to the status of minorities. They include Uzbeks, Kirghizs, Turkmens, Kara Kalpaks, Kazakhs, Tadjiks and nomadic tribes.

In addition to Russians and Ukrainians, who form the bulk of the population, the Baltic deportees have been earmarked by the Soviets to "stay here and develop deep roots in the reclaimed land." Hence, in the Soviet view, the Balts are not only slave workers but also settlers. Surrounded by Slav people and subjected to a systematic russification effort, they are to be quickly assimilated, according to the Soviet plans.

The Trans-Ural, Kazakhstan and Altai regions, which have been assigned a prominent role in Soviet agricultural plans, are being referred to in the Soviet literature as "the continent of virgin soil." This huge territory can absorb almost unlimited masses of people, provided it is possible to cultivate the land. However, the Soviet regime had hitherto failed to procure the necessary farming population, and therefore it now resorts to compulsory labor. From 1954 to 1957, several tens of thousands of Baltic youths, from the age of 15 upwards, have been brought to Kazakhstan and the neighboring districts as part of these efforts. Without providing the necessary equipment and tools, and before any supplies were organized, the Soviet authorities set the young people to work plowing up the steppe and sowing. Baltic boys and girls were sent to Novo-Orsk, Zernograd, Taganlyk, Iriklin and the Polevoi steppe regions. A Soviet



*A Lithuanian priest holding a secret Christmas service in a Central Asian punitive camp in 1955.*

report<sup>10</sup>) has stated: "A group of youth arrived from Latvia at the Novo-Orsk railway station on April 9, 1954. They made tractor sleighs and proceeded to the virgin soil areas . . . People come to the virgin soil areas not to return 'home' after a few years, but they come here to stay, to live here all their life."

Soviet sources thus clearly reveal the fact of deportation, an exile for life. And it likewise becomes clear what the publicized "voluntariness" actually means: an allegedly voluntary exchange of one's home country for the steppe, and separation from one's family and friends.

The reason why the Soviets are intent on having the Kazakhstan steppes cultivated is their desire to have there not only industries but also locally produced food reserves. The Kremlin realizes that shipment of food supplies from distant regions is not only uneconomical but may prove dangerous in the event of war. Accord-

ingly, Moscow strives to turn the northern part of Kazakhstan — the regions of Akmolinsk, Chkalov and Kokchetovo — into the granary of Soviet Asia. For the same purpose, kolkhozes are being turned into “super-kolkhozes” which permit extensive mechanization of farm work.

The entire region, which in some ways can be likened to the Sahara, is arid. A drought in the summer of 1955 destroyed the crops which were to demonstrate the capabilities of the kolkhozes in the areas of newly cultivated soil. “This summer was too difficult,” the Moscow *Komsomolskaya Pravda* admitted on August 10, 1955.

Following a favorable summer in 1956, farming in the Kazakhstan steppes experienced in 1957 a new catastrophe which shook the reputation of Khrushchev, who had initiated the land reclamation action. Since the soil is arid and not particularly fertile, irrigation projects, in which deportees are employed, are important. During the first years the soil still has long-accumulated reserves of strength, but when these are exhausted, new serious problems will arise.

The work slaves in the Soviet sovkhoses are constantly haunted by the menacing ghost of famine.

By contrast, the Soviet authorities and science academies are unconcernedly making plans: in its May 23, 1956, issue, the Moscow *Pravda* quotes a Soviet professor, Vasyutin, as claiming that by 1960 Kazakhstan, Siberia and the Ural region will produce twice as much as is now yielded by the Ukraine, the granary of the entire Soviet Union.

Kazakhstan has been chosen to become a wonderland. During the sixth five-year plan, Soviet industrial production is to be increased 65 percent, while in Kazakhstan, where new masses of deportees have been sent during recent years, the production rise is to be 2.2 times as large.

Kazakhstan therefore needs hundreds of thousands of new workers in the kolkhozes and sovkhoses, as well as in steel foundries, mines, oilfields and for the building of power stations and railroads. Of a total of 4062 miles of new railroads to be built during the sixth five-year plan, 1689 miles are foreseen for Kazakhstan.



*A group of Balts celebrating Christmas in a Kazakhstan camp. The "Christmas meal" was saved up by the camp inmates themselves.*

These figures and the Soviet plans would have no major significance were they not indicative of a tendency to raise the heavy industry potential precisely in Central Asia, adding also many auxiliary industries.

As stated above, Kazakhstan lacks labor. To fulfil its plans at least to some extent, the Moscow police state has to keep the deportees where they are, and has to add ever new masses of people.

Early in 1956, Khrushchev announced new deportations totaling half a million people, and still more deportations were added in the following years.

## KARAGANDA AND SPASK

The Karaganda punitive area lies in the steppe region. Its forced labor camps are known as *Peslag* and have their headquarters in Karaganda, which was founded as late as 1929 but is now the second

largest city in Kazakhstan. Karaganda's significance is enhanced by the nearby coal mines. The Karaganda coal basin — part of the Kuznetsk coal *kombinat* — occupies an area of 1250 square miles, and has many shafts.

The climate is rough and, according to the deportees, hard to endure.

The forced labor camps are located in the city of Karaganda and its surroundings. The first Baltic deportees arrived here in 1941, but large numbers of Balts, both men and women, were sent here also after World War II.

Latvians are interned in the Karaganda camps and also in the camps of Spask (20 miles south of Karaganda), Dolinka, Dubovka (16 miles west of Karaganda), Aktas (eight miles west of Karaganda) and Dzhumabek. In all the camps the Balts are mingled with Ukrainians, Hungarians, Chinese and other nationalities.

In the Spask women's camp the Balts had the following breakdown in 1953: more than 200 Lithuanians, 120 Latvians and 40 Estonians. Since all were political prisoners, it was called a regime camp, to distinguish it from general camps which also housed criminals.

Only a high wall separates the Spask women's camp from the men's camp. Supervision is strict, and both camps are constantly watched by armed guards. Communication between the two camps was carried on by messages attached to rocks tossed over the wall. Life in either camp could also be observed from a nearby hill, which overlooks both camps. These messages were a means of exchanging information about developments in the Soviet Union and in the West, as well as about local events.

The barracks are built of clay and straw. The internal system and order are governed by the same rules as in all other forced labor camps and do not differ materially from those in Vorkuta and Kolyma, with the exception of the hospital, in which conditions are reportedly even worse than elsewhere. The women's camp has only a hospital for internal diseases, while a surgical ward is located only in the men's camp. Operations were therefore performed only in the men's camp, to which also the dead women were brought. Unlike

the tundra camps, a cemetery has been set up in Spask, two miles from the camp. The dead women are dressed in their private clothes, which they had turned in upon arrival. Funeral rites are not permitted, and families are not informed of deaths.

Medical examinations are performed every fourth month, but these are made by male nurses and are therefore cursory and unprofessional. Medicines, even a thermometer, are lacking.

In contrast, political controls, conducted by women overseers and female MVD officials, are very strict and thorough. The prisoners are not permitted to keep either knives or scissors, only sewing needles. Holy Scriptures, if found, are immediately confiscated. During the checkups, the barracks are searched and the prisoners undergo a body search. Sometimes during the search, the prisoners are told to undress and then sent out from the barracks. Their clothes are then left lying in the barracks until they return.

"Despite a ban, the Latvian women observed Christmas, Easter and other holidays," says a returnee from Spask. "The Lutheran and Catholic church holidays do not coincide with the Greek Orthodox Christmas and Easter, and since the camp administration is more familiar with the Russian (Greek Orthodox) holiday dates, the Lutheran and Catholic Balts could celebrate their holidays without attracting much attention. They did it in a heartwarming manner, in the company of friends. A Latvian received a tiny Christmas tree from home in 1953. Candles were lighted on the tree, and afterwards the Latvian woman gave a twig of the tree to every barrack-mate, who received it as a relic from the native country. At Easter, returning from work in the fields, each woman brought with her a small wreath of flowers. Wreaths were also made up for women who were employed in other work. At Midsummer they sang their traditional Midsummer Eve songs. All this looked and sounded unusual in a slave camp in the middle of the Kirghizian steppe. But it gave us, who lived in this death valley, a new strength, at least for a while, conveying a message from a happy past.

"Our normal life was cold and drab. How grateful we were to an artist, an invalid, who served as an orderly in the barrack, and who every day would find kind words to say or do something

pleasant for us. For lack of something better she would prepare crossword puzzles for us to solve. Even these small, trifling things, these short moments of relaxation, were precious to us.

"The camp inmates got along with one another extremely well. Everyone trusted and relied on everybody else. The Latvian women were diligent, and were known as good workers. One-third of the women did farm work, while the rest were invalids assigned to easier tasks. Farm workers went to work in brigades, each made up of 30 women. Sometimes even aged and invalid women were sent to work in the fields, and in such cases the brigade was increased to 50 members. Most of the brigadiers were Russian women, but there were also Latvians, Lithuanians and Jewesses among them. The fields are as far as eight miles from the barracks, and this distance must be covered by foot. Only once, at harvest time, did I see sick people brought to work in a motorcar. Work in the steppe under the burning sun is not easy. There is not a breeze in the summer air. One cannot work bare-headed.

"Until April, 1953, the prisoners received no wages. The only practicable 'currency' at that time was sugar. Money was sent by relatives from home, provided they had not been deported, too. This money was not paid out to the recipients, but was credited to a special account, and could be used for purchases in the canteen. Normally, only a few goods were offered for sale in the canteens: some low-quality candy and half-baked bread. It was a great occasion when sugar or fats were available.

"The camp inmates are permitted to receive parcels of food and clothing from relatives. These parcels are first placed in a special room of the camp, where they are opened and thoroughly checked. Even an occasional piece of butter is probed. Unless the recipient can identify the sender's name and address, the parcel is not handed to her. (Author's note: In other camps the regulations are not so severe.) The same applies to money orders.

"Latvian women who received neither parcels nor money, got a friendly share from their comrades.

"Until 1953, it was permitted to write letters to relatives twice a year, in January and July. However, letters were often lost enroute.

To know whether a letter had been received, the writers numbered them. Sometimes entire passages had been deleted, as all letters were censored."

Most Latvian women in the Spask camp were middle-aged or older, while the Lithuanians as a rule were young girls, only 18 or 20 years old.

Although camp rules prohibit corporal punishment or beating of prisoners, these have occurred in the Spask camp. Cruelty and humiliation were to prove convincingly that the camp "is not a sanatorium." Even physicians, or those who styled themselves doctors or were called so by the camp administration, were infected with this disease of brutality.

Until 1949, all deportees in Karaganda suffered severely from hunger. Because of general weakness, 12 to 14 prisoners, mostly in the men's camp, died daily.

While most of the women were employed in kolkhozes, in stone quarries and in the brickyard, the men built roads, houses and factories in the nearby town, and occasionally worked in the stone quarries and the brickyard. A considerable percentage of the prisoners mined coal.

The kolkhozes cultivate vegetables, especially cabbage, beets, potatoes, and grains. Harvesting is very thorough, and not an ear of grain is left on the field by the invalids who are sent to glean them. If a prisoner managed to hide an ear of grain, she secretly roasted it for use as ersatz coffee.

Before the uprisings in Karaganda and Spask, the prisoner's clothing carried a number and the letter "S" (according to one version, this letter signified 'special camp' of political prisoners, while another explanation is that it designated all 'socially dangerous elements'). In addition, the Roman numeral "I" was sewn on the clothing, indicating the first subsection of Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code, dealing with high treason. The prisoners' clothing was reportedly also marked in other ways before 1953.

When a column was escorted to the place of work, the prisoners had to march silently, with their hands crossed behind them.

All prisoners did not have the same work regime, as indicated by the arrangement of women's barracks:

Barracks Nos. 1—4 housed invalids unfit for work; barrack No. 5, tubercular patients; barracks Nos. 6 and 8, convicts and workers assigned to heavy tasks; barrack No. 7, long-term prisoners (sentenced to 15 or more years); barrack No. 9 was used as warehouse; and barrack No. 10 was for 'special workers,' such as brigadiers, office clerks, physicians and nurses.

The first four barracks also included the so-called *monashki* — fanatical nuns who objected to any work on principle. No reprisals could shake their determination. Outwardly, they differed from the other camp inmates in that they wore black head-cloths.

The women's camp, like the men's, also had solitary cells and the so-called *burs* to which prisoners were confined whenever they opposed, however slightly, the camp administration, or, in many cases, because they had been falsely denounced. The denunciations were received by MVD officials who also tried to recruit informers among the prisoners.

Upon completion of their term, prisoners may leave the camp, but not Siberia or Central Asia. With a few exceptions, the "released" are given jobs in a nearby sovkhوزه or kolkhoزه. When they enter this employment, they are again bound, since a Soviet collective farm may not be left at will, while staying there means utmost misery.

A German woman who has been living the same life as Baltic deportees for ten years says the following about conditions in a Karaganda kolkhoزه — in this case, a kolkhoزه not surrounded by barbed wire and without a camp regime:

"My two children and I were placed in a kolkhoزه some four miles from Karaganda. I knew farm work, but what I saw in this God-forsaken place baffled me. Never in my life had I seen anything so wretched and miserable. Judge for yourself, what should a person do when for a day of hard work he gets 0.70 rubles and two kilograms of vegetables and other food.

"The summer of 1955 was dry, and the crops failed. However, even in the previous years, when yields were higher, we were short of food. My neighbor worked like a horse, but all he got was

350 pounds of wheat and 440 pounds of cabbage a year, in addition to 0.70 rubles a day. You can figure out that it doesn't add up to much. What little we earned was not left over for us, as we had to spend part of it for internal loan bonds. Only those who had a cow were able to pay for the loan. In addition, we were permitted to keep a couple of hens, although even that involved payment of special taxes. A kolkhoze member who had a cow, a hog and a few hens, had to turn over annually to the Soviet authorities 175 pounds of meat, 90 eggs and about 20 pounds of butter. Twenty rubles had to be paid for the use of pasture land, which was meager, so that the milk yield was low.

"My oldest son, 14 years of age, had to operate a tractor, while the youngest, who was only 11, was judged unfit for work and was therefore denied his food ration. I shared my food with him for a month, but then my legs swelled from famine.

"I asked the brigadier to assign some work also to the younger boy, but he reproached the boy for being so small and weak, and said he doubted that the youngster could be of any use. I insisted, and a few days later the kolkhoze management told me the boy could work as a swineherd. This meant that he got his bowl of porridge. I praised God for this.

"From time to time a Lutheran pastor, a 62-year old Volga German, came to our camp. He held services now and then and performed religious rites. Nine "brethren," all pious men, gathered around him, and in the clergyman's absence they would also read the Bible to us. The years 1948 to 1951 brought a fresh outburst of religious persecutions. Out of fear, I buried my hymn-book in the ground, but still I wanted my oldest boy to be confirmed. The pastor performed the rites in my room. Some time later I was summoned to the NKVD and was asked whether the pastor had confirmed my son. I could not deny it. During my interrogation I learned that the pastor and his assistants had been arrested. Others were also questioned, and the investigation went on for several weeks. Then we were all taken to the tribunal. There were 58 'witnesses,' and we were questioned by the court for four days. Then the pastor and his nine 'brethren' were sentenced to 25-year prison terms. This took place on December 12,

1951, and it was the gloomiest day in my life, as my testimony had been used against these righteous men. I can still hear the pastor saying: 'I did not do anything beyond preaching the Lord's word. I die for my Lord and Savior'.

"The public prosecutor paid lip-service to religious freedom in the Soviet Union, but claimed that the pastor was guilty because he had preached and performed religious rites in a private dwelling. A church should first have been built for the purpose. What the pastor had done, the prosecutor said, was mere propaganda.

"The lot of children is especially hard. They grow up in the kolkhozes without the joy and happiness which normally is inseparable from childhood. The life of children in Kazakhstan who do not join the communist youth organization is really too grim. The teachers gave them low grades, shoved them around and beat them. But as soon as a child tied a red kerchief round his neck, everything changed."

Life in the other kolkhozes of the Kirghizian steppes was much the same.

## DZHEZKAZGAN

Dzhezkazgan, 125 miles east of Karaganda, belongs to the *Steplag* forced labor camp. The name indicates that Dzhezkazgan lies in the steppe. The climate is continental, with summer temperatures of 104° F and winter temperatures of minus 31° F.

Dzhezkazgan is of interest to Moscow because of its valuable mines of copper and manganese ore. It is the principal copper-producing area in the Soviet Union, and possibly the second largest in the world. All of the local industries are in some way connected with the ore mines. Dzhezkazgan also has a copper industry *kombinat*.

Labor slaves include Ukrainians, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Kazakhs and Volga Germans. They are employed in copper mines and stone quarries, in construction work, and, to some extent, in agriculture. Latvians were sent here during the deportations of 1945 and later years. The commander of the Latvian Navy, Admiral Spade, was interned here from 1950 to 1952.



*A group of Baltic political prisoners in Dzhezkazgan in 1956.*

The region of the *Steplag* camps can be reached by railway via the Trans-Siberian railroad, which branches off at Petropavlovsk to Akmolinsk, Karaganda and Balkhash. Another line runs, in turn, from Karaganda to Dzhezkazgan, whose station also serves Kingir and other nearby punitive camps.

Returnees have reported that conditions prevailing in Dzhezkazgan are grim. During a dysentery epidemic in 1948, 800 men died out of a total of 4000 in a single camp. Other diseases are also prevalent.

It is known that in February, 1947, there arrived in Dzhezkazgan 1500 German war prisoners whom Sweden had extradited to the Soviet Union, and these men were placed in camp No. 39. However, it has not been possible to find out whether this group of Germans included interned Latvian war prisoners whom Sweden had also surrendered to the Soviets.

With its grim work regime, Dzhezkazgan is typical of the Soviet forced labor camps set up for the rapid annihilation of political opponents. At the outset, the labor needed in the Kirghizian steppes for the large mining enterprises was provided by German and Japanese war prisoners, and later almost exclusively by deportees and prisoners.

## KINGIR

Kingir, the administrative center of *Steplag*, lies in the middle of steppe and vast sandy districts. Its climate is totally unsuited for Europeans; during the summer the thermometer soars to 122° F, while temperatures of minus 40° F are common in winter. Because of the sudden changes in temperature and the vast surrounding plains, Kingir experiences violent blizzards in the winter, while in the summer hurricane-like winds sweep across the steppe. Winter lasts from November to the end of March.

Kingir lies on the 77th degree of longitude and the 47th parallel. Its surrounding area has rich coal deposits, and an important role is also played by foundries.

After World War II, many war prisoners and politically persecuted persons, including numerous Latvian legionaries, were concentrated in the *Steplag* for the mining of coal and non-ferrous metals. In addition to male prisoners (reportedly 9000), there was a large number of women (more than 4000). In 1954, unlike the procedure followed in other regime camps, several hundred criminal convicts were sent to Kingir. The Soviet authorities tried to incite these convicts against the political prisoners by circulating rumors to the effect that "the fascists were determined to terrorize them." This agitated conflicts between the criminals and the other prisoners. The Baltic detainees soon caught on to the bolshevik ruse, and to improve the atmosphere in the camps they explained to the criminal prisoners that they had nothing to fear from the political internees.

The Kingir camp is enclosed by three high walls. One of the interior walls separates the men's camp from the women's. The

criminal prisoners would climb over the wall. Later, for greater convenience, they cut a sizable passage-way through it. The guards observed this from their watch-towers, but they paid slight attention to it.

Until 1950, famine prevailed in Kingir. Starting in 1952, when small wage payments were introduced, prisoners could buy supplementary food, and living conditions improved to some extent.

However, even by performing particularly heavy jobs, the prisoners were not able to earn more than 70 rubles a month. Unrest grew among them, and in 1954 culminated in an uprising involving serious clashes.

Only after the uprising did conditions improve. The Soviets went so far as to transfer some of the functions of camp administration to the prisoners beginning in the fall of 1954. This was dictated by the fear of new uprisings and possible dangerous drops in production.

The Kingir prisoners are required to attend courses in political education. In addition to teaching Marxism-Leninism (Stalin's tenets have not been expounded since early 1956), the political officers would always stress: "You are members of the great Soviet family." The free citizens in the city of Kingir and its surroundings are now being told that the political interned are not criminals. However, it is not explained just what they are, since they are used as slave labor.

This change of attitude came as a surprise to both the free Soviet citizens — those who are not interned in camps — and the prisoners.

While as late as 1954 and for many years before the camp inmates were required to have a short haircut, Moscow's "liberal" policy now permits the wearing of long hair.

A considerable improvement is the permission to write letters, even if it applies only to correspondence within the Soviet Union. While before 1954 only one or two letters a year were permitted, now prisoners may write a letter every month. The prisoners have also been promised permission to write letters abroad, but so far this pledge has not been honored.

The reforms introduced in the fall of 1954 also include special permission to leave the camp and visit the city from time to time. However, not all prisoners enjoy this right, as the Soviet authorities

fear too-close contacts between the political prisoners and the city residents.

In addition, "leave" of up to four weeks is granted once a year. This "leave" must be spent in a special barrack which is cleaner and more pleasant than the others.

Amnesty was applied with great caution, and the camp administration was asked to furnish favorable or unfavorable appraisals of the prisoners. A man marked too heavily as an opponent of the Soviet regime had no prospect of either "release" or alleviation of regime. The amnesty was not carried out automatically (in other works, it did not apply to all political prisoners as a group), but applied only to individually selected prisoners, whose cases were decided by a commission consisting of a public prosecutor and three assessors.

## BALKHASH

On the shore of the 6760-square-mile Lake Balkhash there has risen since 1936 the city of Balkhash, whose importance is increased by mining and working of non-ferrous metals handled by a special *kombinat*. This *kombinat* is endeavoring to step up production, and has included slave labor in its economic planning.

There are two penal camps in the city. So far information has been obtained only on the composition of the women's camp, which includes prisoners deported in 1941.

## EKIBASTUS

The Ekibastus forced labor camps, which reportedly include considerable numbers of Latvian and other Baltic inmates, belong to the Dzhzhkazgan-Kingir camp administration. The deportees work in coal mines which are being expanded under the sixth five-year plan.

## PAVLODAR

Pavlodar, an important railroad junction between Akmolinsk and Barnaul, has aluminum works which use bauxite obtained from rich local deposits.

So far information has been obtained only on male Balts, and this would seem to indicate that there are only men's forced labor camps in Pavlodar.

## ALMA-ATA

Since recent years Alma-Ata has been the capital of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic.

Balts made the acquaintance of the Alma-Ata forced labor camps as early as during the mass deportations of 1941. They are employed in mines and fishery industries.

## MOLOTOVOBAD

This little-known place lies in the Tadjik Soviet Socialist Republic close to the borders of Afghanistan, Pakistan and China. Ten miles from Molotovobad is located a forced labor camp for specialists, most of whom were sent there from Kuchino, which has been mentioned above. The deportee specialists were taken in small groups. The action was practically completed in 1952, although individual Latvian engineers have been sent to Molotovobad also in 1953.

The Molotovobad camp is closely guarded, but is not enclosed by barbed wire. The penal and work regime is described as moderate. The deportees were allowed to ask their families to join them in the Tadjik republic. Although the specialists are deportees, and for some time had undergone a much sterner deportation and penal regime in Inta or Moscow, they are fairly well paid according to Soviet standards. The deported Baltic engineers and designers include persons who have been awarded prizes for inventions and for the preparation of important plans.

Deported Balts are found in Central Asia also in other places, including the Altai region (112500 square miles), the islands of Lake



*A group of Balts in a Central Asian camp. In Soviet eyes, all of them are "counterrevolutionaries."*

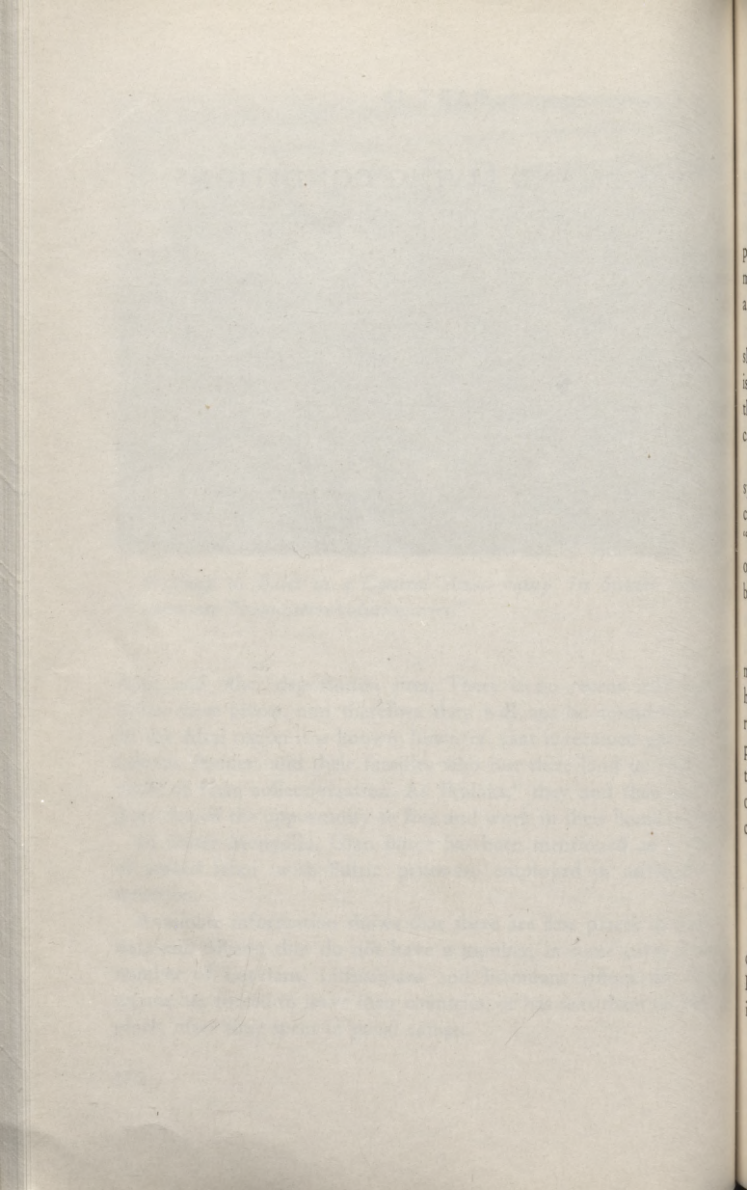
Aral, and other deportation sites. There is no recent information about these places, and therefore they will not be considered here. Of the Altai region it is known, however, that it received part of the Latvian farmers and their families who lost their land in 1949 as a result of farm collectivization. As "kulaks," they and their children were denied the opportunity to live and work in their home country.

In Outer Mongolia, Ulan Bator has been mentioned as a cluster of forced labor with Baltic prisoners employed in railroad construction.

Available information shows that there are few places in Central Asia and Siberia that do not have a number, in some cases a small number of Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians whom the Soviet regime has forced to leave their countries, or has sent them to various places after time spent in penal camps.

PART II

WAGES AND LIVING CONDITIONS  
IN THE CAMPS



## NUTRITION AND WAGES

By introducing compulsory labor, the Soviet Union has not only procured a labor force necessary for the utilization of new raw materials and the cultivation of new agricultural areas, but it has also obtained this force at a cheap price.

If we disregard the changes introduced in the remuneration of slave laborers between 1952 and 1953, slave work in the Soviet camps is compensated only with a highly-inadequate amount of food. Thus the prisoners have to perform strenuous work for food, a practice carried on by slave-holders of other times.

The subjection of millions of people to such an extreme exploitation system gives rise to sharp contradictions, since the system is inconsistent with the Soviet ideology. The Soviet state calls itself a "socialistic state," boasts of its "socialistic achievements," and speaks of the need to replace the capitalistic "exploitation" system with a better and fairer order of social relationships.

What is the Soviet life in reality?

Without dwelling on Soviet real wages, which would show the miserable situation of the Soviet worker, we shall consider only the huge contingent represented by slave laborers. In speaking of their remuneration, we have to distinguish between (1) nutrition as compensation for work, (2) wages proper, and (3) work premiums. For the sake of clarity, it should be stated that nutrition and wages depend on filling the work norms, while premiums are linked with the exceeding of norms.

### A. Food rations

Food rations in the forced labor camps are not uniform. They depend on the work norm group in which a prisoner is included. Rations for invalids and women are smaller. The highest rations are issued to coal miners and other mine workers. However, even their

rations are graded according to whether they fulfil, exceed or remain below the work norm.

The daily food ration ranges within the following limits: bread, 400 to 1200 grams; cabbage or fish soup, 1 to 1.2 liters, served twice daily; porridge, 200 to 450 grams; fats 10 to 13 grams or 10 to 50 grams of sunflower or cod-liver oil; sugar, 13 to 27 grams; salt fish or half of a herring, 100 to 120 grams; or 45 grams of meat.

Prisoners confined to the solitary cell, or *bur*, have their daily bread ration cut to 300 grams, and except for a reduced soup ration they receive nothing else. On the other hand, in some mine areas miners may have as much bread as they want; in these cases, the Soviets have deemed it appropriate to increase bread rations above the prescribed quotas in order to raise production. However, these are exceptions. Moreover, the bread served is not of standard quality, containing too much water.

The prisoners likewise claim that the soup contains little of nutritive value, and that the small salted fish put into the soup makes it at times unpalatable.

As regards food rations, the prisoners are divided in categories, or so-called "cauldrons."

In Kolyma, male prisoners belonging to category I (that is, those who fill 100 percent of the norm) are entitled to 800—900 grams of bread, while a woman gets only 600 grams, even if she performs the same work as a man. In category II (prisoners producing from 70 to 99 percent of the norm), men are given 700, women 500 grams of bread. Category III (50 to 69 percent norm fulfilment) male workers are issued 500 and women workers 400 grams of bread. This Kolyma category III corresponds to the so-called "first cauldron" in Vorkuta, where cauldron II workers get 800 grams of bread, while workers of "cauldrons" II to VI get 1200 grams of bread. There are different variations in other rations.

Only those who belong to cauldron VII — overseers and camp administration — are fully satisfied.

Physicians calculate that because of the Arctic climate and hard work a person needs 4000 calories a day, at least during the eight winter months.

On the rations provided by the camp a person cannot live more than two years. Then comes dystrophy (see below). During the third year of such a work and nutrition regime, a person's health is ruined, and during the fourth year he is included among the work invalids. This explains the huge number of invalids in all Soviet forced labor camps. Conditions improved only after 1952 (in some places even later), when small wage payments were introduced which permitted a person to supplement the scanty rations with food bought in canteens.

The prisoners suffered severe famine until 1950, but even after that year improvement varied from camp to camp. Food is somewhat better in mine camps and may be supplemented with more nutritious food obtained in the canteens, while in camps which in the Soviet view are less important (furniture making, fish canning), the canteens do not sell butter, margarine, sugar and the like.

Canteen prices are high and therefore even if food is available, adequate amounts cannot be bought. A kilogram (equal to 2.2 pounds) of butter costs 56 rubles, a kilogram of margarine — 37 rubles, sugar costs 12 rubles a kilogram, candy — from 20 to 50 rubles, bread — 1.5 rubles, 20 medium-grade cardboard mouth-piece cigarettes — 5.60 rubles.

Speaking of camp food, it should be mentioned that conditions are further aggravated by the vice of theft which is widely spread in the Soviet Union in general and thrives in the camp kitchens and storehouses.

Not all of the food, calculated on paper by the gram, reaches the kitchen. Sizable amounts "disappear" through various devices used by the camp administration, the MVD officials or the kitchen chief. The MVD recompenses its informers by allotting them food at the expense of other camp inmates. Through corrupt practices, thin soup becomes even thinner, and bread dough is eked out by using low-quality ingredients or adding extra water. During the first post-war years dough was so thin that it could be baked only in special pans.

Persons returned from Soviet labor camps are unanimous in pointing out that they were saved from starvation only by the food parcels sent to them. The Balts received such parcels until 1949 when com-

pulsory farm collectivization ruined Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian farmers. Few food parcels were received from the Baltic countries after that year. Solidarity prompted the sharing of the additional food with Germans, and a few years later the latter reciprocated with gifts received from Germany.

Thus, it was possible to live through the most difficult years.

### B. Wages

Soviet business enterprises — of which there are two types — state-owned and cooperative — have evolved a system of trading in human beings. It is known as *hozrashchot* (*hozaistvenny rashchot* — economic clearing) and involves unique and rather complicated manipulations with men and women who are subject to Soviet rule. To understand it, one should know that for each political prisoner whom the security organs turn over to a business enterprise for slave labor, the latter is required to pay the Soviet government a remuneration according to a certain tariff. This wage tariff is identical with that according to which free workers are paid. Only — in this case, the wages do not go to the prisoner and the fruits of his labor are reaped by the government. As an exploiter of unpaid labor the Soviet government thus acquires the status of a slave-owner.

Since Stalin's death, the new leaders in the Kremlin have tried to remove this ignominious blot by permitting payment of a part of their wages to the slave laborers. The change-over to the new system actually began before Stalin's death, in the spring of 1952, but after the wide-spread uprisings of political prisoners in 1953, wage payment was introduced in practically all Soviet slave labor camps.

Under the wage system established for camp inmates, a Soviet business enterprise, usually the camp administration, pays the prisoner only a minor portion of the wages, keeping the rest. Although the Soviets make a good profit on slave labor, the wages paid to slave laborers are invariably below 50 percent of those paid to free workers. In the camps of the *Steplag*, for instance, wages range from 27 to 35 percent and those of *Peslag* from 20 to 45 percent of the normal. These percentages vary according to the categories of jobs. These



*Huge amounts have been deducted from the small wages of the political prisoners for the "purchase" of Soviet internal loan bonds. For the prisoners, this is lost money.*

categories in turn are divided into grades, depending on the specific types of work performed in the individual punitive areas. For instance, there are seven grades in *Peslag*. Grade 1 includes persons with no experience in the work assigned. Grades 2 and 3 comprise workers whose skill does not exceed that of an apprentice, while skilled workers belong to grades 5 and 6, and master craftsmen to grade 7.

The heaviest deductions are made from the wages of skilled workers and master craftsmen. They receive only 20 percent of the wages which would be paid to them if they were free. Lower-grade workers are paid 45 percent of the full wage.

Let us take the case of an electrician in grade 3. Assuming that he fulfils and exceeds the work norm, his monthly wage account compared to that of a free worker would be as follows:

Work hours credited:

Hours included in the work norm	25 days, 8 hours each	200 hours
Overtime	25 days, 2 hours each	50 hours
Hours added in recognition of good performance		20 hours
		Total — 270 hours

Wages:

Paid to a free worker per hour		3.68 rubles
Paid to a camp inmate (in the same job category and grade) 40 percent of full wages		1.47 rubles

Monthly wages:

Free worker	3.68 rubles multiplied by 270 hours	993.60 rubles
Camp inmate	1.47 rubles multiplied by 270 hours	396.90 rubles

Sums deducted by camp administration:

For food 3.70 rubles a day for 31 days		114.70 rubles
For clothing 2.50 rubles a work-day for 25 days		62.50 rubles
Income tax on prisoner's wages		30.— rubles
		Total deductions 207.20 rubles

The camp inmate is thus paid:	396.90 rubles
minus	207.20 rubles
	189.70 rubles

For this sum of 189.70 rubles a slave laborer can buy, in the camp canteen, three and a half kilograms (a kilogram equal to 2.2 pounds) of butter or five kilograms of margarine.

This is what the real wages of a camp inmate amount to.

The above computation does not include a considerable expense item which even a man behind barbed wire could not avoid up to 1957, in other words, compulsory subscription to Soviet internal loan bonds. In a year this item may represent as much as 500 rubles or more.

The size of deductions varies according to individual camps. Food money is from 3.40 to 4.50 rubles a day and the clothing-money ranges from two to three rubles a day. Lately, the prisoners have been permitted to wear their own clothes, in which case clothing money is not deducted.

Persons "released" under the amnesty, but retained in forced work, receive wages from which no deductions are made for food and clothing. However, a fairly high progressive income tax is levied on the higher wage groups. Also the so-called bachelor's tax is deducted. In Kolyma, this tax is deducted indiscriminately from the wages of single and married men. The *hozrashchot* wage system often differs in practice from the theory.

The camp inmate is frequently victimized in other ways as well. A common practice is to accuse him of squandering raw materials and other necessities or of causing production short-comings.

Heavy deductions are also made as a punishment if a person loses a piece of clothing supplied by the camp administration. For instance, if a *bushlat*, valued at 96 rubles, is lost, a tenfold fine may be imposed on the prisoner. This means that 960 rubles are gradually deducted from his wages during the following months.

Deductions from the wages of a person kept behind barbed wire also include an item designated as "guarding," that is, guarding him with watch-towers and watchdogs. Expenses for medical treatment are also deducted.

Camp chiefs, in conjunction with the management of the business enterprise concerned, may decide when and at what intervals wages

are to be paid. At times, payments are delayed for two or three months in order to accumulate working capital reserves.

In an effort to raise the output, piece-work and work brigades have been introduced. The brigadiers keep a constant watch on their brigade members and try to obtain the fulfilment of norms, disregarding a man's health and strength reserves.

There is, however, one regulation which is helpful to the slave workers — Soviet agencies which hire out labor collect from the camps, in the latter's capacity of business enterprise, an indemnity for each prisoner who dies. Failure to observe safety regulations causes numerous accidents resulting in incapacitation or death, and the business enterprises try to limit the number of accidents for economic reasons. It has been found that an excessive number of invalids and a resultant reduction in the labor force cause the enterprise heavy financial losses.

Invalids are, it is true, employed in lighter jobs, but with small economic effect and therefore the business enterprises favor the release of invalids from the camps. Invalids who are themselves eager to make money are unable to earn more than five to twenty-five rubles a month and their monthly wages have rarely reached 60 rubles.

In addition to the *hozrashchot* system, the so-called *rashchot* should also be mentioned. Under this plan, designed to increase the output of a slave laborer, the interned are promised a reduction of their sentences for exceeding the work norms, according to a detailed schedule. For instance, if a camp inmate exceeds the norm by 40 per cent or, in other words, fulfils the norm to 140 per cent on a certain day, he is credited with three days. This system was introduced at the end of 1953 in Vorkuta, in April 1954 in the *Steplag* and in June of the same year in *Peslag* and elsewhere.

The sentences are reduced according to the following rates:

A work-day during which the norm is fulfilled by:

100 percent reduces the term by one day

110 percent reduces the term by a day and a half

120 percent reduces the term by two days

130 percent reduces the term by two and a half days

140 percent reduces the term by three days.

For especially hard work, for instance in stone quarries, the reduction rates are as follows:

96 percent of the norm reduce the term by 1.25 days

101 percent of the norm reduce the term by a day and a half

106 percent of the norm reduce the term by two days

111 percent of the norm reduce the term by three days.

## CLOTHING

In addition to what has already been said about the clothing of camp inmates, we shall list individual pieces of clothing as designated by the prisoners:

### A. Winter clothing

*Bushlat* — black quilted long-sleeved jacket reaching to the waist;

*Telegreika* — black quilted waistcoat;

(*bushlat* and *telegreika* together are called *fufaika*);

Trousers, black, quilted;

Cap with flaps for ear protection;

Gloves, quilted.

### B. Summer clothing

Jacket, blue, flannel or other light material;

Work trousers, blue;

Mosquito net.

### C. Underwear

Two pairs of drawers, two shirts, one sheet, two pillowcases.

In addition, of late, each prisoner is issued one towel and two pairs of foot-rags.

### D. Footwear

*Botinki* — boots issued to coal miners;

*Valenki* — top boots of felt, without leather soles;

*Kirzovoi* — artificial leather boots.

## E. Women's clothing

1. Slip;
2. Drawers (of thin linen cloth, like the slip);
3. Blouse of printed cotton;
4. Cotton dress for the summer and long trousers for the winter;
5. Grey cotton headcloth for the summer and dark flannel headcloth for the winter;
6. Quilted jacket for the summer and heavily quilted *bushlat* for the winter;
7. Mosquito net for face protection in the summer and quilted mittens in the winter;
8. Men's footwear of artificial leather for the summer and footwear of coarse sack cloth, the so-called *burki*, for the winter.

The clothing and footwear issued is usually second-hand. New articles are given mostly to MVD informants.

The clothing may be considered adequate for the summer, even if it fails to afford adequate protection against rain or moisture. But the winter clothing is no protection against the cold from December to March. Returnees state that the clothing given them by the Soviets was inadequate. Private clothing and footwear were taken away by the bolsheviks to hinder escapes. "Released" prisoners may buy their own clothing and footwear.

## HEALTH CONDITIONS AND MORTALITY

What ten years of forced labor do to a person's health, could be seen at Friedland, the West German camp for returnees, at the end of 1955 and in early 1956. The author had the opportunity to observe from close quarters about 10000 German war and civilian prisoners and talk to a large number of them. With a few exceptions they had spent ten or more years in the same forced labor camps and prisons where ten or more percent of the Latvian people continue to toil under the sign of the hammer and sickle. Living conditions and their effect on the German war prisoners were and are the same for the interned Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians. Thus the

German returnees are a living example of what happens to the Balts in the Soviet camps.

Practically every released German prisoner says that he suffers from dystrophy.

Dystrophy? It sounds strange and unusual. What is dystrophy?

There are several types of dystrophy, but in this case it is the *dystrophia musculorum progressiva*. It is a disease entailing chronic digestive disorders. The author asked a physician among the returnees about the symptoms of this disease. He said: "Dystrophy as it affected us had special external symptoms: deformation of ribs, shrinking of the shoulder and thigh muscles, withering of arms and legs. These are symptoms shown by starvation victims. Dystrophy affected all miners and people engaged in other hard work and is caused by inadequate food and excessive work. A weakened organism is unable to fulfil the work norm, although the brigadiers and camp administration insist on its fulfilment. Coal collectors must often crawl 40 to 50 yards through the narrow galleries and at times use even their teeth in dragging the coal. The effort is so intense that it rapidly undermines one's health. Your body feels as if filled with lead. A person admitted to a hospital because of some serious ailment needs at least a week to overcome his accumulated weariness."

Dystrophy usually ends in death. Returnees cite many Latvians who died of dystrophy.

Returnees suffered during their imprisonment and continue to suffer from hypertonia or high blood-pressure.

"We got high blood-pressure," says a German physician who was in Inta, "because of psychic upsets. Also the unhealthy climate affected us. Some got swollen legs and purulent abscesses. This, however, did not entail exemption from work. Blood-pressure, which normally was 120 to 130 millimeters, reached 240 or 250 millimeters. Many men died of a stroke. I remember R., a Latvian from Jelgava. He was 43 years old but could not rid himself of excessively high blood-pressure. One day, he collapsed and I saw his head strike the table heavily. He had had a stroke. Many hypertonia patients also had kidney troubles."

Very few camp inmates have escaped tuberculosis.

"Practically everybody is affected by tuberculosis," says a German returnee — a former inmate of the women's camp in Tayshet. "Not only pulmonary, but also intestinal and bone tuberculosis is widespread. The only medicine given to lung patients was calcium. Contributory causes of tuberculosis are the overcrowded barracks and indifference to the prisoners' health. Persons with active tuberculosis sleep in one room, close to each other. New cases of disease are only discovered when they already have cavities. Serious cases are hospitalized, but it is not always possible to find accommodation for them. Though there was a shortage of x-ray equipment, some equipment has now been procured, but not enough."

Scurvy is also widespread, especially in the camps of the Arctic region. Everyone who has been in Vorkuta and Inta, as well as in Kolyma has had an experience of it. In Kolyma this disease is called *tsinga*.

Scurvy is caused by the lack of C vitamin. The skin bleeds, the gums ache, become deformed and bleed, and the affected person becomes anemic and loses weight. The diet of the interned is inadequate and defective. There is a lack of fresh food, to say nothing of vegetables and fruit. In the forced labor camps scurvy is combated by giving the patient a pine-needle drink diluted in boiled water or serving a tea of dog-rose hips or berries of the mountain ash. Also a drink made of crane-berries is used as medicine.

There are also many cases of pellagra which is caused by the lack of vitamin B2. This disease is characterized by head-ache, vertigo, cramps, delirium and digestive troubles. Unprotected parts of the skin become inflamed and covered with pustules and later turn hard, thick and begin to crack. Pellagra recurs and torments the patient for years. It was combated by feeding yeast, since fresh milk was not available for medical purposes in the forced labor camps. Pellagra was usually combined with other diseases and therefore under Soviet conditions it was difficult to ascertain the true cause of death.

As is usual under abnormal conditions, the forced labor camps were from time to time visited by dysentery. An epidemic of dysentery could kill hundreds of prisoners within a few days. Dysentery is contagious and it is spread not only by the sick but also by all

organisms carrying the bacilli. Although modern medicine provides means for combating this disease rapidly and effectively, under anti-sanitary Soviet conditions and because of the lack of efficient medicines (sulfa drugs and anti-biotics), many inmates of the slave labor camps died of dysentery.

Articular and muscular rheumatism is also common. Work in coal mines and forests almost invariably leads to rheumatism. Wading or sleeping in wet places, wearing damp clothes and living in a severe climate helps this disease to ruin the health even of young people. The Soviet physicians are not particularly concerned about rheumatism, and rheumatic patients are not exempted from work. The same is true of sciatic pains.

An inquiry into the principal diseases in slave labor camps shows that, in addition to those mentioned above, typhus (especially during war and post-war years), heart, kidney and liver diseases, nervous afflictions and insanity, different kinds of anemia and loss of eyesight are among the most common. All diseases in some way linked with lack of vitamins occur there.

A slave labor camp inmate is beset by tiredness no less than by the diseases. It is not the usual fatigue, but a heavy and chronic weariness caused by the lack of vitamins. There are few things the interned long more for than the rest given by sleep. Returned from work and having gulped down a thin soup, they slump in their beds and sleep like dead. Neither the noise of the loudspeaker nor the brawls staged by the *blatnois* disturb them, nor are they affected by the narrowness of their cots or the hard sawdust mattress. When they get up in the morning, they have not slept enough, and part of the tiredness must be carried along. As the sleep deficiency accumulates over many years, a man becomes apathetic, physically and morally worn out, helpless and despondent.

"We have to work until we collapse, until we are thrown into mass graves and our corpses are covered with calcium chloride," in these words the condition of the slave workers is characterized by one who escaped death.

In despair, the interned simulate sickness in order to get a few

days' or weeks' respite. However, little can be achieved in this way and therefore some decide on self-mutilation.

"Some cut up their stomachs," states an East Prussian who spent ten years in Vorkuta, "others chopped off their fingers or a hand. There also were people who smoked chemicals, drank urine or introduced garlic into the anal duct in order to produce fever. Also other methods were used: a thread soaked with excrements or kerosene was drawn through the skin in order to cause an eruption on the skin. The 'clever' ones drank the sputum of tuberculosis sufferers and then went to the doctor. The analysis carried out permitted them to stay six months in the hospital. I knew 'strategists' who repeated this game for years. They could call themselves fortunate to be able to overcome the serious infection. It is impossible to list all the desperate methods used by hapless Soviet slave laborers in order to escape death in the mines or the icy fields when their physical strength is exhausted."

Nobody who has spent two or three years, or even longer in a forced labor camp, has preserved health. The ruthless regime and the callous treatment ruin a man physically, morally and mentally. "Whoever is too sensitive and readily affected by his surroundings," states an eye-witness, "dies first and his death is caused not only by the external conditions but also by the psychic sufferings which he experiences daily and which deprive him of the strength to endure."

Other people in the shadow of death are seized by a desire to live and survive. "It is astonishing," many returnees say, "how we were obsessed by the idea of survival. We fought with ourselves daily, we fought for the alternative: to live or to die. At night, we slumped into our cot wishing to fall asleep and never awake again, but when we got up in the morning we were determined to live through another day. The same was true of our comrades, our Baltic friends. They suffered greatly, many were already crippled, but they pulled themselves together again and again, spoke of their country, of their families, of the storms which had swept the shores of the Baltic, of the old times of statute work, of the injustices which their forefathers had suffered, of the exacting hard pioneering work their fathers or

they themselves had done. And they said — we have got to live in spite of the Russians.”

To conclude our survey of health conditions in the forced labor camps, we should mention another large category of patients, namely, frostbite victims. Their number is very high. During the eight winter months few days pass without a prisoner's freezing a limb or fingers or toes. Blisters appear on the white frostbite spot and the physician or male nurse has no choice but amputation.

A nurse who had spent many years in the Magadan slave camp states about her experience in the local hospital:

“The three barracks of the hospital housed 150 patients, crammed so tightly that their bunks touched each other. People with deeply sunken eyes or rather what was left of a man lay there. Only lung inflammation patients would cry out their pain which they otherwise tried to conceal. The barrack was filled with the horrible smell of putrefying flesh.

“In the morning, the surgeon came with his aides and tools, walking along the whole row of bunks. The nurses helped the patients to sit up and told them to bend their right arm toward the breast with the palm down, and then the surgeon cut with pincers the frost-bitten purulent fingers. Twenty-five bunks along one wall and twenty-five bunks along the other. Portions of cut-off flesh were thrown into a kidney-shaped bowl. After fingers, came the turn of toes.

“These were the lighter cases. Other people had only trunks of arms and legs left. Those who had lung inflammation did not even feel when they lost an arm or leg. After regaining consciousness, they felt for their leg, but could not find it. In some cases amputation came too late. They died of blood poisoning.

“I cite these Soviet victims as heroes. Few people speak of them. A number was for some time legible on their grave, that was all.”

As has already been stated, forced labor camps have local hospital barracks as well as main hospitals which form sanitary settlements or *sangorodoks*. In addition there are dispensaries.

Dispensaries and hospitals employ doctors, if there are any. If not, male nurses or the so-called *medsestras* take their place. *Medsestra*

means a 'registered nurse,' although she does not possess the qualifications of a registered nurse. *Medsestras* are young women trained in special courses where they are taught first aid and some knowledge of sanitary work, receive military training, including parachute jumping, and take the short course in the history of the Soviet communist party. Their medical knowledge is slight and usually they fail to learn even from practical experience.

The graduates of the medical institutes are likewise quite inexperienced. They are sent to the slave camps for practical training. The more observant among them actually learn something in time, while the others perform administrative jobs since they do not know what to do with a patient.

There are, however, outstanding specialists and surgeons among the doctors. Most of them are found among the interned — either deportees or war prisoners. Among the Russian doctors are professors arrested during the purges and physicians of the older generation.

Doctors in the ranks of the interned serve with greath self-abnegation. However, they cannot give all the help that is needed. They apply their knowledge in operations or general treatment, but only seldom can they exempt a prisoner from work because of illness and send him to the hospital for a lengthy period of time. The approval of the Soviet head physician or the camp administration is needed in such cases.

Likewise, it is difficult to help in serious cases, since the necessary medicines are lacking. Effective medicines are usually not available. Some Baltic doctors have reportedly bought expensive medicines out of their own pockets in order to save a patient's life.

The medical service in some forced labor camps has been improved since 1953. This has depended on connections and the political influence of the head doctor, in other words, whether or not he is a communist party member.

Some hospitals even lack thermometers, forceps and surgical scalpels. However, even where medical instruments are available, much of the effort is of little use since the prisoners continue to suffer from malnutrition.

The food rations issued to the patients are small, in accordance with the Soviet slogan: "He who does not work, shall not eat."

Returnees speak of hallucinations caused by hunger during their hospitalization. They say a man taken to the *sangorodok* was normally "written off," since only grave cases or incurables were sent here. No ambulance or any other conveyance was available to transport the sick to the hospitals. Normally, the patients had to walk to the hospital, although in most cases central hospitals are far from the camps. Fever patients have had to walk up to 12 miles on foot.

The plight of the surgical patients is further aggravated because ether and other anesthetics are often used by the Soviet physicians and other medical personnel to drug themselves.

The craving for intoxicants is so strong that in one hospital the alcohol used to conserve internal organs was emptied from the jars and consumed. Intoxication is considered a means of escape from Soviet life for at least a few hours.

The camp inmate lives as if he were standing on the threshold of death. From the moment the camp gates shut behind him, he realizes that the chances to survive for more than a few years are slim. So he decides to take whatever small enjoyment everyday life may offer. Anyone who has returned from these catacombs of the living openly admits that instinct is stronger there than mind, self-control and moral considerations. Only what can be readily obtained is important, even if it is such primitive pleasure as intoxication or rapid satisfaction of the sexual urge.

We have often inquired about the death rate of the Soviet slaves.

This question has been answered not only at Friedland and the reception camps of Austrian war prisoners, but has been studied by commissions of the International Labor Organization and the United Nations and other special investigating bodies. The question has been studied thoroughly in accordance with scientifically tested methods of questioning eye-witnesses.

The mortality statistics in the Soviet punitive camps up to 1951 are appalling, the death rate averaging 20 to 30 percent a year. The high mortality is aggravated by poor sanitary conditions, disregard of prophylactic medicine, failure to observe safety regulations, inhumanly heavy work and an inadequate diet.

A mine worker is officially entitled to 2,800 calories a day, while doctors who observed conditions on the spot state that, in view of the hardness of the work, he needs 4,000 calories. Besides, it is not only the quantity of food which matters. The shortage of vitamins and mineral salts also weakens the organism. Similarly, the lack of real rest and calm ruins the nervous systems of the camp inmates.

The only consolation is found in the most recent accounts which speak of an improvement in conditions since 1952.

Although food rations have not been substantially increased — some returnees say they are exactly the same as five or ten years ago — the wages which the prisoners have been receiving in the past few years enable them to buy extra food and, in case of sickness, medicine.

This has radically changed the situation. Persons returned from Kolyma, Kingir, Vorkuta, Inta and Potma at the end of 1955 say that mortality among the prisoners was then almost normal. Persons with weaker physique died, while the surviving had become acclimatized and more or less used to the hard work and the primitive living conditions. Sanitary conditions have also improved. The perseverance of the interned themselves has helped to eliminate or reduce the danger of parasites and therefore there have been no large epidemics in recent years.

Where physicians and nurses among the prisoners are employed in the sanitary service, the care for the sick gives little cause for complaint. Unfortunately, it must be stated that many medical specialists are still employed in coal mines and unskilled jobs, while medical care is entrusted to persons who are not physicians at all or else are inexperienced Soviet trainees.

Unforgivable is also the Soviet refusal to hand the prisoners medicines, eye-glasses and other medical supplies sent by their families.

The fact that medical service and the food situation have improved on the whole in recent years, is attributed to Soviet difficulties in procuring new labor reserves. World War II heavily decimated the Russian people. Some experts claim that on the front and because of war conditions the Soviet Union lost from 20 to 30 million people. In addition, the Soviet regime has senselessly and recklessly destroyed young and healthy people in the forced labor camps and deportation

sites. The Soviet Union now lacks people and has therefore adopted less inhuman treatment of the deportees and camp inmates, since they represent a necessary, and not readily replaceable labor force.

## CHILDREN OF THE POLITICALLY PERSECUTED

What has happened to the children of the deportees?

Study of this question has so far failed to provide a satisfactory answer. We can only deal with it in the light of the somewhat scant testimony of returnees.

Women sent to the deportation areas were permitted to keep their children, unlike mothers interned in forced labor camps, whose children were placed in nurseries or children's homes. New-born babies were also sent to the nurseries. At present, a mother may keep a baby, if she can breast-feed it for nine months, in some cases, a whole year. A "released" mother may claim her child or children.

In the homes children are russianized and educated in a communistic and atheistic spirit. They are taught trades in which the Soviets need labor. Similarly, Latvian and other Baltic children who lost their parents during the war are placed in the homes.

Let us have a look at one of these homes — known as the Central Children's Distribution Home (Tsentralny Dietsky Priyut Razpredelitel OMVD Moskva) which is housed in a former Moscow monastery. The home consists of two large church buildings, two four-story houses, a dispensary and an MVD administration building. In Stalin's time, the unfortunate children were guarded from six watch-towers, but now armed guards walk about in the court-yard. The ground, second and fourth floors of building No. 1 house boys aged from seven to eighteen years, of various nationalities. The third floor of the same building is occupied by girls, nine to fourteen years old. The rest of the boys live in the second house. One church is used as a kitchen, the other for solitary confinement. Every day the children have to undergo three to four hours of "political reeducation" and at least an hour of military training. The rest of the time, devoted to "free discussions," ball games, and so on, is also designed to make the boys and girls "good communists" and "enemies of the bourgeois world."

Children of *kulaks* and deportees are placed in *children's labor camps!* About 4000 youths are segregated in such a camp at Igarka. As early as 1950, this camp had 18 barracks and several auxiliary buildings. In this work colony, deportee children were obliged to associate with juvenile delinquents, mostly thieves. Most of the children had not been sentenced by either juvenile or other courts, but had been interned at the discretion of the Soviet administrative agencies.

Soviet political education in these homes does not always produce the desired results — several adolescent children of Latvian deportees have, in their turn, been sent to forced labor camps as political offenders.

Teenagers whose parents have been deported to Siberia or Central Asia have in some cases been permitted to return to their own country provided there were close relatives who undertook to care for them. As far as can be seen, the Soviets were guided by purely economic considerations in those cases. The keeping of children in homes is costly, while the Soviet government does not contribute anything toward their support by private guardians. Children of politically persecuted persons are not released from homes unless the Soviet authorities are convinced that their communist education has been successful. If not, the children are kept in the homes, and are put to physical work at an early age.

"Released" persons to whom their children have been returned usually prefer to stay in Russia. Experience shows that sooner or later their children are threatened by new deportations under the guise of "voluntary recruitment actions."

## MOODS

Dr. Wilhelm Starlinger, a victim of bolshevik terrorism who spent several years in forced labor camps and studied the mood among political prisoners and the characteristics of various nationalities, speaks of Ukrainian wildness, Georgian cunning, Baltic defiance and

Turkmen patience.<sup>19)</sup> The character and spirit of these oppressed nations manifests itself behind the camp palisades and barbed wire.

Baltic defiance!

Since 1945, the deportees and interned are no longer made up exclusively of what has been called "peaceful inhabitants," but also number active anti-Soviet elements. Thousands fell in an open desperate struggle against the invader and national enemy; thousands more engaged in an equally uncompromising fight but were overwhelmed and captured, and became Soviet slave workers like those who had not the chance of firing a single bullet against their oppressors in 1941.

Both categories are united in their uncompromising opposition, overt or covert resistance to and defiance of the Soviet regime.

We have received a document which reflects the views of the interned Latvians. It runs as follows:

"As children and members of the community, who only later grew to be men, we witnessed the horrors of the Soviet invasion of 1940. We do not wish on this occasion to refer once more to those dire events. All of us experienced and saw them. Because of them we did not refuse to take up arms against the Soviet power.

"If in 1944/45 a large part of our people remained under the Soviet regime in order to continue safeguarding their existence in their country, do not consider them traitors or cowards. During this time many of them accomplished more than we did at the front. They stood in an untenable fighting position, they risked their lives and freedom, but their efforts failed. In spite of everything, they have shown to everybody, also to generations to come, what it means to love one's country and die for it."

Germans and Austrians who have spent many years with Latvians and other Balts in the camps and prisons are unanimous in describing the unshakeable faith of the Balts in the reestablishment of their countries. This faith shines on all of them and makes a unit of them.

"When we left, the Latvians asked us to state that they continued to stand for independent Latvia. To a man they are opposed to bolshevism and the Russians. They asked to convey a message of recognition to the Latvian patriotic organizations in the West. Someday something is bound to happen, they say. You will see, the Baltic

countries will regain their independence. First Germany will be united, then will come the turn of the Soviet satellites and then ours."

Such is the unshakeable faith and unity of purpose of the forced labor camp inmates.

"The term 'hatred' fails to express adequately the intense hatred felt for the Russians by the Latvians," this phrase has been repeated by returnees from Vorkuta and Tayshet, in the latter case referring to Latvian women in the Tayshet forced labor camp.

This hatred has been provoked by the Russians who are viewed as foreign oppressors.

Characteristic is a testimony by a Latvian who returned to Latvia from a Soviet deportation area. He said: "I do not like it here. I only see Russians here. I had better return to Siberia. There we have something of an international city, built by ourselves — Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Poles, Germans and others. But no Russians!"

No matter where a Soviet forced labor camp, prison or deportation area is located, one phenomenon has been observed everywhere — Latvians feel a close solidarity with their Estonian and Lithuanian fellow-comrades and friendship for the Germans, no matter whether German war prisoners or Germans from Russia. This has been stressed by every returnee and confirmed by other testimony.

A solid foundation for friendship among the peoples has thus been laid in the forced labor camps of Vorkuta, Inta, Norilsk, Kolyma, Tayshet, Krasnoyarsk, Kingir, Potma and elsewhere and in the prisons of Leningrad, Vladimir, Alexandrovsk, Lubyanka and others. The personal friendship among political prisoners has given strong impulses of mutual trust and cooperation among the oppressed nations. Whether this friendship, born in tundra and taiga, will only be an episode on the road of suffering walked by martyrs of various nationalities or whether it will provide the soil for the voluntary integration of small and large nations, is a question for the future to answer.

The Baltic martyrs preserved dignity even in moments of dire suffering and isolation, as becomes truly religious persons and patriots for whom their nation's good means more than their personal well-being.

On the other hand, in the same camps where millions of political prisoners are interned, criminal convicts live according to the principle: "You shall die today, since tomorrow will be my turn."

And these criminal elements were chosen by the Soviet regime to fill positions of trust, such as that of brigadier and so on. The Soviets would say:

"You have sinned against the law and you are now undergoing your punishment, but you are not enemies of the people. Enemies of the people are the counterrevolutionaries. They must be annihilated."

Most politically persecuted persons are educated people with a different idea of a person's duties and responsibilities and with another way of life. The a-social elements whom the Soviets mingle with the political interned, particularly disliked educated men. One saw the dregs of society rising against the educated man, a term which in the camp becomes an insult and an object of derision. This adds an additional burden to the hardships.

Not out of haughtiness, but through an instinct of self-preservation and a feeling of spiritual harmony did the Balts keep together and allied themselves with the Germans, Finns and Hungarians. This in turn made and still makes their life easier to live.

Since 1953 when satisfying one's hunger ceased to be a daily concern, small circles were formed spontaneously, mostly for discussion of social and political problems.

The political prisoners eagerly seize political news passed on to them primarily by the "released" whom they meet daily at work. The spokesmen of the different nationality groups have reportedly considered ways of action in the event of war in order to prevent the repetition of the 1941 executions of political prisoners. Significantly, the debates also touched on questions such as: freely elected parliaments expressing the popular will, the removal of frontiers and other barriers to economic, cultural and friendly personal relations between East and West, abolition of farm collectivization, fight against the bolshevik ideology and the reestablishment of independence of countries annexed by the Soviet Union.

In addition to the members of captive nations, participants in these debates were Germans and Austrians, and in a few cases, the Japanese who, however, usually kept to themselves.

In 1955, the Balts became more isolated than before. Their German friends were released and nationals of satellite countries were transferred from Soviet punitive camps to concentration camps in their own countries. This caused the Balts to unite even more closely in the camps and deportation sites.

The solidarity of the interned Balts protects them against danger from without and maintains their morale.

The interned also try to raise their morale by social and cultural activities, as far as these are possible in a camp. This has been done with the aid of choirs and other musical activities. In general, the interest in music is great. They feel as if music were able to bring them sounds from a different world. Although the overseers dislike hearing hymns, of late they do not attack the singing groups. Before Stalin's death, individual singers never dared to sing hymns but choirs which sang hymns were not molested.

Theatrical performances are another source of enjoyment for the camp inmates. They prefer to stage classics which permit an escape to a world of refined feelings and tact, where a person's individuality is still free from tarnish, where emotions are not derided and where freedom holds an honored place.

Among the prisoners there is always someone who can act as a stage manager, rehearse a part and give the performance some polish.

What is it that gnaws at and weighs on the imprisoned man? It is the lack of freedom and the sullied everyday life with its injustices and humiliations, victimization and foul practices. One day is exactly like the other, and this makes one feel like an animal in a pen and turns existence into a heavy burden.

This is felt at every step by people who have become a burden even to themselves. Returnees who speak of their Baltic friends often mention depression and resignation. Is there a way out?

The politically persecuted derive force from their unwavering faith in the victory of good which is the center of their hopes and

optimism. And still the barometer of their moods shows a trend toward depression. Life in a Soviet forced labor camp seems senseless and miserable vegetating with no purpose but that of barely evading death. "Reserves of mental strength are completely exhausted in ten or more years in the camps," say people who have themselves experienced all the sufferings involved in living thousands and thousands of days without freedom.

"It is terrible to grope around in this darkness, hopelessness and stark death — my friends whom I left in Tayshet sank into even deeper depression before our parting." This was said by a man who knew only Baltic friends. Some diversity in their life was only brought by the fight against the stool pigeons. "I loathe a stool pigeon more than vermin and I could stamp him out with greater ease than repugnant parasites," said a man when he was declared released. He was not sure whether he would be safe from constant watching and eavesdropping on the other side of the barbed wire.

Suicides are not numerous among the prisoners, still, some have taken this desperate step. For persons living in uncertainty and doubt, much depends on the moral support given by close relatives. Some cling almost desperately to contact with one they cherish and if this contact breaks, the connecting link to life is broken. It is impossible to look into the souls of these peoples; we only know that they keep alive the spark of life and faith as long as it is illuminated by signs pointing to the resurrection of their oppressed country and by testimonies of friendship from family and friends.

#### AMNESTY — BUT FOR WHOM?

There is no country in the world that has announced so many amnesties as the Soviet Union.

On the other hand, there is no other country in the world where despite the amnesties fifteen or more million people are still performing forced labor. And it is also true that even the so-called free Soviet workers are subject to some degree of coercion. However, we shall not dwell on this problem and shall continue to consider the

fate of hapless people still in the forced labor camps, and persons formally "released," but bound to their former places of work through compulsory work contracts, as well as people in the deportation areas.

What amnesties have been applied to them?

An amnesty proclaimed after Stalin's death, on March 27, 1953, applied only to criminal offenders. The political prisoners remained in the prisons or forced labor camps.

A year later, an amnesty was introduced for young people in the punitive camps and on September 17, 1955, the Presidium of the U.S.S.R. published a decree "on amnesty for Soviet citizens who collaborated with occupiers during the Great Patriotic War 1941 to 1945."

Testimony given by eye-witnesses shows what the two last-mentioned amnesties have meant. We are basically interested in two questions: first, have political interned actually been released from punitive camps, in other words from forced labor and second, if so, have they returned to their home country.

Evidence on the implementation of the youth amnesty gives a fairly clear picture. From among several testimonies we choose one referring to the Inta and Abetz camps in the Arctic.

The youth amnesty applied in Inta and Abetz to 47 Baltic youths who served long terms as political offenders. They had committed their "crimes" before reaching the age of 18. When their cases were examined, 26 were removed from the list of amnestied because "their birth certificates were lacking," in other words there was no evidence of their birth!

This way of handling amnesty has been reported by a returnee.

Twenty-one youths were actually released from Inta under the amnesty, as their parents were able to send birth papers from Omsk, Tomsk, Karaganda or Latvia. Five were allowed to join their families, while 16 youths were sent to a miners school in Syktyvkar. The five young boys who were permitted to join their parents were drafted for service in the Soviet army four weeks later. Since the remainder were dissatisfied with the miners' school, they were allowed to choose between that school and the army. Twenty-six Baltic youths who

had lost their birth certificates during the deportations were not released but transferred to mine No. 12 of the Inta camp with a lighter regime while E.M., a Latvian, was sent to the Inta mine No. 3 on August 18, 1954, since even he was not permitted to return to Latvia.

This is what the amnesty proclaimed by the new rulers of the Kremlin meant to youths interned for some ill-defined misdemeanors committed before they were 18 years old.

The Balts were largely affected by the amnesty of September 17, 1955 for the so-called 'collaborators' which was published at a time when the West German Chancellor had succeeded in obtaining the repatriation of German war prisoners.

In this amnesty, Voroshilov, the Soviet President, invokes the principles of humanity in order to "enable these citizens to return to an honest working life and to become useful members of socialist society."

We are quoting below the full text of the amnesty decree:

*Decree*  
of  
the Presidium of U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet:

On Amnesty for Soviet Citizens Who Collaborated with  
Occupiers During the Great Patriotic War, 1941—1945.

Since the victorious ending of the great patriotic war the Soviet people have achieved many new successes in all spheres of economic and cultural construction and in further strengthening their socialist state.

Taking this fact, as well as the ending of the state of war between the Soviet Union and Germany, into account, and being guided by the principle of humanity, the Presidium of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet considers it possible to introduce an amnesty for those Soviet citizens who, through faintheartedness or lack of awareness, were drawn into collaboration with the occupiers during the great patriotic war of 1941—1945.

In order to enable these citizens to return to honest working life and to become useful members of socialist society, the Presidium of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet resolves:

1. To release from their places of imprisonment and from other measures of punishment persons sentenced to up to ten years' deprivation of freedom for assisting the enemy or for other crimes committed during the period of the great patriotic war of 1941—1945, under Articles 58.1, 58.3, 58.4, 58.6, 58.10 and 58.12 of the Russian Republic Criminal Code and the corresponding articles of the criminal codes of the other Union republics.

2. To halve court sentences of more than ten years imposed for crimes enumerated in Article 1 of the present decree.

3. To release from their places of confinement, irrespective of the length of the sentence, persons convicted for service in the German Army, police and special German units.

To release from further periods of punishment persons sentenced to exile or to forced residence in certain areas for these crimes.

4. Not to apply the amnesty to those convicted of the murder and torture of Soviet citizens.

5. To stop all cases under investigation and cases not yet examined by courts relating to crimes committed during the great patriotic war of 1941—1945, under Articles 58.1, 58.3, 58.4, 58.6, 58.10 and 58.12 of the Russian Republic Criminal Code and the corresponding articles of the criminal codes of the other Union republics, with the exception of cases of persons mentioned in Article 4 of the present decree.

6. To cancel the record of conviction and the loss of rights of citizens released from punishment on the basis of the present decree.

To cancel the record of conviction and the loss of rights of persons who have already completed their sentences for crimes enumerated in Article 1 of the present decree.

7. To lift the responsibility of Soviet citizens living abroad during the great patriotic war of 1941—1945 for having given themselves up to the enemy or for having served in the German Army, police or special German units.

Also to lift the responsibility of Soviet citizens at present abroad for having occupied executive posts during the war in police, gendarmerie and propaganda agencies set up by the occupying forces, including those drawn into anti-Soviet activities in the postwar period, if they have exonerated themselves by subsequent patriotic activity for the benefit of the motherland or have given themselves up and confessed.

In accordance with existing legislation, to regard as extenuating circumstance the surrender and confession of Soviet citizens living abroad who committed serious crimes against the Soviet state during the great patriotic war of 1941—1945. To establish that the punishment handed down by the court in such cases may not exceed five years' exile.

8. To give the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers the task of adopting measures to facilitate entry into the U.S.S.R. of Soviet citizens at present abroad, as well as members of their families irrespective of citizenship, and of settling them in jobs in the Soviet Union.

K. VOROSHILOV, Chairman of the Presidium

N. PEGOV, Secretary

The Kremlin, Moscow, Sept. 17, 1955

Significantly, the amnesty does not apply to persons sentenced under Sections 58.2, 58.5, 58.7, 58.9, 58.11, 58.13 and 58.14 of the Soviet Criminal Code. They include people accused of and tried for sabotage; participation in anti-Soviet organizations; counter-revolutionary activity even if carried on before the Russian revolution of 1917 or during the Civil War in Russia; armed uprising; "inciting to war;" and wrecking of government equipment and property. Actually, these are provisions of the criminal code which were applied to the Balts. For instance, the charge of participation in anti-Soviet organizations is made not only against members of the Home Guard and other patriotic organizations of independent Latvia, but also against members of the Latvian Legion, even if they were subject to a compulsory draft.

In practice, the latest Soviet amnesty applies formally to persons sentenced under Section 58.1, 58.3, 58.10 or other provisions; however, since most of them were also sentenced under other provisions, the amnesty was not applied to them.

Of those released in the fall of 1955, not all may be considered as amnestied. They included persons who had been deported in 1940 or 1941 and had already served their sentences of 15 or 25 years. A 25-year sentence could be completed in that time in accordance with Soviet regulations which provide for a reduction of the term when a prisoner has fulfilled or exceeded his work norms. This question has been treated in the foregoing chapter of this book.

Similarly, one cannot consider as amnesty a parole, which in individual cases provided for the release from the forced labor camps, but not from exile in general. Many Balts released under the "amnesty" therefore moved from Vorkuta or Tayshet to the regions of Amur, Khabarovsk, Tomsk, Omsk and Krasnoyarsk or to some of the Central Asian Soviet republics.

In general, there have been various migrations and transfers, especially since 1954 and 1955, the transfers being linked with the so-called "release."

In December 1954 many Balts were transferred to Karaganda, and the Vorkuta invalids were moved to the Yavas and Potma camps in September 1955.

Transfers of deportees also took place in 1955 in many other places. In some instances this meant release from the punitive regime, but in other cases the opposite was intended — a transfer meant punishment. Thus, active participants in camp uprisings were moved. Persons involved in the Kingir mutiny, including women, were sent to the Vladimir prisons where rebels from Vorkuta had already been gathered, while participants in the Norilsk rebellion were transferred to the Potma punitive camp.

Many of the "released" landed in Ukhta and other places in the Autonomous Komi Republic in 1954 and 1955, while labor for Inta was recruited throughout the Soviet Union, with the exception of the Omsk region. Labor was not recruited among camp inmates, but among deportees settled in the deportation areas.

However, most deportees stayed where they were, although the released were no longer required to live behind barbed wire. As shown by the testimony of returnees, the released are not permitted to leave their previous punitive area. Camp inmates have to stay in Vorkuta even after their "release" and are required to register once a week with the local MVD office.

On the other hand, the "released" are no longer watched by guards and are freed from the hardships of the camp regime; there are no deductions from wages for the maintenance of the camp, and the restrictions in writing and receiving letters do not apply to them. According to the testimony of several returnees, the prohibition for members of one family to live together was maintained in the Arctic regions even after "release."

On the other hand, visits by relatives are allowed under special dispensations. The first visits of this kind took place in Vorkuta in 1953. Wives or children were allowed to visit their husbands or fathers provided the political officer and the camp chief did not object. Visits to camp inmates who fulfilled the norms were also permitted — this was another way of raising the output.

A special hut was even built in the so-called visitor's zone for visits by family members. Before entering this zone, the visitor was required to undertake not to take letters from the camp or bring out any other information.

There is a distinction between the amnestied and the rehabilitated. The latter are few in number and, unlike the amnestied, they are allowed to leave the punitive area without special authorization.

The rehabilitated victims of Soviet terrorism include persons who have been sentenced to death and executed. Thus, the Supreme Soviet Federal Court's Military Committee sentenced to death R. J. Ceplitis, an officer of the Latvian army, on July 29, 1941 (he had been arrested by the Soviet power on May 25th of the same year in Latvia). On December 9, 1957, a Soviet tribunal in Moscow announced that Ceplitis's case had been reviewed and he had been posthumously rehabilitated.

The amnestied remain in exile and the places where they are compelled to live are changed from punitive areas into deportation

areas. In the light of Soviet laws deportation or exile is also a punishment. It is therefore incorrect to speak of the amnestied or the "released" as of persons whose punishment has been completed. All deportees who are not permitted to return to their country are undergoing punishment, even if under a lighter regime. However, a man is not free in compulsory exile and this is the criterion by which the recent Soviet changes should be appraised. Even restricted freedom of movement is a punishment, even compulsory registration with the Soviet militia is a restriction, even an imposed place of work is a violation of personal freedom.

The "released" are told where they may live. If this place is not identical with the previous residence, the Soviet officials indicate two or three deportation sites, leaving the choice to the "released" person. The authorized places of residence coincide with those where the Soviet economy needs labor.

A "released" woman has stated: "I was released from the penal camp and was placed in a transit camp. There I was handed a railway ticket to Dubovka near Krasnoyarsk and told to report to the local militia there. Upon arrival I was sent to the kolkhoze of Dubovka as a farm worker. Together with four other women I had to work for four months in a grain warehouse. I spent the nights in a barrack together with 16 other farm women. Since we were not paid any wages and the food was extremely bad, I tried to get out of this kolkhoze, but failed. I was however transferred to the potato drying store, where I earned 40 rubles the first month, 60 — the second, 120 the third and during the fourth 180 rubles, without deductions. We did not have to pay anything for using the barrack, but had to provide our food and cook our warm meals.

"In 1954, after much insisting, I was permitted to leave the kolkhoze and took a job in a bakery as a charwoman, earning 220 rubles a month without deductions.

"Two of my friends, released immediately after myself, were placed with the knowledge of the militia in a brickworks. Later, they managed to get jobs as seamstresses in the nearby invalid shop. There they met another of our fellow-countrywomen who had meanwhile worked as servant and nurse in a family. Wages and conditions

of life were very bad in all places and did not differ much from conditions in the penal camps."

Some of the punitive camps have been liquidated and declared free settlement areas which, however, do not differ much from the deportation regions. This has been done in Ust-Vym, Ust-Ukhta, Pechora and several centers in Central Asia. Also Inta, Vorkuta, Abez and Tayshet are being transformed into such settlement areas. The local places of work are accordingly turned over to the civilian administration which signs work contracts with the former camp inmates. Before release from the camp, they must sign a contract for at least three or five years.

Alongside amnesty and expiration of the sentence, a third way of leaving the punitive camps is pardon.

Petitions of pardon are examined by special Soviet tribunals, which have become more active after Stalin's death. In some cases, they even take the initiative in pardoning a political prisoner. The true reasons for these actions are not yet clear. Cases have been known where a Soviet tribunal has summoned Balts suggesting that they apply for pardon but the latter have refused. Those pardoned have in some cases even regained small amounts of real estate and other property. Similarly it is permitted in these cases to join other deported family members.

However, only a very small percentage of political prisoners are released under pardons.

Political prisoners who are permitted to return to their native country after serving their terms have to report to the local Soviet militia within 24 hours of their return. While living in their native land, they remain under the constant control of the militia. Their freedom of movement is restricted. If the militia refuses to register them as residents, they must leave a town or rural commune within three days.

The Soviet authorities normally do not register the released deportees in cities where they lived before their deportation and where they hope to find some work. As a result many former deportees feel that they are unable to overcome the new difficulties facing them and, finding no other way out, return to the Arctic regions.

The Soviet authorities also use other perfidious methods in order to compel the Balts to leave their beloved country. Thus, "politically unreliable persons" who have returned from deportation are not permitted to choose an occupation that would assure a living to themselves and their families. People who are no longer able to work because of their age receive no pension if they are former farmers, artisans, officials or members of the professions. Moreover, the Soviet wage policy being as it is, grown up children have no way of providing for their old parents. Also, in many cases the children of these aged peoples have died as a result of political persecutions or are reduced to poverty themselves.

Amnesty or pardon therefore do not mean for these sorely tried people a restitution of rights or a return to normal life in their home country.

PART III

UPRISINGS

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## “FREEDOM OR DEATH”

Who would think of striking in the Soviet Union? Whatever the conditions of work and wages may be, organizing, or participating in, a strike entails 25 years at hard labor. Since forced work is an even harder lot than the usual work, no Soviet citizen will try to defend his interests with the aid of strikes.

Persons who organize a strike risk being sentenced under Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code. This section is worded in such a way as to make it applicable to practically every case. Under this section, a striker can be prosecuted for sabotage (paragraph 7), terrorism against the Soviet power (paragraph 8), anti-Soviet propaganda (paragraph 10) and other offenses entailing heavy punishments.

The Soviets have designed safeguards against strikes and any other internal resistance. However, their “security wall” has a weak point. This weak point is the forced laborers — the Soviet slaves. The only thing they still have to lose is life itself. However, after five or ten years of hard labor, the value of life is reduced in the prisoners’ eyes.

This attitude is expressed in the slogan under which the slave workers rose against the Soviet tyranny, demanding for themselves human conditions of work and life and dying as martyrs of freedom.

Strike or uprising — in both cases the politically persecuted men pursued the same aim. Their demands — adapted to the primary requirements of camp life and their improvement — were of minor significance. What mattered was that the rebellious prisoners showed overt resistance to the Soviet power, and fought for the rights of man. Their fearless and decisive fight must be seen only from this point of view. It would be wrong to attach great importance to this or that demand, weighed and formulated for tactical reasons; they were of secondary importance and were often not prepared until after the uprising began.

The great uprisings in Norilsk, Vorkuta and Kingir arose spontaneously in the same way as popular revolutions do.

It must be assumed that our information does not cover all the strikes and uprisings. The bolsheviks have tried to conceal these events, which are a disgrace to their regime; with considerable success, it must be admitted. If German, Austrian, Japanese war prisoners and others who had spent long years in the Soviet forced labor camps had not witnessed the risings of the Soviet slaves before returning to their countries in recent years, we would know little about the events in Kolyma, Karaganda, Norilsk, Dzhezkazgan, Kingir and elsewhere. Even now, as far as can be judged, there is no information about more isolated places. Only the arrival of new eye-witnesses would permit us to describe as yet unknown places where uprisings have occurred and supplement previous testimony.

The first known mutiny in forced labor camps took place in the Ust-Ukhta punitive area. It broke out in 1940 with a strike in work column No. 3 which was mostly composed of Poles employed in stone quarries. The strikers demanded improvement of work conditions and a free Sunday for the celebration of divine services. The Soviet administration countered the strike by withdrawing food from the strikers.

A large uprising occurred in 1947 in 14 camps at Ust-Vym. The clash with Soviet guards and military units resulted in the death of many prisoners, including Latvians.

A similar uprising broke out in the summer of 1952 in the Vozhael punitive camps in the Komi republic; it went on for seven days. It was repeated in August 1954 for a period of ten days.

While all these disorders took place in the European part of the Soviet Arctic regions, unrest spread like wildfire in 1946 in the vast Kolyma punitive area in the Far East. N., a returnee has stated:

"I witnessed the 1946 uprising in Kolyma. It lasted three days. Fire brigades were summoned to quell it. They had little success, and therefore the guards opened machine-gun fire against the insurgents. Seventy men were killed. I do not know the number of wounded since they were immediately picked up and carried away. The bolsheviks were highly indignant at the prisoners' resistance. Since it proved impossible to find the leaders of the uprising, every sixth man among the camp inmates was shot. There were hunger strikes

in Kolyma also in 1954, possibly even earlier; I do not know about them, since at the end of 1946 I was transferred to another punitive area. Upon my return in 1953, I witnessed the afore-said uprisings. The Soviet administration punished the insurgents by prohibiting the sending and writing of letters for a long time and by refusing to give medical treatment to the sick who, instead, were put to hard labor. Latvians also suffered from these restrictions and punishments. In 1953 and 1954 I was the only German among them and I was united with them by a common fate."

The Kolyma punitive area extends for some 1000 miles from Magadan and therefore one witness cannot give a comprehensive survey about this remote region of the Soviet Far East.

At Friedland, other testimony was obtained about the 1954 strikes. Their scope and excellent organization brought about the liquidation of the punitive camps in 1954. The political prisoners were declared "released," and were sent to the same work as before but under somewhat improved conditions. The second witness states that in his and neighboring camps the strikes were organized by Balts and Ukrainians.

The third testimony about the disorders in Kolyma has been supplied earlier by a Japanese prisoner of war. According to his testimony, 150 000 slave laborers participated in the Kolyma mutiny of 1954. It was touched off by the execution of several camp inmates for the alleged purpose "of maintaining discipline." The uprising was led by 150 prisoners in various camps. It began with a strike. The strike committee presented 20 demands for an amelioration of working and living conditions. However, the MVD found out the leaders' names, they were separated from the others and executed. This enraged the prisoners and they rose, putting up a fierce resistance to the camp administration and guards. The local authorities were unable to quell the uprising, and a high official despatched from Moscow accepted the principal demands of the prisoners. The uprising halted work in the mines for an entire month.

In July 1950, there was an uprising in Salekharda. It was started by 1600 men in work column No. 64. Taking the guards by surprise, they obtained rifles and trench-mortars. Small as the value of these

arms may have been, their possession encouraged the rebels to go to the camp administration and demand the surrender of all arms. There was some shooting, with casualties on both sides. After the mutineers occupied the premises of work column No. 68, they were able to increase their supply of arms. Thereupon, they invaded other camps seizing the radio broadcasting station, and the telegraph and telephone offices. This uprising was quelled by bombing from airplanes. It is not known whether the mutineers included Balts.

In the Dzhezkazgan camps, uprisings occurred in 1947, 1951, 1953 and 1954. There is little information about them. It is only known that troops and an MVD general were summoned from Alma-Ata to suppress the rising. The leaders of the mutiny were arrested and executed a few days later. The surveillance of the remaining mutineers was reinforced, one guard being allotted to every five prisoners. Some of the slave workers were put in chains and even worked in chains.

Similar uprisings took place in Karaganda at the same time as in Dzhezkazgan, that is, in 1947, 1951, 1953 and 1954. The largest uprisings occurred in April 1953 and a year later from July 15th to 27th. MVD units, with machine-guns and tanks, were summoned and killed several hundred prisoners in a fierce clash. Among the dead were 80 or 82 women — the uprising had been particularly violent in the Karaganda women's camp where an open defiance of death was shown. The surviving leaders of the Karaganda mutiny were transferred to Vorkuta. In this the bolsheviks committed an error; in Vorkuta these anti-Soviet fighters told about the heroic struggle against the oppressor in Karaganda, thus inspiring the Vorkuta internees to fight for their honor and freedom. In 1954 disorders broke out also in the punitive camps along the Sherubay and Nura rivers near Karaganda.

The Karaganda mutiny gave the signal for a rising in Balkhash. The political prisoners in the Balkhash copper mines were the first to urge their fellow-prisoners in the neighboring camps to rise. MVD units tried to prevent a larger uprising by opening fire against the rebels after a short parley. The latter had not had time to arm, but started erecting barricades. The fight of these fearless men won them

the sympathies of the people in the city of Balkhash where the Soviet security organs had even proclaimed a state of siege. Tanks arrived in the city and the fighting with the rebels went on for 24 hours.

Although all uprisings were quelled with considerable loss of life, this did not prevent political prisoners in other camps from rising. From Karaganda the unrest spread southward to the forced labor camps on the banks of the Sherubai Nura. The political prisoners there demanded a review of their sentences and better working and living conditions. After seven days the disorders petered out when a special commission came from Moscow and promised to satisfy some of the demands.

Extensive unrest prevailed in the fall of 1952 in Krasnoyarsk. In several camps the political prisoners disarmed the guards and set fire to sawmills. There was a recurrence of the risings in 1956.

Unrest had been rife since 1952 also in the Ural region. A dramatic uprising broke out in June 1952 in Molotow (now Perm) punitive area. It seems to have been at its most intense in the large Sisvetskaya camp. An East Prussian returnee from this camp says: "The rising in Sisvetskaya broke out in June 1952. It was started by the Ukrainians, but they were soon joined by the Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians. Their weapons were rocks, but in the heat of the fight, faced with superior forces, they bared their chests and shouted to the MVD men: 'You will not escape the day of vengeance!' Great courage in front of the machine-gun barrels was shown by Balts, Germans and West Ukrainians. The mutineers formed groups. Some of the groups engaged in fighting with the MVD men, others burned the barracks, while some shouted slogans and voiced the demands of insurrectionists. Both sides had dead and wounded to report, but the losses of the prisoners were naturally much heavier. After the uprising had been suppressed, the surviving rebels were surrounded and guarded by guards armed with automatic weapons. The leaders of the mutineers were taken off to unknown destination. The order to open fire on the insurgents had been given by Public Prosecutor Rudenko in Moscow."

A year later, a strike took place in the forced labor camp at Fabrichnoye, close to the Arctic circle. In the summer of 1954, almost simultaneous uprisings occurred at Revda near Sverdlovsk and in the Karabash punitive camps. In Revda they were started by Hungarian war prisoners because the bolsheviks did not keep a promise to release them after completion of the Volga-Don canal. In 1955, from June to July political prisoners in Solikamsk staged a hunger strike. It was begun by Spanish prisoners. When the strike leaders were later transferred to a penal camp, 12 of the 26 sentenced were Spaniards.

In 1950, political prisoners in the Tayshet women's penal camp No. 015 began a protest strike. They sat outdoors for four hours while the thermometer registered 40° F below zero. Some of the women could not stand the cold and the strike was called off. The Soviet guards fired volleys over the heads of the strikers, not without a moral effect. However, for three days the strikers refused to go to work. The Soviet administration summoned a public prosecutor. When three of the strike leaders were put in solitary confinement, their comrades freed them. Then the MVD began to starve the strikers. This uprising resulted in a partial compliance with the prisoners' demands and the female camp supervisors were themselves sentenced to terms of from 10 to 25 years. Another result was that all Latvian women in this camp were transferred to the Kolyma region.

New trouble broke out in the men's and women's punitive camps in Tayshet in the fall of 1954. The unrest had many reasons, but officially the political prisoners protested against receiving poorer pay for their work than their fellows in Vorkuta. No details of the strike are known but it has been reported that the leaders were removed to punitive barracks and *burs*, while other strikers were transferred to the lowest — the ninth — food category. Indignant about these punishments, the interned continued to strike. The number of inmates in the punitive barracks therefore grew. Within a short time about 300 slave workers, mostly Balts, were confined there. When Soviet investigating committees arrived, the Latvians complained about injustices suffered from the camp administration.

During the clashes the prisoners had beaten up MVD officers. However, these and the soldiers summoned to aid them refrained from using fire arms; only various kinds of clubs were used; still some men were seriously injured. The disorders were not confined to one place but spread more than 130 miles over the entire punitive area.

The revolts were not in vain. Iron bars were removed from the barrack windows as also were the numbers from trousers and jackets of political prisoners; criminal convicts had never had them.

Insurrections have also been reported at Reshoty, Krasnoyarsk region, in October 1954 when outstanding heroism was displayed by the Chechens whom the Soviets had mass-deported from their homes in Caucasus, and in the Veryshaguino, Mirnoye, and Verkhny Imbatskoye camps on the Yenisei, belonging to the same punitive area. There has also been an uprising in Sakhalin, but information about it is scant. A minor uprising took place in Potma at the end of the summer of 1955.

The following chapters will be devoted to the description of uprisings in Norilsk, Vorkuta and Kingir, because Balts, in close collaboration with the Ukrainians, played a considerable part in organizing them and in the fighting against the MVD and Red Army units.

## STRIKE AND REVOLT IN NORILSK

Stalin's death made the camp inmates believe that they could look forward to a relaxation of the penal regime. They expected that Soviet Premier Malenkov would introduce an amnesty. Indeed, it was proclaimed, but only served as a new challenge to the political prisoners. Announced on March 27, 1953, the amnesty opened prison and camp gates only for criminal offenders while the political prisoners were left behind barbed wire.

Some political prisoners had cherished far-reaching hopes. They had believed the Western powers would take advantage of the favorable situation created by the Kremlin leaders' mutual rivalry

and would press for implementation of the principles of individual and national freedom emphatically stressed in the Atlantic Charter and in statements by Western statesmen. Everybody in the Soviet Union felt oppressed, not only people who had spent the larger part of their life behind barbed wire on the threshold of death, but also all others who faced Soviet realities outside the camps. There is little exaggeration in the saying that there are only three categories of people under the Soviet rule: former prisoners, current prisoners and future prisoners.

Will the chains be broken? This question occupied the mind of everybody.

The release of criminals and the retention of the political interned gave a clear, but grim answer. This act reflected the solidarity of Stalin's heirs with the dregs of society. It also expressed solidarity with Stalin's despotism, cynicism and the most revolting of his schemes — the annihilation of political adversaries in the forced labor camps.

On May 7, 1953, a strike broke out in Norilsk and the entire punitive area subject to its administration.

Its causes may be easily misunderstood. The strike was touched off by an insignificant incident. In camp No. 5 a note attached to a piece of rock was tossed across the fence from the neighboring camp. The message fell a couple of feet within the prohibited zone. As a prisoner picked it up, a guard fired, wounding him slightly. This infuriated the other prisoners who were standing by, and they openly manifested their anger. The guard fired once more; he did not aim at the crowd, but a ricochet wounded another prisoner in the finger.

After protests to the administration in camps Nos. 4 and 5, where most inmates were Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians, it was decided to proclaim a strike. The inmates of these camps refused to work. A day later the strike was joined by the women's camp from which the fatal message had been sent. The women's camp, known as camp No. 6, announced a 14-day hunger strike. Camps Nos. 1, 2 and 3 with mostly Ukrainian inmates, learned about the strike and followed suit. Soon the strike spread to the whole punitive area as far as Kharpich, a couple of hundred of miles east of Norilsk, where large numbers of forced laborers were employed on railway

construction. The close solidarity of the political prisoners baffled the Soviet administration. It was not sure what to do. Work stopped in the entire Norilsk punitive area.

Proceeding with caution, the strike leadership prepared a series of demands. After their discussion in camps No. 4 and 5, they were communicated to other camps and were unanimously approved by all strikers who hung out black flags as a sign of the strike.

The demands were as follows:

1. Extension of amnesty to political prisoners,
2. Improvement of food rations,
3. Eight-hour work day,
4. Improvement of the cultural programs,
5. Transfer of camp inmates to healthier regions or, at least, immediate amelioration of working conditions in Norilsk,
6. Introduction of uniform work regulations in all places of work,
7. Removal of the camp commandant from his office,
8. Introduction of a regular and clear bookkeeping system in the local *kombinat*.
9. End of discrimination against national minority groups,
10. Removal of numbers from prisoners' clothing,
11. A higher ceiling on money transfers to families at home,
12. Barracks should no longer be locked at night, and
13. End of reprisals.

Although the strike was started and the demands were formulated by political prisoners, the three camps which housed criminal prisoners who had not been released, soon followed suit. This meant that the strike had turned into a general strike. People living in Norilsk outside the camps did not try to conceal their sympathies with the strikers. They followed the developments with great interest and brought news about the strike to camps where it had not yet begun.

In camps Nos. 3, 5 and 6 the strikers compelled the Soviet officials to leave the camp territory. After a clash between the inmates and the guards in camp No. 3, the camp management and the guards actually left the camp voluntarily. The guards did not feel secure after having shot five strike leaders who had been transferred from

camps Nos. 4 and 5 to the solitary confinement cells in camp No. 3. The arrested had previously broken out of the cells.

The strikers took over the kitchen, the storehouses and the hospital.

The Soviet administration sent *blatnois* - as their persons of trust - into camp No. 2 to create disorders and sow the seeds of disunity.

The mutineers prepared for armed resistance which they believed to be inevitable. They built barricades, forged swords, and prepared explosives and gas cans for use against soldiers whose arrival was expected any moment. Those who seemed unfit for the fight were released. They included persons whose term was close to completion or who had an easier job before the strike.

To end the strike, several MVD generals and other high officials arrived from Krasnoyarsk. They asked the prisoners to go back to work promptly. In case of compliance, they promised, there would be no reprisals against the strikers and their leaders.

One of the participants in the uprising says:

"At the time when the strike broke out, camp No. 5 was chiefly employed in the building of several six-story houses near the camp. Inmates of men's camp No. 4 and women's camp No. 6 were also used for this work. Camp No. 10 took bricks from the same supply pile as camp No. 5. The latter sent to work a day-shift and a night-shift.

"Camp No. 5 was enclosed by a double barbed-wire fence. The outer fence was twelve feet high, the inner — five feet. In the southwest the fence bordered on the brickyard. The guards patrolled the zone between the outer and inner fences, in other words, the *zapretnaya zona* — the prohibited zone.

"Through working together, there was close contact between camps Nos. 5 and 6. In 'emergency' cases, letters attached to stones were thrown across the fence. It was, naturally, a prohibited practice, but usually the guards 'looked the other way.' To avoid possible charges against an individual, fellow-prisoners would stand around those who threw or picked up the 'stone mail.' Accordingly, if a guard intercepted a note, he could not charge any particular person.

"The prisoners felt outraged about the incident of May 7th because the guard had fired from within the camp, which he was not

authorized to do. We complained to the camp commandant; after consulting the guard, he tried to make us believe that in this case it was permitted to fire, since the prisoner's hand had been within the prohibited zone.

"In the morning of May 8th we went to our work on the construction site, but we all were restless. We walked around, without working. We felt as if some new forces had taken hold of us and made us act.

"We did not work the next day either. On May 9th, we announced a sit-down strike. As soon as it was noticed by the neighboring camps, they joined it. It is difficult to describe the thrilling effect which the notions of 'strike' and 'Soviet Union' had on us. Not only was it something quite new, but we all were stirred by a proud defiance.

"From the roof of our barrack flew black flags made of mattress cloth.

"The camp administration was uncertain as to how to proceed. Camp No. 5 continued to receive food, while camp No. 4 did not — it may have announced a hunger strike and refused the food. I only know that it was without food for three days.

"We who belonged to camp No. 5 continued our sit-down strike on the construction site until May 12, while others struck in the camps. When we came home, the guards tried to send another shift to work, but without success. Faced by our determined action, the camp commandant charged us with sabotage and said that those refusing work would be given an additional sentence of three years. His threats were from time to time announced over the loudspeakers.

"'Return to work at once' the commander would shout in the loudspeaker. 'You have no authority — let Malenkov come here,' replied the political prisoners approaching him in a group.

"We always went around in groups, a practice which ruled out individual reprisals and thus reduced the risks we were facing.

"In addition to Ukrainians and Balts, our ranks were filled with Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Germans and Italians.

"Some of them — whose term was nearing completion — began to waver. But the initiative was still in the hands of the strike

organizers. When General Panikov came from Krasnoyarsk, it was as if the scene with camp commander and the *kombinat* manager were repeated. The strikers spoke in a speech choir: 'There is no sense talking to you, you cannot decide anything. We want to talk with a representative from Moscow.'

"The only answer was again: 'No higher official will come here. Unless you resume work at once, the term of each of you will be prolonged by three years.'

"Nevertheless, an MVD Major General, who was referred to as one of Beria's aides, arrived from Moscow the following day. He invited the strike leaders to submit complaints and demands in writing. This placed the strikers into an awkward position because nobody knew who were the leaders at the moment. In addition, we were concerned about possible reprisals against the strike leaders.

"A young Ukrainian approached the Major General calling himself the 'leader.' The MVD representative however did not even talk to him. Finding no other way out, after a short discussion, the strikers appointed from among them seven 'negotiators,' not 'leaders;' the latter still remained hidden to the bolsheviks.

"There was no need to improvise the demands, since, as stated above, they had been prepared in advance.

"Although the demands had been presented, the strikers were beset by doubts as to whether they were being given a fair deal. The following days did not bring any clarity. The transfer of several hundred foreign prisoners from the barracks to another area of camp No. 5 looked suspicious. On May 20th, half of the strikers in the same camp were moved to camp No. 4 and a half-built uninhabited camp a mile and a half south of camp No. 5. The mutineers realized that these steps were designed to break up the strike organization and create chaos. In addition, the transfers were taken as a sign of reprisals, protested against in one of the strikers' demands. The unrest was further enhanced by the sound of machine-gun volleys heard soon after the transfer of a part of the camp inmates to new quarters. It is possible that part of the strikers paid then with their lives for their boldness.

"May 21st and 22nd were days of great commotion.

"On the night from May 21st to 22nd the camp guards started locking the doors of individual barracks. This was noticed, and the inmates broke the windows and doors. When a fire engine arrived from without, feelings rose higher and the rebels tried to seize the hose. The driver of the fire engine thereupon hastened to leave the camp. Driving at high speed, he hit a camp inmate. This series of events made the strikers act with even greater decision.

"On May 22nd the inmates of camp No. 5 assumed control of the camp administration and refused to admit the guards to the camp. The strike lookouts were given all necessary instructions — but nobody knew from where they came. Everything was done in a conspirative manner, but ran smoothly.

"On the night of the same day a group of Red Army soldiers marched into the camp. The strikers promptly came out to meet them, asking what was their business. During this parley, the strikers closed in on the soldiers. Once more one could see that the strike leadership was excellent and evidently included persons with military experience.

"The Soviet officer got nervous and fired his pistol in the air and guards posted at some distance also started shooting. The mutineers threw themselves to the ground, and the Soviet officer retreated.

"Seeing that only warning shots had been fired, the prisoners grabbed bricks and sticks to drive the soldiers out of the camp. Their retreat was covered by fire from the guards who shot above the heads of the prisoners.

"The Soviet administration again invited the rebels to disperse. As the order was not promptly observed, a new volley of shots, this time aimed lower, followed. The rebels then went to their barracks, leaving only their lookouts.

"There were no significant events during the morning of the next day. The loudspeakers continued to clamor about the punishments to be expected if the strike were not ended.

"Then Red Army soldiers were ordered to surround the camp. Even then the troops shrank from decisive action. However, a com-

pany marched into the camp through two gates, pushing the mutineers back to the sides of the court yard. Bullets coming from outside whistled over their heads.

"The situation became serious when a company took cover behind buildings and opened fire against the prisoners crowded in a corner of the camp.

"There were heavy casualties; their number was increased as mental patients, hearing the shooting, rushed out of their rooms and threw themselves into the line of fire.

"By the afternoon of May 23rd, the strike was suppressed, but only in camp No. 5 and through a massacre. The dead were carried away in seven trucks.

"Meanwhile, events had moved on in other camps as well. In order to disrupt the strike, the *blatnois* — the henchmen of the MVD — were sent into camp No. 2. Their hostile attitude was remarked right away and six of them were stabbed to death, probably by the Ukrainians, during the first night. The remaining *blatnois* then disappeared again. The strike went on, until a false rumor had it that the strike had ended everywhere else. So the strike was discontinued in camp No. 2, although in some places it went on for almost 100 days. The misunderstanding had arisen because camp No. 2 was about 20 miles from the city of Norilsk and the inmates of individual camps were strictly isolated during the strike.

"In camp No. 3, on the other hand, an all-out strike began as late as June 4th. As in camp No. 5, there were long parleys between the strikers and the camp administration which threatened reprisals; the threats failed, although rumors had reached Norilsk and also camp No. 3 that several hundred, possibly a thousand prisoners, had been killed in the bloody clash in camp No. 5.

"The inmates of camp No. 3 began to barricade the gates.

"None of the strikers' demands were fulfilled, although the Soviet administration was considerably disconcerted by the bloody events in the neighboring camps and hesitated to take sterner measures. The inhabitants of the city of Norilsk sympathized with the strikers, and passed them packs of cigarettes and food through the barbed wire

every day. From the camp administration the strikers received reduced food rations.

"However, the strike did not break down by itself. The Soviets saw no other way out but to send in troops again.

"According to one version, the soldiers arrived on August 3rd, according to another on August 11th.

"One thousand Red Army soldiers were sent from Krasnoyarsk, because the Soviets felt they could not rely on local troops whom they suspected of friendliness toward the slave workers."

A participant in the Norilsk uprising says:

"At three o'clock in the morning the camp loudspeaker opened up. It did not broadcast the usual invitation to end the strike, but ordered the strikers to leave the camp immediately. Naturally, we refused to comply and hastened to take up position on our barricades. We understood that a critical stage had been reached. Pouring through the shattered gates, to the sound of fire arms, the troops invaded the camp. They closed in on us from the flanks. We fought back, although we knew that our resistance was hopeless. We were not allowed to take care of our dead whose number amounted to about fifty."

Japanese prisoners reported much heavier casualties. The discrepancy may be due to the fact that the numerous wounded may have been counted among the dead. In the first moments after the clash it was not possible to distinguish between dead and wounded.

Similar events took place in camps Nos. 1 and 4. There, too, slave laborers were killed and wounded. A returnee has mentioned in Friedland that the wounded included M., a 30-year old man from Riga, a former member of the 19th Division of the Latvian Legion, and V., a 32-year old sailor. The Latvian Red Cross has additional information on them.

During the Norilsk uprising, outstanding heroism was shown by D., a Latvian woman who earlier had been known for care for and favorable influence on Latvian girls in the camp. Her term had been nearing completion, but for participating in the uprising she was sentenced once more and transferred to another punitive area. An eye-witness estimates at 150 the number of Baltic women in camp No. 6. The bulk of the camp inmates had been composed of Ukrain-

ians, while the Russian group was numerically equal to that of the Balts. Of other nationalities, there were about 30 Polish, six German and two Japanese women.

Because of their large number, the Ukrainians provided the greatest number of strike pickets, while the leadership of the rising, as stated by returnees, included other nationalities as well.

In the fear that guards might lock them up, every second woman spent day and night outside the barracks. At the same time they fulfilled control tasks in the kitchen, the telephone exchange and the hospital. Food was issued only to sick and pregnant women.

With a permission of the so-called "strike activists" the camp commandant was admitted to the camp from time to time, for the handling of important and urgent administrative matters. Communication with camp No. 5 was by way of flag signals. In this way the women's camp learned about the slogans and demands of the strikers.

After the arrival of Moscow representatives, the strikers ended the hunger strike and resumed work, but continued to insist on their demands. When a demand was violated — for instance, when reprisals were taken against "activists" — one of whom was an Estonian, the strike was resumed.

The black flag reappeared on the barracks of the No. 6 women's camp.

The women hastened to collect and store stones and to build barricades. They pledged each other to defend their arrested comrades in a life-and-death struggle. The Soviet administration began to realize that even this camp could be forced to capitulate only by using troops.

On July 11th the women's camp was surrounded by Red Army soldiers. The loudspeakers started again, inviting the prisoners to leave the camp at once. Despite the tragic experiences of the neighboring camps, the women did not capitulate to threats. Shouts of hate met the soldiers. The Soviet officers saw that nothing could be reached through intimidation and at half past four in the morning they ordered a fire brigade to enter the camp, followed by troops. Some soldiers were armed with axes, others with clubs. With these weapons they succeeded in driving the women out of the camp. By

the gates stood MVD agents who separated the women into different groups.

Some of the strikers were sent to the prison which, by the way, was the first large building in Norilsk at the time when it was not yet incorporated as a city, while others were interned in punitive camps and the rest, considered less dangerous, sent back to the ordinary camps.

Airplanes were used in quelling the uprising in Kharpich, a few hundred miles from Norilsk. In large numbers the rebels marched to Norilsk along the newly-built railroad. Even the guards had joined the rebels. Enroute, all of them were encircled by troops. As the Soviets had sent planes, flight in the tundra was impossible, and many guards who had joined the rebels committed suicide.

According to some witnesses, the center of the Norilsk uprising was not in the camps in and surrounding the city, but rather in the Kharpich area.

This was the end of this uprising, which broke out before Stalin's death, and which seems to have been the largest of all such insurrections. In all of the Norilsk punitive area the uprisings went on for 96 days. What was their result? Not negligible, it would seem. There were changes in the camp regime and several of the rebels' demands were accepted. However, this was not the principal success. If earlier disturbances in Kolyma, Karaganda and elsewhere had shaken the tenuous moral foundation of the Soviet power, the Norilsk rebellion lighted a fire of unrest which was never entirely put out. True, it had been suppressed by brute force, many rebels had fallen and slave labor was not abolished — nevertheless, this fire gave off sparks which produced new unrest in all of Siberia, in the Arctic regions and in Central Asia.

Soviet slave workers were the first to start an undaunted and open fight against Soviet oppression, terrorism and deceit.

The uprising discredited the Soviet Union in the eyes of those who had blindly accepted its ideals and doctrinary teachings. Study of the changes brought by the uprisings shows that they were significant in the miserable life of the slave workers.

The Soviet power introduced the following changes in the Norilsk punitive area:

1. The regime camps were transformed into general work camps with a less rigid internal regime.
2. The prisoners were not locked up in their barracks at night.
3. Bars were removed from windows.
4. Numbers were removed from the clothing of the prisoners.
5. Instead of two letters a year, Soviet citizens were permitted to write a letter every month.
6. Camp inmates whose conduct was good could once a year receive visits from their relatives for whom special quarters were arranged.
7. If the work norm was exceeded by 30 percent, one work day was credited as two, and, in case of norm fulfilment above 130 percent, as three days.
8. Three hundred rubles were paid out from the wages every month (previously 100 rubles).
9. Instead of four films monthly, eight were shown, the camp administration paying for four of them.
10. Overseers and camp inmates were forbidden to use foul language.
11. The prisoners were permitted to send written complaints to the communist party and government offices. An answer was given in every case. When the complaint was submitted to the representative of an office, the latter gave the prisoner a receipt.
12. Outstanding workers received annual leaves of up to three weeks.

In the summer of 1954 the Soviet authorities also introduced some changes in the camp system.

Depending on whether prisoners had or had not fulfilled the work norms and had or had not given cause for complaints, they were transferred:

- a) to camps with a less rigid regime where they were not guarded in the camp and enroute to and from work; those whose term was almost completed were issued identity documents which in certain cases enabled them to leave the camp,

- b) to guarded camps where the prisoners were escorted to and from work, but guards were not allowed to carry arms,
- c) to camps of stern regime, which are constantly under armed guard and from which prisoners are escorted to work by armed guards,  
or
- d) to punitive camp or prison, in order to isolate slave laborers who had committed some offense.

Pregnant women and mothers who at the time of arrest had left small children at home were promised release for good conduct. Some youths came under the youth amnesty, mentioned previously.

Balts and other non-Russian prisoners were permitted to write letters in their own language; previously, the letters had to be in the Russian language.

The handling of some matters within the camp was entrusted to the forced laborers themselves. It was even planned to set up so-called internal tribunals which were to try fellow-prisoners for minor misdemeanors, offenses against the camp administration and failure to fulfil work norms. However, the camp inmates refused to comply with this order from Moscow and such tribunals were not established.

In concluding our survey of the uprisings in Norilsk and their effects, it should be mentioned that the bolsheviks succeeded in detecting a considerable number of leaders and the so-called activists of the uprisings. They were sent to punitive camps or prisons in other regions. After some time those considered less dangerous were transferred to the usual camps, but in a different region. The bolsheviks wanted to scatter them and forestall new plans of uprisings on the basis of old friendships. This aim was achieved, but the bolsheviks failed to consider another consequence of their measure. The individual rebels landed in places where the prisoners had so far lacked the initiative to oppose the Soviet power. Now they were told about the daring feats of the slave workers in Norilsk and were encouraged to do the same. The unrest therefore soon spread to other parts of Russia.

Only very few rebels were left on the spot, that is, in the Norilsk prison. Sentenced to several years of imprisonment, they were needed as prosecution witnesses in the trials of local Soviet administrative officials.

Whenever the Soviet system suffers some drawback, it looks for scapegoats. In Norilsk the culprits were found in Major General Smirnov, the chief of the administration, and several of his aides, as well as a few MVD officers. All were either sentenced to death or given long terms at hard labor. Some MVD men escaped punishment by committing suicide.

In his indictment of these former high-ranking officials, the Soviet public prosecutor cynically said: "If these officers had strictly adhered to orders from Moscow, the strike of Norilsk would never have occurred."

There are some indications that through these trials the bolsheviks tried to win the sympathies of the political prisoners. Witnesses against the former chekists included both Latvian and Lithuanian, as well as Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Russian and Circassian convicted leaders of the uprising.

A new and strange flower was thus plaited into the garland of Soviet justice.

## DEATH HARVEST IN VORKUTA

The Karaganda and Norilsk rebellions released a chain reaction. The echo of the last volleys in Norilsk had not yet died out, when the slogan "Death or freedom" was sounded in Vorkuta.

That politically persecuted people are prepared to die and refuse to surrender during the fight, was clearly demonstrated to Moscow by the initial stage of the disorders in Norilsk which spread over the entire peninsula of Taimyr. Most deportees had originally not been active anti-bolsheviks, but became opposed to the Soviets in the forced labor camps. They had, it is true, never liked the Soviet system, but from latent adversaries or politically indifferent persons they had been turned into uncompromising fighters against the Soviet regime.

What else can one expect from people who have been degraded to the status of slaves and seized by the machinery of death and destruction?

The day came when political prisoners rose also in Vorkuta. The trouble started with a strike, and at the outset much was the same as in Norilsk. The first to strike was mine No. 7, immediately followed by mines Nos. 1, 3, 8, 12, 14, 16, 29 and 40. In some mines, strike committees were formed to present demands and negotiate with the camp administration and later with Moscow. Other mines showed their solidarity through the so-called go-slow strike. In the first case, miners did not leave the camp, while in the other they went to the mines but held their shovels in hand, standing idle or shoveling only a few pieces of coal into the wagons.

The hoisting of the first rebel flag was followed a quarter of an hour later by another, made according to the same pattern, and in a few hours such flags were hoisted in all surrounding camps and on the Vorkuta power station. While the flag in Norilsk was black, in Vorkuta it was red with a black border. It was left at half-mast in honor of the first fallen comrades, workers from mine No. 3.

The course of events can only be followed mine by mine.

In July 1953, 200 forced laborers were brought to Vorkuta mine No. 7 from Karaganda, where they had enjoyed some measure of freedom. In Vorkuta they were placed under a stern regime behind barbed wire. The difference was great and the newcomers particularly resented the Soviet refusal to honor a promise made in Karaganda before their departure — they had been promised tolerable working conditions and out-of-camp accommodation in Vorkuta.

These men had seen in Karaganda that Soviet officials waver whenever they meet opposition, and accordingly, they decided from the very outset to refuse the work assigned to them. The camp administration tried to calm the excited workers by alleging that local conditions precluded the honoring of promises given in Karaganda and by claiming that anyhow no living quarters outside the camps were available. The newcomers, however, insisted on their agreement with the Soviet authorities in Central Asia; they argued that the local camp regime should be made less rigid as a move toward introducing

equal conditions of work in all Soviet camps. Such claims found eager listeners among the inmates of mine camp No. 7, who, like the newcomers, were political prisoners. Contact was established between the two groups from the very first moment.

The inmates of mine No. 7 proved their solidarity with the newcomers and a strike broke out a few days later.

The camp commandant failed to persuade the prisoners to end the strike. A strike committee hurriedly prepared its demands and, as a condition for negotiating with the Soviet authorities, asked the despatching of a governmental representative from Moscow. The strikers agreed on demanding reduction of their hard labor terms. For those who had served more than ten years it would have meant a release. Knowing the Vorkuta coal *kombinat's* difficulties in obtaining new labor, they volunteered to work a few more years in the mines, provided they were released from the camps.

The administration rejected the demands and urged the miners to resume work.

"To hell with your coal, we demand freedom!" was the strikers' answer, whose self-reliance and fighting spirit grew daily.

After consulting Moscow, the administration adopted a conciliatory stand; it promised:

1. Examination, by competent authorities, of petitions for review of sentences,
2. Discontinuance of locking up the camp inmates,
3. Removal of the humiliating numbers from the prisoners' clothing,
4. Removal of bars from barrack windows,
5. Permission to write a letter every month, instead of twice a year, and
6. Possibility of meeting one's relatives, provided work norms were filled and the prisoner's conduct gave no cause for complaint.

"What is the use of all those promises", the prisoners said. "We know the bolsheviks. Petitions for review of our indictments and sentences will not change anything. As for the bars and numbers, we shall remove them ourselves. What can we write to our families? The things we really want to tell them, will not pass the censorship anyway. How many people can come to see us here, beyond the Arctic

Ovaka žiža i vjekav rad sovjetskih vlasti je zasnovan na tome a to su reči generala N. K. Wde Derevianka komandanta Vorkut Laga, koje je rekao za vreme ustauka na Vorkuti augusta 1953, Od Pri-baltičkih nacija nema nijednih pobornih ni ovrca, nijih po dejstvima neprijatelja sovjetske vlasti. Mi im ćemo se postarati da tu gamad do poslednjega umistimo sa lica zemlje.

Fotokodnja velika čistka Pri-baltike za koju ja znam bila je 1952 godine kada su se naši lagori popunili na račun omladine i intelektualije Pri-baltike. Benu je pisao pričao student medicine Paulis Jonas, članik 7 klase Vigants, Gro-dis, kao i ostali da je u toj čistiki pohapšeno oko 10.000 omladinaca iz redova univerzitetske omladine i gimnazista, a sami čekisti su pričali da je u lagore Vorkute dovezeno u toku 3 nedelje 32.000 Litvanaca, Letonaca i Estonaca. Sovjetske su vlasti računale da će time uiniti kraj parti-zansko pokretu u zemljama pri-baltike.

A fragment of the report of a Yugoslav returnee who had been interned in Vorkuta together with Balts:

"The purpose and endeavors of the Soviet rule are based on it — in the words of MVD General Derevianko, Commandant of the Vorkuta camps, during the mutiny of August 1953; 'The Soviet authorities have no enemy so numerically small but yet so implacable in their enmity as the Balts. We shall, however, see to it that this vermin disappears from the face of the earth.'

"The latest major purge in the Baltic countries — known to me — took place in 1953 when our camp was filled with Baltic youths and intellectuals. I was told by Jonas Saulis, a medical student, Vigants, a high school student, Grodis, and others that about 10 000 university and highschool students were arrested during this purge. Even MVD men said that about 32 000 Balts were brought to the Vorkuta camps within three weeks. The Soviet authorities hoped to liquidate the partisan movement in the Baltic countries by this measure."

Circle? It is a two-thousand-mile trip from the Baltic countries, and nobody would be allowed to come here from Tomsk or Krasnoyarsk even if he had money to pay for the fare."

The new Kremlin leaders hesitated, anxiously looking for a way out of the highly awkward situation. Then they sent to Vorkuta Colonel General Maslennikov who, since World War II has been known as a "double hero of fatherland" and Prosecutor General Rudenko, known from the Nuremberg trials of National Socialist leaders. They were accompanied by thirty officers and high officials.

Maslennikov's group set up its headquarters outside mine camp No. 7, and summoned the arrested strike leaders who were addressed very politely; no threats were proffered at the outset. As far as could be judged, Moscow wanted to find out what lay behind the disorders and had sent an investigating committee which completed its work in eight days.

Events in mine No. 3 took a different course. Its inmates soon learned about the strike in mine No. 7. The news was conveyed by empty railway cars, carrying slogans. On the cars was written: "Are you still working? Don't be cowards," or "Comrades, we strike, do not desert us," and so on.

In a camp where everybody was striking, Rudenko said: "If you resume work, things will improve . . ." Whatever he said, was of no avail. The efforts of other Moscow spokesmen to win the confidence of the strikers and confuse them with cheap promises likewise failed.

"To hell with your coal, give us freedom," "First freedom, then coal," "Freedom or death" were the slogans voiced everywhere.

Hand-written pamphlets appeared, inviting everybody to support the strike and fight for the newly formulated demands.

The attitude of the rebels differed from camp to camp. Although everybody was opposed to the Soviet regime, the strikers of one mine also launched — for tactical reasons — the slogan "Long live Malenkov!" While prisoners in the mine camps Nos. 3, 7 and 29 showed utter fearlessness and an uncompromising attitude, some other strike committees feared serious excesses and first watched developments in the mine camps which had started the struggle.

To deceive the wavering among the strikers, the Soviet administration spread rumors that the strike had been called off in the neighboring camps. Also, railway cars — actually empty — were sent past the camp several times a day in order to create the impression that work in the mines had been resumed and train loads of coal were again leaving for Leningrad.

What happened in mine camp No. 3?

The strike which broke out in mine No. 7 on July 22nd, spread to this mine a few days later. The strikers' demands were the same. However, in camp No. 3 a spark of trouble was set off from the very outset, threatening to develop into a mutiny.

The news was reported of the arrests of 30 men from Karaganda. They were interned in the prison camp. The strike committee of mine No. 3 was in safe hands. Together with 2,000 prisoners, it went to the prison, demanding the release of their comrades.

Their fearlessness impressed the Soviet officials. The Soviet major in charge of the arrested workers, promised to release the Karaganda men within a few hours. This promise was to gain time for the summoning of reinforcements and few minutes later sizable units of MVD and Red Army arrived and encircled the mutineers. In addition, trucks drove in to take the arrested Karaganda men to the city prison.

At this very moment, the Karaganda men had overwhelmed their guards and had broken out from their confinement.

An order was barked from the gates: "Fire!"

However, no shots were heard. The barrels of the soldiers' sub-machine guns pointed sidewise and the MVD men only fingered the triggers of their guns. The unbelievable had happened — they disobeyed the order to shoot at unarmed adversaries, at emaciated men in prisoners' garb.

It seemed, as if the lips of the armed men formed the question — are these people actually our enemies?

Did it mean that one rebellion was followed by another?

The MVD officer grasped the situation. He grabbed a sub-machine gun from the hands of the nearest MVD guard and opened fire on the prisoners.

A sub-machine gun is a fast weapon. Within 30 seconds it had mowed down 15 men. When they were put on stretchers, two of them were dead.

"We stood nearby," says an eye-witness. "The chairman of our strike committee and his aides walked toward the MVD detachment and the commander of the guard and told them: 'From this moment we assume control of our camp. If an officer or soldier tries to enter the camp without our permission, we shall kill him. If you want to use force against us, you will have to shoot all 4500 inmates of this camp. Meanwhile, you will not receive a lump of coal. Be informed that now it is our turn to act!' While our spokesman was talking, we faced hundred gun barrels. They kept silent. The words uttered with great seriousness convinced those who held sub-machine guns and also our lives in their hands. Even in a police state there are arguments that are stronger than fire-arms. Although still behind barbed wire, for the first time since many years we felt free. We were not interested in what happened beyond the gates, we were exclusively concerned about what went on inside the camp which we now controlled. Tasks and responsibilities were assigned. We ordered that food rations be raised to adequate quantities. Food reserves permitted such rations for an entire month.

"Before we had had time to do much on our own, the MVD major reported to our sentry at the gates, asking for admission. He was unarmed. We let him in.

"He reported that General Derevianko, the supervisor of the Vorkuta mines, had authorized a monthly wage of 300 rubles for each prisoner. In addition, slave workers would be allowed to receive visits from their relatives, the bars would be removed from barrack windows and the doors would not be locked at night, the MVD major told us.

"What a wonderful feeling! We had been striking just a few hours, and were already promised a series of improvements.

"We said we would study the information. A pleasant season had come to the tundra. The sun was shining and there was an agreeable calm, disturbed neither by the passing trains nor the banging and clatter of the mine installations. It was nice to have a real rest at

long last. In addition, we had demanded the coming of a representative from Moscow.

"On July 27th Derevianko came to see us. 'Don't you think it wiser to resume work,' he said in a paternal tone. 'Most of your demands have been accepted, what else do you want?'

"We replied that we were waiting for a representative from Moscow.

"General Maslennikov is due to arrive here any moment,' he said, as he went.

"The name of Maslennikov was well known to us. He was not only an MVD general but also a Deputy Interior Minister of the Soviet Union.

"Although the Soviet officials spoke to us with angels' tongues, we did not expect any good from his visit. Maslennikov was a man known for his immeasurable brutality.

"In the afternoon of July 29th, a big showy car drove into our camp. Flanked by heavily armed guards, it drove to a section of the camp where we used to spend our leisure time.

"Maslennikov had come as Moscow's representative, in accordance with our request.

"He was asked to sit down at a table placed outdoors. His car was turned so as to face the gates and be able to start promptly. About 500 soldiers were concentrated round the camp.

"Our strike committee and other speakers who had something to say were summoned to Maslennikov. They repeated the demands for a review of the indictments and sentences of political prisoners. Also other demands were voiced. But in addition — Moscow's representative, accompanied by 30 high Soviet officers, had to listen to our views on Soviet terrorism in general.

"To do him justice it must be said that he listened patiently to everything. But then he got to his feet, climbed into his car and proceeded to the next camp.

"On August 1st, we saw a strange movement at some distance. Prisoners from mine camp No. 7 were being taken in small groups to the tundra. We did not understand what was going on. Only

later did we learn about it. The first group taken outside the camp was not told anything and was allowed to return to the camp.

"To the second and following groups the MVD told: 'You see, your comrades have decided to resume work. Do you want to follow their example or shall we shoot you?'

"This MVD ruse succeeded. Divided, no longer feeling like one single group, the prisoners in the neighboring mine camp let themselves be confused and returned to work."

But what was going on in mine camp No. 29?

During the last week of July, mine camp No. 29, too, did not go to work. The greatest trouble was caused for the administration by the ensuing shortage of personnel needed for the operation of ventilation and water-pump installations. The prisoners strictly turned down the invitation to resume work, presenting the demands described above. The Soviet administration and guards were also prohibited from entering mine camp No. 29. The only exceptions were the camp commandant and the officers of the supply and health services.

The MVD found no other approach to the problem than to encircle the camp. Hundreds of Red Army soldiers dug themselves in the tundra soil. Rain filled the holes with muddy water and the soldiers cursed the dirty detail they had been assigned. Railroad workers who noticed the strikers' slogans "Freedom or death!" took a different attitude. Locomotive operators, driving past the camp, would sound their whistles. Train passengers waved hands, expressing their sympathy to the bold men in the camps. One should note that these passengers were not occasional travelers, but people who had some mission in Vorkuta, as no tourists were allowed to this remote corner of the Soviet Union.

When Derevianko's attempts to persuade the prisoners failed, mine camp No. 29 was also visited by Maslennikov. A table covered with blood-red cloth was set up and the meeting was opened. Derevianko then asked Maslennikov, the Deputy Minister of the Interior of the Soviet Federal Government, to take the floor. The Minister rose to his feet, exclaimed 'Citizens!' and then began wiping sweat from his face and unbuttoned the collar of his uniform.

"Citizens' Maslennikov began again, 'I can announce to you that the Government is preparing radical changes in the camp system. I am not authorized to discuss all the details . . . But go back to work . . . you will be taken care of . . .'"

"You have sucked our blood long enough," said a man coming forward from the group of the political prisoners. "We shall not return to work before you have reviewed the indictments against us."

"It seemed that everything that had to be said, was said. A call to break up the meeting came from the crowd, and the Moscow committee had to watch the prisoners disperse.

"The Kremlin representative had spoken in the name of the Soviet Government, but three thousand men simply turned their backs on him. Can a dictatorship tolerate it?"

"On the next morning there was new activity round mine No. 29. Soldiers who stood by their trench-mortars and sub-machine guns, were joined by fire brigade men and ambulances.

"The Moscow committee appeared again, but this time without the Deputy Minister of the Interior. The group was accompanied by a thousand heavily armed soldiers.

"As the main camp gates were flung wide open, Derevianko shouted in a grim voice:

"Interned citizens! For the last time I invite you to call off the strike. Those ready to work should come out. They will not be punished!"

"Treading heavily, a few left the camp. Thousands stayed. They replied shouting: 'Freedom or death!'"

"One of the Moscow men leapt forward and fired a pistol in the air. It was an order, the pre-arranged sign for a blood-bath."

Who was this man?

His name is universally known. After World War II, he went to Nuremberg to pass a fair judgment on oppressors. He spoke in the name of high principles of justice, indicting those who caused the death of millions of innocent people. He spoke then in court as one of the defenders of right and law. Now he stood in front of the forced laborers, a pistol in his hand.

The order for the mass murder in Vorkuta was given by Public Prosecutor General of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Rudenko.

The prisoners, their hands joined, had advanced a few steps. They looked like a living wall. They stood erect, while usually their heads were bent at work. In this moment they felt an elation which was reflected in their shining eyes; they did not hide their bodies in dugouts or behind buildings, as did those who were armed with sub-machine-guns and trench-mortars. They stood still before their judge.

Rudenko's pistol had not yet sunk down, as hundreds of bullets struck the prisoners, piercing their chests and waists. Even this measure of bullets had been determined in advance.

No — this time — not freedom, but death!

This was the requiem of a fight.

It has been often asked how many fell in the Vorkuta uprising. Different figures have been cited, while the Soviet authorities keep silent. The surviving comrades were not allowed to take care of the fallen comrades. If a hundred were killed, several hundreds were seriously wounded. Those lightly wounded were less numerous. The executors tried to gain merit by a thorough job.

This happened on August 1st.

As all Balts commemorate June 14th as the day of Soviet mass deportations from the Baltic countries in 1941, the Vorkuta inmates, whatever their nationality, observe August 1st. They have proclaimed it their day of mourning. Every year since 1953 Vorkuta people pin a black ribbon to their miner's dress as a sign of undying solidarity and loyalty to their fallen comrades.

Returnees state that this day is observed also in Potma.

"Latvians also fell then, seven were dead on the spot." I was told by several returnees in Friedland who remembered the massacre in the Vorkuta tundra with horror.

The dead were buried at night. Will their graves be opened once as another Katyn mass grave?

The minds of the survivors still conserve a vivid recollection of this grim event.

"Out of tundra moss and shrubs we made wreaths which we surreptitiously placed on the graves of our martyrs. We included them in our silent prayers," says a man who had lived to see a great deal during World War II but for whom all the horrors of war paled before what he had seen in Vorkuta.

What happened to the survivors? Rudenko, Maslennikov and Derevianko — all had threatened to punish those who refused to end the strike.

They were sent to the prisons of Vorkuta, Inta, Kirov, and Vladimir, to local punitive barracks or to other remote camps. On the other hand, the Soviets showed restraint in imposing the additional sentences which the camp commandant had so often mentioned to intimidate the strikers. Rebels taken to the Vladimir prison were reportedly nine months later sent to Krasnoyarsk region for work. Before the mutineers were imprisoned or confined to some other penal institution, they were carefully separated into different categories. MVD informers helped in this screening and determination of the degree of "dangerousness." They stood at the side of the Soviet officials, as the surviving rebels were taken along a narrow passage for identification and assignment to a specific category.

Those who were left in forced labor in Vorkuta, had their working and living conditions improved. Returnees from Vorkuta state that neither cigarettes nor food were lacking after the uprising. Numbers were removed from the prisoners' clothing and bars from the barrack windows. The slave workers were allowed to write postcards twice a month. The greatest improvement was, however, the increase in wages for the hard mine work.

These improvements, it is true, did not apply to the entire Vorkuta punitive region.

The Vorkuta uprising ended with massacre on August 1, 1953. As we saw, it could be quelled only with bullets. Both Maslennikov and Rudenko returned to Moscow with this lesson.

As in Norilsk — Moscow had to admit another thing — it could not rely on military units stationed in the Arctic regions. The soldiers who accompanied Maslennikov were neither Russians, nor Ukrainians, but Mongols. They were speedily brought to Vorkuta by air. It is

not known what, if anything, they were told about the camp inmates. They blindly carried out orders. As far as could be judged, firing at the massed political prisoners did not seem to them as anything unusual. Possibly they belonged to an executioners' unit, of which there is no lack in the MVD.

It remains to ask why camp inmates did not participate 100 percent in the July 1953 uprising, as all of them suffered from the hard conditions of forced labor.

It only looks as if all did not participate. Actually, in one way or another, everybody gave testimony of his solidarity with the strikers. As an example one can mention mine camp No. 40 where no dramatic events took place but it did not mean that the inmates of this large camp stood aloof. They merely chose a different method: they brought the strike from the living quarters to the mines, as required by the rules of a well-organized strike. Their work during the strike days became what was known as the "Italian plague." Instead of the normal 1000 tons, they just managed to mine some 30 tons a day. In this mine none were killed, but many were arrested. The same is true of other camps, not named here.

Even interned women wanted to participate in the strike, but were told by the strike committees to abstain. The committees considered the women's force too weak in the face of the fairly large guard units.

Still, German women employed in the Vorkuta brickyard camps declared a hunger strike. As stated by returnees, even the Latvians were ready to join, but the Germans dissuaded them, pointing out that much heavier reprisals could be taken against the Latvians than against themselves.

The slogans of the strike were approved by all prisoners and solidarity with the strikers was shown not only by people behind the barbed wire, but also by the free people in Vorkuta and nearby areas.

The strike and the uprising did not mean the end of the prisoners' fight. They carried it on, although outwardly they had been overwhelmed. Cases of sabotage increased in the mines. The Soviet administration and the guards found it difficult to combat sabotage,

since they were afraid of descending into the mines. As soon as the forced laborers were in the mines, they felt unobserved and could act with greater safety. The mines were also the place for the catacomb church where the believers could gather for prayer and divine services. They felt more or less free underground.

A new strike broke out in Vorkuta in the summer of 1955. The experience acquired in the foregoing strike suggested a more adroit and versatile course. From the very beginning all the mines were engaged in the strike. Everybody went to work in order to — as an eye-witness has stated — to lie down and sleep.

The Soviet administration was helpless against such tactics. It simply could not reach the strikers.

What did the strikers demand this time?

Their demands seemed truly radical. They demanded freedom of movement outside the camps and the annulment of wartime sentences.

The success was so great that at first prisoners refused to believe in it. In mine camp No. 7 the gates were opened three hours later. "It seemed so strange that we had suspicions and doubts," says an East Prussian returnee. "It seemed as though the bolsheviks were setting traps. No one had courage enough to be the first man to walk through the gates. We feared that a bullet fired from behind would hit him. However, nothing of the kind happened. Later, we learned that the Communist Party Central Committee in Moscow had given an order to prevent the strike spreading at all costs, but without loss of prisoners' lives. However, there were some victims even this time. In mine camp No. 12, where the strike continued, soldiers sent from Kirov broke into a barrack early in the morning, accompanied by dogs. They pulled workers out of their beds, clubbing down those who resisted. Four persons were killed in this fight, both sides suffering casualties. The indignation, however, was still great. Seeing the bolsheviks ready to compromise and wishing to avoid further incidents of this nature, the strikers called off the strike within a week. A promise was given to amnesty those who had been sentenced for wartime offenses."

A study of the amnesty of September 1955, shows that the demands of the Vorkuta strikers were considered in it. How far the promises were filled is, of course, another matter. Anyway, it was proved once more that the Soviet power is extremely sensitive to strikes and resistance by prisoners. According to returnee testimony, this strike was launched by Lithuanians who carried it through in cooperation with other Balts and Ukrainians and with the approval of other camp inmates.

As has been testified by eye-witnesses, there were several demands. The Balts asked the repatriation of prisoners who had served their term, had been amnestied, or were old or invalids. It was also requested that in such cases even family members should be allowed to return from the deportation sites.

The two Vorkuta strikes and uprisings, which were separated from each other by a period of two years, caused great changes in the Soviet forced labor system.

The foregoing shows that the political prisoners did not receive anything as a gift. The changes in the punitive and exploitative regime were achieved only through their fearless fight and their sacrifice.

#### KINGIR PRISONERS FIGHT AGAINST TANKS

The most dramatic of all uprisings occurred in the Kingir copper mine region in Central Asia. Nine thousand male and four thousand female camp inmates participated in it. Only a few, possibly a hundred, avoided the fight; most of them were MVD informers who had to stand aside in the interests of their personal safety. A year earlier, the Ukrainian resistance organization — the largest in this camp — had killed about 100 stool pigeons. In cooperation with the Balts and other national groups there evolved, in time, a special "counter-intelligence service" which managed to unmask every informer and traitor. This enabled the Kingir rebels to open their fight in a spirit of greater unity than in Vorkuta.

The Kingir strike developed from the very outset into a well-organized uprising. Leadership of the strike was assumed by Colonel Kuznetsov, one of the most popular Soviet officers, who had acquired undeniable merit in storming Berlin at the end of World War II. In 1952, he was arrested on charges of having attempted to escape to West Berlin with an entire tank regiment. After having been kept in various prisons, he was sent in 1954 to Kingir — a place which, according to the MVD, housed only “fascists.” The Soviet security authorities had a hard time with these “fascists.” As stated above, the political prisoners in Kingir had gotten the better of the MVD agents, and the MVD therefore tried to regain its influence.

It formed a plan. In April 1954, about 600 criminal prisoners were sent to Kingir which since 1949 had only had political internees.

“You see,” an MVD officer told one of the newcomers a few days after their arrival, “the fascists plan to attack and do away with you. Unless you forestall them, your days are numbered. Try to teach them a lesson; we shall back you up in every possible way.”

However, men who have spent long years in internment develop a special instinct. This particular man and other criminal convicts understood that the MVD was using them. One of them went to see a representative of the political prisoners and told him frankly what he had been told.

It turned out that the new arrivals had been imprisoned with political prisoners a few years previously, and, under their guidance, had seen through the Soviet methods of terrorism.

The spokesman of the criminal interned said they favored solidarity with the political prisoners, especially where the common interests of all interned were at stake.

Who were these criminal prisoners?

Many were youths whom grim Soviet life had left without parents, school or home. Not so many years ago they were called *bezprizorniye*, meaning “those without home and shelter.” There was no one to help and take care of them. Some of them had been sent — at the age of 16 — to the Kingir camp branded as habitual criminals. Their chests and hands were tattooed. These children of Stalin’s dictatorship, interned behind barbed wire or thick walls,

listened, perplexed, to stories about the "sunken world" which the October Revolution had replaced by the dictatorship of the proletariat. One thing, however, seemed quite clear to them — the Chekists could not possibly be their friends and therefore they did not even covet the benefits promised by the MVD.

It was soon found that the MVD planned to incite the criminal internees against the political prisoners; the subsequent clash would disclose the leaders of the latter, something the MVD had so far failed to achieve with stool pigeons or otherwise in Kingir.

One of those who enjoyed authority from the very outset was the aforesaid Colonel Kuznetsov.

He not only spoke but wrote frankly, showing no respect for or fear of the Soviet power. And so, for having described the prison cell of the camp in a letter to his wife, he was confined there himself, joining 400 other prisoners.

The true reasons behind the activity of the newcomers were not clear, but one Sunday they dismantled the heating tube of the camp bath and used it to break through the separating wall of the neighboring camp. It was one of the internal walls designed to separate the different camps. An outer wall, eight meters thick, encircled the whole camp area.

The wall was two brick-lengths thick. It would have been impossible to break through it with a pipe, unless a place had been chosen which was formerly a passage way. This was done and the passage was reopened.

Eye-witnesses have reported that the guards were amazed. They had orders to shoot, but did not do so. As they hesitated, it was possible to free 400 internees and 200 held in the penal barrack. Kuznetsov, too, was released. He may even have imagined that the prison was forcibly opened because of him. Having thus regained partial freedom, Kuznetsov assumed the leadership of the political prisoners. He ordered the capture of the camp guards.

The criminal prisoners meanwhile continued their task. The wall which separated the two men's camps from the women's camp was pierced within an hour. Four thousand women were no longer separated from the rest of the camp inmates.

By next morning the situation could be seen more clearly. The guards had been captured, but their officers had escaped. Food warehouses and other strategic places in the camp were guarded by lookouts selected by the prisoners themselves.

Another day passed, and the Soviet administration and the MVD prepared countermeasures. At three o'clock the next morning, MVD units entered the camp from three sides. The MVD guards had been drinking. With shouts, they attacked everyone who crossed their path, using bayonets or rifle butts. Shots were heard from the women's camp. As the internees of neighboring camps were driven out from the women's camp, they were fired on. Some 60 or 70 dead were counted. The number of wounded was higher. The MGB hurriedly transported the dead to nearby Dzhezkazgan.

Kuznetsov, who now grouped around him representatives of all nationalities, protested against this action. He was supported by Balts and by Ukrainian partisans known as *banderists*.

The regulations forbade armed guards to enter the camp, but this night whole military units had broken into it.

"We demand the punishment of the guilty! Armed units had no right to penetrate into the camp area." This was the slogan under which the Kingir camp inmates began their strike. They knew that the military action had been taken without Moscow's knowledge and that the law, even if it was Soviet law, was on their side. In the case of any setback, the Soviets always look for scapegoats; if the strike looked like ending in favor of the interned, Moscow would blame the Soviet officials in Kingir and this event would not pass unnoticed. The strikers knew this, and therefore stressed the illegal character of the camp administration's action.

The strikers also demanded that the bodies of their fallen comrades be brought back to the site of the clash. Only in this way could they prove that their fellows had been killed by MVD bullets and had not — as the administration might allege — been killed by the strikers themselves. Another demand was that no internees be transferred to another camp within the coming weeks.

The local Soviet officials promised to fulfil the strikers' demands and in addition undertook to summon a public prosecutor. The

acceptance of their demands made the strikers call off the strike which had lasted three days.

However, as soon as the work brigades began work, the guards rounded up the criminal convicts and drove them out of the camp. Since the original scheme of the MVD had failed, it had been decided to send them elsewhere. The MVD men behaved so brutally that this alone caused new trouble.

One of the criminal convicts succeeded in reaching the camp siren and sounded a warning which was heard by political prisoners working on a building. Their prompt decision was to return to the camp. The guards stopped them, but work ended.

On their return to the camp in the evening, the political prisoners learned about the administration's failure to honor its pledge and indignantly resumed the strike.

A new, enlarged "strike committee" was formed. Of its 15 members, 14 were designated by the men's camps and one by the women. The women's representative was a "counterrevolutionary" who had spent 17 years in forced labor camps. Kuznetsov again played a leading role.

From that moment on, the Kingir camp cluster was turned in a truly autonomous republic of a type not known in the Soviet Union since the October Revolution. The strike committee supplemented the old demands with new ones. These were:

1. Review of indictments and sentences.
2. Amnesty for juveniles and the aged.
3. Release of foreigners to their home countries.
4. Conversion of the camps from regime camps into ordinary labor camps.
5. Removal of bars from barrack windows.
6. Removal of numbers from clothing.
7. An eight-hour work day.
8. A wage raise.
9. Reduction of sentences by up to seven days for each work day performed.
10. Right to choose residence after release.

11. Right to correspond more often with family.
12. Promise not to punish the strike committee,  
and
13. Review of sentences imposed in 1953 and punishment of  
officials responsible for imposition of these high sentences.

With respect to demand No. 13, it should be noted that in 1953 a strike broke out in protest against the brutal treatment of political prisoners by the guards. One day, as they returned from work, a guard opened fire without reason, killing four and wounding 16 internees, including three Latvians. To "justify" himself, the guard later alleged that an internee had grinned in the work column. The prisoners' indignation was so strong that it took the form of a protest strike which went on for three days. For participation in that strike a number of prisoners received heavy sentences. In 1954, as a token of solidarity with their comrades, the strikers demanded a review of their sentences and restitution for wrongs suffered in 1953.

The main demand was that a representative of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee come from Moscow.

To preclude the possibility of accusing the strikers of being "counterrevolutionaries," Kuznetsov advised them to abstain from anti-Soviet slogans. He suggested instead that the suppression of the strike be made more difficult through slogans, such as "Long live the Soviet Constitution," and "Down with Beria's terror methods."

Invocation of the Soviet Constitution was merely a parody. Article 3 of the constitution starts with the words: "Considering as its main task to end any exploitation of people and the elimination of classes, without pitying the exploiters..."

If the Kingir mutineers demanded the same, they spoke a deep truth and their slogan was actually not so strange. Only, those who live in the Soviet Union need no explanation of what the Constitution and the law means — they know it too well. The Kingir rebels who rose against the Soviet exploiters belonged to the lowest class in the Soviet police state and they seriously wished that their exploitation cease. However, their slogan was not the result of naivete.

They chose the sign of the Red Cross as their flag. The Red Cross and Red Crescent are the traditional signs of a humanitarian spirit.

Why couldn't these principles be applied in Kingir, the strikers thought?

Then one day the loudspeakers in the watchtowers sounded: "Attention, attention! Representatives from Moscow have just arrived. They want to talk to you. At three o'clock they will come to the camp."

The strike committee placed tables in the yards of the two camps, and the inmates of three individual camps, both men and women, gathered there.

An eye-witness describes the ensuing events: "Punctually at three p. m., four of us went to meet the Moscow representatives. Clad in bright uniforms, they came to the gates. Their gold braid and medals shone in the sun. One of the generals was called Dolghish, and a few moments later we were told that he was Assistant Public Prosecutor General of the MVD. The second man, called Bychkov, was Deputy Chief of GULAG, the main administration of the forced labor camps. One of them, accompanied by numerous Soviet officers, went to one courtyard, and the other to the yard of the neighboring camp. Kuznetsov sat down at the side of Dolghish. There was a moment of silence. "It looks as solemn as Red Square (in Moscow) during a troop review," said one of the men. Then Bychkov rose to his feet. "Comrades, you have made several demands," he began. "Some of the demands are justified and deserve acceptance. However, the Government implemented them even before you wrote them down. Look, here I have the texts of decrees issued by the Government in April. That was only a few weeks ago, and evidently news of them has not reached Kingir yet, but you may rest assured that these instructions will be carried out even here. I am choosing one at random — a decree of April 24, 1954 on the amnesty for juvenile delinquents. Another decree, issued on the same day, provides for the release of invalids and old or sick people before the expiration of their term, provided they submit their petition for pardon to the camp administration. The same applies to reduction of sentences for good work. The decree does not foresee, it is true, sentence reduction by seven days for each work day, as you demand, but those fulfilling or exceeding the work norm will have their sentences shortened by two or three days for

every workday. There is no need to speak of the eight-hour day — it has already been approved. You see, on its own initiative, the Government has worked out plans to alleviate your work and reduce your sentences. Unless I am mistaken, what with the envisaged reductions in sentences, most of you have only a small portion of the term left and have just to prepare for leaving the camp. But you should keep in mind one thing — don't gamble away all these advantages offered to you by some rash action. Be sensible, comrades! Comrade Kuznetsov, who is no doubt a clever man, would give you the same advice. Wouldn't you?" Bychkov turned with a forced smile to Kuznetsov, watching at the same time the other members of the strike committee. One of them asked: "What about a review of the indictments and sentences?"

"Well, comrades, you see, we have also come here to receive your applications for review of sentences. I and General Dolghish will accept them beginning to-morrow."

"When will the bars disappear from the windows?" a woman shouted.

"Will those who shot at us last year be punished?" another voice was heard.

"Will we be permitted to return to our homeland after our release?" asked a man with a Baltic accent.

"There were many questions.

"We shall discuss quite a lot of things during the next few days. We are staying here two more days,' said both Soviet generals, as soon as they heard questions concerning the 17 killed and several hundreds crippled in the Kingir camp.

"Bychkov and Dolghish tried to close the meeting, but the prisoners insisted on prompt arrival of members of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee.

"What is the use of your asking for the appearance of central committee members,' said one the generals indignantly. "Both we and your camp commandant act on behalf of the central committee. This is why we have come here to listen to you. Don't imagine that the central committee has so little to do that it can send one of its members here. Before we discuss other matters, we want an answer

concerning the discontinuance of the strike. We shall come back tonight to hear your answer and to decide further steps.'

"This was the end of the meeting. However, the final word had not been spoken. In the evening the camp inmates gave it:

"Comrade General! Our imprisoned comrades have authorized us, the strike committee, to declare that we insist on the fulfilment of our demand for the arrival of members of the Party Central Committee. Until their arrival, we refuse to resume work.'

"The Moscow representatives evidently had not expected such an answer. They considered new steps. One of them was dividing juvenile camp inmates into different groups. The next morning, 180 of them were summoned out of the camp. All of them believed they would be released, but only 30 were freed, while the rest were sent to a work colony near Kingir and promptly assigned to work brigades. Youths who had not yet left the camp refused to appear before the Moscow committee.

"Thereupon the Moscow men tried their hand at categorizing invalids and tuberculosis patients. After five percent had been declared to come under the category of those to be freed, all activities in this respect were halted.

"The next day, a host of Soviet public prosecutors arrived from Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, from Karaganda and other distant places. They interrogated the political prisoners on the bloody clashes of last year, prepared minutes, took pictures of whatever material evidence was left on the scene of events and told the prisoners that the culprits had already been imprisoned.

"Several days passed. The camp inmates did not spend them idly.

"In order to inform others about the uprising, they started building a radio transmitter. In their opinion, this would enable them to inform not only other areas of the Soviet Union, but also the free world about the events in Kingir, 'We shall contact the International Red Cross,' said some. 'We shall refute Moscow's lies that no forced labor camps are left in the Soviet Union,' suggested others.

"The claim that all slave camps had been liquidated in the Soviet Union was published in 1954 in some Western newspaper. Only Moscow's campaign of lies could bring about the publication of such

a statement in the press of the free world. We should not let Moscow get away with such a brazen lie, we must have a radio transmitter which can be heard in all of Europe and non-Communist Asia. The voice of the Kingir rebels should pierce the Iron Curtain.' And so it was decided.

"There were outstanding specialists in the Kingir camp. As soon as the need for a transmitter arose, a radio engineer was found. Of course, he was a political prisoner, as was also his young assistant, a Lithuanian.

"X-ray equipment and medical supplies provided the technical basis for the construction of the transmitter. The Lithuanian hastened to perfect himself in the use of the Morse code for English-language broadcasts. An excellent hiding place for the transmitter was found in a remote corner of the women's camp.

"Early in June the first SOS signals of the Kingir mutineers were broadcast, telling of the fate of 13,000 internees.

"The engineers understood that the audibility of their broadcasts would not go far beyond the Kazakhstan steppes. The lack of suitable equipment precluded the building of a more powerful transmitter. Moreover, it was realized, that as soon as a more powerful transmitter started operation, there would be bolshevik interference with its broadcasts.

"Even as things were, the rebel transmitter had to compete with the camp loudspeaker used by the administration. Several times a day, it addressed the rebels and it was clear that the administration knew fairly well what was going on in the camp although it held only a defensive position. Kuznetsov ordered the erection of barricades. In addition, weapons were forged. Bars removed from the windows were forged into spears, and carbide lamps and explosives were adapted for repelling invaders.

"All this activity was observed from airplanes which flew over the camp every day.

"You will see, we shall stamp out all of you,' barked the administration's loudspeaker in the watchtower.

"Freedom or death' replied the prisoners' loudspeaker. 'If we have

to die, we shall die. We would rather blow ourselves up than surrender to you.'

"Moscow watched the developments in Kingir closely, and very seriously appraised every action and statement by the prisoners. For the reports on the disastrous events in Karaganda, Salekharda, Norilsk, Kolyma and Vorkuta had been piling up in Moscow during the past few years.

"The local administration knew that there were excellent chemists among the prisoners, and that the internees had been able to smuggle explosives into the camp from mines and stone quarries.

„Food reserves were available for 40 days. The strike committee rationed them strictly.

"Members of the Party Central Committee did not come, but on the other hand nobody paid any attention to the two generals sent from Moscow.

"Midsummer came. Life in the camp followed the newly established routine; the internal walls were no longer any obstruction. Both men and women did guard duty. The women's post stood at some distance from the armed men whose weapons were however so miserable that Kuznetsov, the one-time Soviet tank commander in Berlin, feared that panic would break out during the first moments of the expected attack. Women mounted guard for the sole reason of encouraging the men during the fight, as it was believed that the latter would not retreat under the eyes of the women. The barricades, built of bricks, clay, scrap iron and wood, could only resist infantry attack. The headquarters of the strike committee were surrounded by a specially built barbed-wire fence.

"In the early hours of June 26th, Bychkov's voice was heard over the loudspeaker:

"Attention! Attention! Troops are entering the camp. I order everybody to leave the barracks!"

"At the same time, hundreds of rockets flared up, casting a ghostly light over the camp area. Tanks emerged from several directions. Some rolled in through the camp gates, crushing the barricades like matchwood, while others broke through the walls. It is not known for sure whether there were seven or more tanks, but within a few

moments they controlled the camp. Hiding behind them, infantry men fired at whoever happened to be in the courtyard. One of the first bullets struck Vilis Rozenbergs, a former Latvian legionary, while another killed an Estonian woman who stood on a sentry post.

"The tanks set fire to the barracks, smashed their walls and rolled over whatever was in their way. Infantry followed in their wake, dashing into the barracks and firing at the prisoners whether these were still in their beds or had risen, awakened by the noise.

"Although taken by surprise and half-awake, the most courageous among them fought back. The sound of firing and shouts of fear mingled with the cries of the wounded. The MVD men bayoneted even those who lay on the ground, pierced by bullets. Tank crews fired at prisoners who were at some distance from them.

"Camp No. 2 put up the fiercest resistance. Twice it repelled the attack. Carbide bottles were hurled and home-made grenades exploded against the walls and turrets of the tanks. When the supply of these weapons was exhausted, the men and women in prisoners' garb threw stones against the invaders.

"The desperate fight had been going on for almost four hours. Lithuanian women tried to save the transmitter which a few moments ago had broadcast the last SOS signal, surprising the enemy.

"A few Latvian girls continued the fight in another corner of the camp. One after another they sank down to the ground. The bullet of an MVD man struck Biruta Blums, the daughter of a Latvian war hero, who stood side by side with another Latvian of whom it is only known that she was the mother of two children. The surviving women joined hands and advanced against the tanks. They had neither carbide bottles, nor stones. They marched toward the enemy singing. It was difficult to tell what they sang. Maybe a hymn, maybe a song about their country. The rattle of the tanks drowned their voices.

"The huge tank, grim and ominous, lifted its steel belly in front of the girls. And a moment later it rolled over them. The drunken tank crew laughed.

"General Bychkov, Deputy Chief of the central administration of the forced labor camps, watched the scene from a fourth-floor window in the administration building and directed the 3000 men

and the tanks. Only a few hours ago these were opposed by 9000 men and 4000 women, but a four-hour fight had thinned their ranks.

“Bychkov did not act on his own initiative. When Moscow had been asked a few days previously how to proceed against the rebels, it had answered: ‘Liquidate them!’”

K., a returnee, who told the story of this terrible night at Friedland in the fall of 1955, added: “All the Balts took part in this fight. The number of their fallen and wounded was therefore relatively high.”

Five hundred were killed. Another returnee said that if the attack had not come at night, the number of victims would have been much higher. In the darkness and confusion some were eliminated from the ranks in the first moments of the clash, being taken by surprise and disabled for the fight.

The Kingir uprising lasted 42 days.

On June 26th it was ruthlessly quelled. Casualties equalled those of a major battle.

Many of the seriously wounded died of their injuries. On the other hand, many a man whom his comrades had seen fall to the ground during the fight proved to be only wounded and God’s grace helped him to recover. This was evidently also the case of Biruta Blums who was considered dead. In the spring of 1956 the news was received in Latvia that she had survived. Little information is available on the fate of the other fighters.

It is only known that the surviving were arrested, tried, and brought in special trains to Kolyma. A special trial was staged for the members of the strike committee who became the leaders of the rebels.

A solidarity strike with the Kingir mutineers commenced in Dzhezkazan on June 10th. After the Kingir massacre of June 26th, General Bychkov arrived with his tanks in Dzhezkazan. “Do you want to suffer the same fate as the Kingir rebels?” asked Moscow’s executioner.

The twenty thousand Dzhezkazan camp inmates were not prepared for a fight and called off the strike.

Nevertheless, great changes followed.

A few mutineers who, as foreigners, were due for an early release, returned to the Kingir camp some time after the terrible night; they were greatly surprised at what they saw in their former camp.

Work no longer began at six o'clock in the morning but at eight and ceased at five p.m. Window bars which had disappeared during the mutiny had not been replaced. Numbers had been removed from the clothing of the prisoners. Invalids, disabled persons and juveniles were being released from the camp at a fairly rapid rate. Those who were not released, had their sentences reduced. However, because of the extremely severe sentences most of them had to spend in the camp an additional five or more years.

The administration began to invite theatrical troupes and orchestras to the camp. Men and women were allowed to meet a few times a month at concerts, theatrical performances or dances.

The general mood, however, was still so low that nobody could really enjoy all the new things. It felt strange to dance at a place where not long ago blood had flowed in streams.

The heroism of the persecuted people in Kingir was a hymn to modern man's yearning for freedom and this place became a new link in the chain of freedom uprisings which broke out spontaneously in Soviet camps where terrorism and exploitation resembled that practised in the cemetery of living people in Kazakhstan.

STRIKES AND UPRISINGS IN SOVIET FORCED  
LABOR CAMPS

(This list is not exhaustive)

Region and Punitive area	Year	Month or season	Duration
<b>KOMI S.S.R.:</b>			
Ust-Ukhta	1940		
Ust-Vym	1947		
Vozhael	1952	Summer	
Vorkuta	1953	"	
	1955	"	
<b>URAL REGION:</b>			
Salekharda	1950		
Molotov (Perm) area	1952	June	
Fabrichnoye			
Revda/Sverdlovsk	1954		
Karabash	1954	Summer	
Solikamsk	1955		
<b>SIBERIA</b>			
Krasnoyarsk region	1952	Fall	
	1956	April	
Norilsk	1953	March-August	100 days
Tayshet	1950	Winter	
	1954		
Reshoty	1954	October	
<b>CENTRAL ASIA</b>			
Dzhezkazgan	1947, 1951		
	1953, 1954		
Kingir	1954		
Karaganda	1947, 1951		
	1953, 1954		
Sherubay Nura	1954		
Balkhash	1954	Spring and summer	
<b>FAR EAST</b>			
Kolyma	1946, 1953		
Sakhalin	1954		
<b>EUROPEAN RUSSIA</b>			
Potma	1955	Summer	



TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN THE SOVIET UNION  
 TRAVEL CAMPS

Region and Province	Year	Season
<b>RUSSIA</b>		
Ussuriysk	1947	
Ussuriysk	1947	
Verkh	1952	Summer
Verkh	1952	
<b>URAL REGION</b>		
Yekaterinburg	1950	
Yekaterinburg (Pamir) area	1952	June
Perm		
Perm - Cherdyn	1954	
Karabakh	1954	Summer
Verkh	1955	
<b>SIBERIA</b>		
Krasnoyarsk region	1952	Fall
	1954	April
Novosibirsk	1953	March-August
Tyumen	1950	Winter
	1954	
Yaroslavl	1954	October
<b>CENTRAL ASIA</b>		
Dzhirgatalay	1947, 1951	
	1953, 1954	
Singul	1954	
Kashgaria	1947, 1951	
	1953, 1954	
Shir-Darya-Naryn	1953	
Balkhash	1954	Spring and summer
<b>FAR EAST</b>		
Kolyva	1946, 1953	
Verkh	1954	
<b>EUROPEAN RUSSIA</b>		
Tomsk	1955	Summer

## INQUISITION AND GRAVES OF LIVING PERSONS

At the time of the Russian October Revolution, prisons were declared a remnant of the capitalist world. Punishment, as understood in penal law and penal policy, was described as having the character of reactionary vengeance and of a crude desire to punish.

By these statements the communist leaders wished to stress that in their newly-established dictatorship there would be no place for prisons and punishment. If at all, they would be needed just a few more years, but thereafter the communist moral code and the ideal arrangement of human relationships would free man from evil instincts and habits and would bring home to him the blessings of the new system.

Actually, the different Soviet penal codes indicate that the communist regime still believes it has to fight "class enemies," "socially dangerous elements" and the former upper and middle class. As a matter of fact, during the transitional stage any dictatorship faces resistance which it suppresses; the Soviet Union which followed a highly radical course in building up its dictatorship, is certainly no exception to this rule.

However, if even during the second generation it has made little progress in implementing its world betterment plans and feels compelled to keep behind prison walls and barbed wire between 15 and 20 million people — not to speak of the millions of people who have died a martyr's death since the October Revolution — it proves not only the bankruptcy of the initial bolshevik utopian ideas, but also shows that a tremendous lie is being used to disguise the truth.

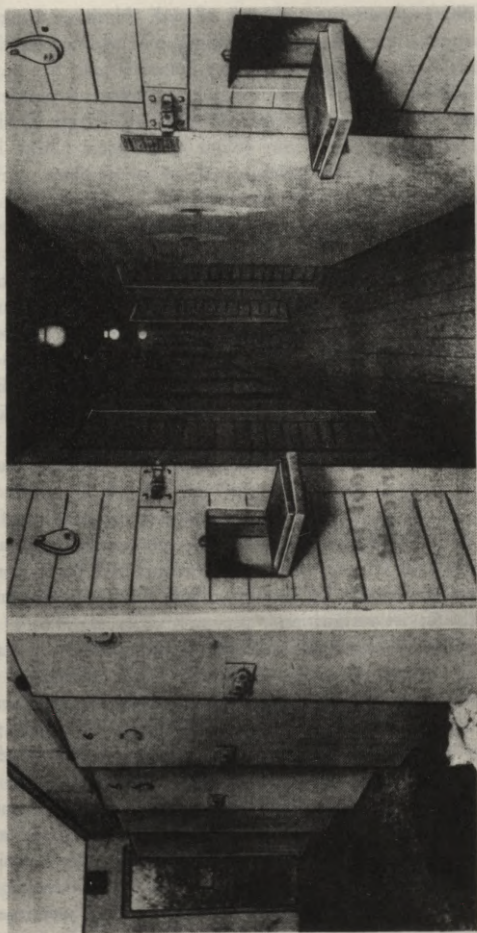
As we have seen, the Soviet regime has covered the territory under its domination — about one sixth of the world's land area — with forced labor camps and similar institutions. In addition to these places which, in the last analysis, are prisons as well, there are prisons proper and penal servitude institutions. It is significant that in Norilsk and other "centers opened to civilization" the first large structures to be

erected were prisons. The deportees had to build first of all the prison, thereafter the barracks of forced labor camps and only then other buildings. Hence, in the Soviet Union the prison is the foundation of a "new building and settlement effort."

There are prisons in the Soviet Union — such as Lubyanka and Butyrki (both in Moscow), Vladimir, Novocherkassk, Verkhny Uralsk, Aleksandrovsk and countless others — which have become symbols of the worst sufferings and should serve as a warning to the entire world. Nor should one forget the Cheka torture cellars — the ante-chambers to these prisons. The Soviet inquisition begins in these cellars — it is a spiderweb in which the monster entangles its victims to suck out their marrow slowly, letting them suffer for its sadistic enjoyment and letting them watch their own doom.

The Soviet political police which we shall call the Cheka — its classical name — and its interrogation judges mostly conduct their hearings at night, a much-tested method of breaking down the prisoner physically and mentally. In addition, the Cheka has worked out a series of procedures designed to make the victim indifferent to everything and obtain "confession" of any crime deemed important by the inventors of the charges.

We shall mention here only a few of these methods: threats to deport family members; pretending to take a prisoner to his execution; solitary confinement; torture; questioning with 30 minute pauses, changing the interrogators; physical coercion (beating with rifle butts or other objects, squeezing fingers in vices, pulling out fingernails, or driving a needle under the nails, flogging with barbed wire, immersion in icy water, burning with heated tongs or sulphur, crushing fingers in doors, repeated blows on the head, beating to the point where consciousness is lost, several times, beating the soles of the feet until loss of consciousness, seating on a bottle which penetrates the anus, keeping prisoners barefoot and without even a shirt on a cement floor, et cetera); nocturnal interrogation under blinding lights; 14-day confinement in a dark cell; standing for hours with raised hands; starving and denying tobacco, and thereafter offering food and cigarettes during interrogation; serving salt herring



*Single-Man Cells in the Cheka Prison of Riga*

without drinking water, not to speak of such things as using foul language, name-calling, threats, forbidding the prisoner to submit exculpatory evidence, and falsification of documents.

As early as 1940/41, the Cheka used special electric torture devices. In 1941, after the Red Army had been driven out of Riga, bolshevik photographs of these devices were found in the local Cheka headquarters. There were about 60 pictures; the accompanying text gave advice as to how the examinees were to be bound, how their arms and legs were to be treated and how the electric current was to be applied.

Solitary confinement is combined with various refined methods. In addition to the ordinary solitary cell there is a small cellar cell where water drops on one's head; the so-called water chambers where a person is held in water and immediately thereafter taken to a heated chamber or a water chamber with a 500-watt light bulb; keeping a prisoner in a furcoat in an overheated chamber; locking him up in a box where he can only stand; confinement in a cell whose walls are covered with blood and where the cries of other tortured prisoners are audible.

During the interrogation, the Cheka endeavors to obtain information about the arrested person's political friends; various alleviations and temporary release are promised if the tortured person undertakes to betray his friends by obtaining from them information important for the Soviet authorities.

Witnesses who have evidence in favor of the accused are warned not to testify.

In the course of time, Cheka methods have reached perfection. In practically all cases, the accused person is forced to admit guilt, even if there is none, and state facts about other persons, which are not true or which he does not know at all.

People with first-hand experience say that physical and mental sufferings, famine and tiredness break any victim of the Cheka and after a while actually he feels happy when he can sign his deposition.

A peculiar method of torture was reported by a German who came to the Friedland camp early in 1956 and who had been interned in the Lukiskiai prison together with Lithuanian partisans. According

to him, while he was kept in custody on remand, hungry rats were turned loose on him in addition to other methods of torture. Another returnee who had been held by the communists in the Daugavpils prison told of a refined torture to which he was subjected: a roll of rusty wire was rolled over his body. Scars were still visible on his skin.

A former officer of the Latvian national army says the network of Cheka cellars has been increased in recent years. He states: "In 1940/41 the Soviets had one huge torture cellar in Riga, namely the headquarters of the Cheka; and in Liepaja they did not need more than the 'Blue Building.' But since 1945, 36 Cheka cellars have been installed in Riga alone. Now Riga has separate MVD or Cheka cellars for railwaymen, for sailors and for various other callings. While some of them have only from 15 to 50 cells, several blocks are occupied by the cellars in the Stabu Street and Rainis Boulevard where the Gestapo formerly had its headquarters. The Soviets started work right away after 1944: They built passage-ways connecting the cellars of all houses situated between the former Ministry of Agriculture and the Officers Club, a distance of about 350 yards. It is an area which can 'accommodate' underground the population of a small country town. In this labyrinth of Cheka cellars nine cells were provided for German war prisoners while all the rest were for Soviet citizens — that is to say for Latvians who have been turned into Soviet citizens against their will. Lively activity prevailed in the two sets of cellars — at Stabu Street and Rainis Boulevard — in the winter of 1949. To judge by names scribbled or carved on the walls of the cellars, each of them had housed before us several hundreds of prisoners. There is little to tell about the chambers; they were narrow and whitewashed in order to increase the effect of the powerful light bulbs. Even if you closed your eyes, the light penetrated through your eye-lids. The only way to get a little sleep was to press your palm against your eyes. Even this did not help much, as every hour we were awakened for interrogation, which went on night and day, mostly at night, when the whole set of buildings became alive.

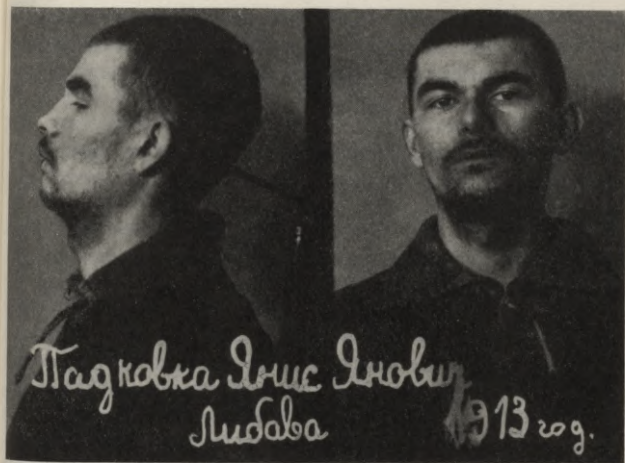
"In the winter of 1950, I was transferred to the Riga Central

Prison which was crowded with Latvian partisans and their supporters. Some of the partisan leaders were confined to the so-called death cells.

“Although at that time capital punishment was abolished in the Soviet Union, at least 30 political prisoners were shot in the Riga Central Prison during the winter months of 1949/50. An inmate of the death chamber was one O., who had spent several years in the Kurzeme forests and had killed several hundred members of Soviet security units in the area around the Engure lake. I saw him. He was a short man and wore fishermen’s top boots. He was brutally beaten in the prison. To try him, a special *troika*, also known as *osoboye soveshchaniye*, composed of three Soviet officers came from Moscow. One belonged to the State Security Ministry, the other represented the Soviet Supreme Court and the third was an MVD official. This Latvian partisan leader was sentenced to death and executed in the prison. More fortunate was Lieutenant B., who had been sentenced to death in 1944 for resisting the German occupation by a German military court; in 1947 he fell fighting against the Bolsheviks as a partisan. He, too, was one of those who before their death took a heavy toll of the foreign invaders. Other partisan leaders came from the Lubana forests and marshes. The Riga Central Prison also housed a considerable number of Latvian high school students.”

As indicated by this and other testimonies, prisons in Soviet-occupied Latvia were mainly filled after 1945 with nationalist partisans. At that time, the entire Latvian people rose against the Soviet rule. The first partisans were Latvian soldiers who had managed to avoid the Soviet screening camps after the end of the war. They were joined by an increasing number of civilians, especially by farmers, after the farm collectivization in 1949.

A returnee has told the following story about a partisan group which was formed of Latvian soldiers who had fought against the Soviets during World War II (names of persons and places and other facts which would point to their former hideouts are omitted for obvious reasons).



*The Cheka takes photographs — front and profile — of politically persecuted people, also marking the person's first name, father's first name, and surname, as well as the birth-date. The photograph shows a worker from Liepaja who was arrested by the Soviets as a "counterrevolutionary."*

"The Latvian partisan group which I joined was formed at Ventspils. From there we proceeded to Dundaga. Our force grew with every new wave of arrests which rolled over Kurzeme (the western province of Latvia's four provinces); men who succeeded in escaping bolshevik arrest joined us. Soviet terrorism increased noticeably in 1947. The Cheka looked for anti-Soviet elements; educated people were removed from their places of work one by one. The Soviet security agencies were unwilling to fight us openly. Even the first attempts to mop the forests brought them heavy losses. The first major fighting took place in 1948. The Soviets used tanks and planes. They tried to encircle us. They began the mopping up

action from Kandava by way of Tukums and Talsi. The Dundaga forests were surrounded by forces of the Red army, navy and airforce. There was heavy bombing and the fighting went on for seven days. Night and day, wounded were brought to the Tukums hospital and field receiving centers. The corpses of partisans were also brought to Tukums, as the Soviets evidently wanted to identify them. They lay not far from the church on the market place, covered with tarpaulins.

"All roads and highways between Ventspils, Dundaga, Talsi, Tukums and Kandava had posters warning against 'bandits.' At certain intervals there were check points, where armed guards controlled both drivers and pedestrians. Mongols considered especially trustworthy were used for this purpose."

The partisans adopted elastic tactics and collaborated with Latvian resistance groups in the cities and in rural regions. In 1948, a few hours before a singing festival in Riga the partisans dynamited the singers outdoor stage. The festival was organized by the Soviet occupiers and its program included a cantata in honor of Stalin, as well as songs praising other Soviet leaders. The stage was blown up along with all the portraits of the Kremlin potentates, red carpets, draperies and sickle and hammer flags.

There was resistance to compulsory collectivization and in many cases farmers refused to leave their land and livestock. Arrests were a daily occurrence. In contrast to 1940, people now openly opposed the Soviet authorities, defending themselves, their families and their property. The rural population did not hesitate to support the partisans with food, clothing and medicines. From time to time, partisans got shelter in farms. In 1948, the Soviet occupation power felt compelled to issue an order prohibiting, under pain of heavy reprisals, the opening of farmhouse windows or doors after midnight.

The partisans' activities, and especially their food supply, was greatly handicapped by farm collectivization in 1949.

During this time, when the rural population experienced extreme difficulties, the partisans had no way out other than to attack the Soviet kolkhozes and Soviet cooperative stores to get food. Beginning in 1948, the Latvian partisans began to coordinate their activities

with those of their Estonian and Lithuanian comrades. Following mopping-up actions in the Kurzeme forests, some Latvian partisans moved to northern Vidzeme (central province of Latvia) and Estonia, while others went southward to Lithuania.

In 1947 and 1948, the partisans did not shrink from attacking Soviet transports and prisons, freeing their comrades from the latter. Ruthless Soviet officials were sentenced to death and executed. Those whose lives were spared were admonished to treat the inhabitants of their rural parishes and workers in a humane manner. In 1947, Latvian partisans surrounded the Bauska prison and attacked the prison guards. The same partisan group attacked a column of Soviet militia, killing 30 militiamen and seizing their weapons. In 1948, Latvian and Lithuanian partisans organized a joint attack on a train of deportees outside their national territory. They killed the guards and freed the deportees who, however, were afraid to leave the train.

It is a common error to regard as nationalist partisans only those who had chosen the woods as a base for their fight. Although the Latvian forests have offered protection to many anti-Soviet fighters, it would be wrong to limit the scope of the partisans' activity to the forest and swamp regions. Patriotic partisans operated in other places as well. When repeated mopping-up drives and cold weather prevented them from staying in the forests, the partisans moved their hideouts and operative area to the larger towns where people know each other less. They usually had regular work in the cities or rural areas and they assumed combat tasks only at the appropriate time. Some of the anti-Soviet fighters can hardly be described as partisans, since they opposed the Soviet rule spontaneously, following the command of an inner voice and without being associated with people who held identical views.

Karlis C., the son of poor parents, had learned a trade at an early age. After working for a Riga tailor, he obtained a journeyman's status and since 1946 had worked on his own account in northern Vidzeme. In the same year, he shot down the chairman of the Valka district executive committee. He did it in the day-time, in the presence of several witnesses, in front of a dairy. C. even did not try to escape after his deed. Asked by MVD officials: "Why do you,

a proletarian, have such a hatred of the Soviet regime?" he only answered: "I love my country, and I hate the foreign oppressors."

He was sentenced to 25 years at hard labor. This sentence may seem justified, if considered from the purely formal viewpoint. However, his only thought had been to avenge the humiliation inflicted upon his people and actively to oppose the hated Soviet regime. Passing through several prisons, he eventually landed somewhere near Alma-Ata. There he escaped, and headed for China, but was recaptured. Meanwhile, the mother of this courageous Latvian patriot had been arrested.

After 1945, many other Soviet officials in Latvia and the other Baltic countries paid with their lives for their sordid actions in the same way as the chairman of the Valka executive committee. The resistance movement against the Soviet invaders has not ceased since 1945. As late as 1956, the Soviet authorities published decrees promising exemption from punishment to those who would end the fight and surrender; on the other hand, arrests have not ceased.

In addition to the partisans, another large category of anti-Soviet elements, namely the supporters of partisans, should be mentioned.

In regions where the partisans have been active, large sections of the population, especially farmers, have been deported or arrested on charges of supporting the partisans. It is true that they helped the partisans with food, clothing and, occasionally, shelter. In addition, in the Arctic regions and Siberia there are now many Latvian doctors, medical students and nurses who went to the woods to treat wounded partisans after clashes with the Soviet security units. Even surgical operations have been performed in the woods. It is reported that Latvian women — doctors, nurses, and medical assistants — have displayed a true spirit of self-abnegation. When others hesitated to help the wounded partisans, these women gave all the aid they could.

All these active opponents of the Soviet occupation regime were liable to arrest and imprisonment. Some of them were used as slave labor in the Arctic regions, while others were sent to prison.

The following prisons have been frequently mentioned as containing Latvian inmates: Vladimir; Leningrad; Lubyanka, Butyrki, the Central Prison and other prisons near and in Moscow; Vologda;

Kiev; Kharkov; Perm; Kirov; Sverdlovsk; Molotovsk; Verkhny Uralsk; Kazan; Gorky; Novosibirsk; Krasnoyarsk and Aleksandrovsk, as well as all prisons in the main deportation areas.

We have chosen the Vladimir prison, some 80 miles northeast of Moscow, for a closer study. Vladimir is a so-called *isolator* for political prisoners, among them many Latvians. The Latvian Red Cross has a list of persons who were interned there in 1955.

The Vladimir prison consists of five large blocks of buildings. It has both communal and solitary cells. The former are built for from four to sixteen inmates each, but usually they are crowded to twice the normal capacity. It is not permitted to air the cells properly and prisoners often faint because of lack of oxygen. There are iron-frame beds without spring netting. The beds are of the single and double decker type. Twelve persons have to share a table. Likewise, each prisoner has a small shelf in the communal chest of drawers. As prisoners are permitted to go to the toilet only twice a day, a special vessel, known as a *parashka* is kept in the cell. The mattress is filled with wood shavings. Only one blanket is issued to each prisoner, in addition to two pieces of linen to be used as sheeting, and a small pillow.

Clothing: the striped prisoner's garb and a peakless cap to match it. Underwear is inadequate. Older people are issued quilted trousers and felt boots in the winter. When in bed, a prisoner is not allowed to cover his head with the blanket and must sleep so as to allow the guard to see him through the slit in the cell door. A prisoner who does not comply with this rule, is woken at night. It is not permitted to sleep in the day-time.

Food: since February 1953, each prisoner is issued, daily, 700 grams of bread, 400 grams of potatoes, 200 grams of vegetables, 120 grams of grits, about 40 grams of meat, 80 grams of herring, 12 grams of edible oil, 15 grams of sugar and 10 grams of coarse tobacco. Actually, little is seen of meat and fats, while herring or other salted fish is usually rotten. Rye bread has an admixture of at least 50 percent of corn. Sauerkraut soup is the most common dish. At one time, it was served daily for nine months in succession. The number of grams

indicated for each food item does not convey a true picture of the food situation, as the meals are one-sided and of poor quality.

Hygiene: prisoners are taken to the bath, which is quite satisfactory, every tenth day. Every sixth week, the prisoners' heads are shaved. A prisoner can wash himself only when he is permitted to go to the toilet.

An important role is played by the solitary cells with which all prisoners become acquainted sooner or later. They resemble the cells in the Cheka cellars, being two yards long and 0.85 yards wide. They are never cleaned, practically no light penetrates into them, and their stuffy air is hard to breathe. A prisoner is confined to the solitary cell for periods of from three to twelve days. Offenses which entail confinement in the solitary cell include disobedience to prison guard, loud talking and so on.

What poisons the prisoners' life is, in particular, the spying on them by the stool pigeons. The MVD sees to it that each cell has an inmate who reports anti-Soviet statements and information on cell comrades, even if referring to past activities.

A German who had been imprisoned with Latvian partisans, has told the following about his arrival and life in the Vladimir prison: "We were taken past reinforced doors and countless guards. First we spent 14 days in quarantine where we were deloused, although the Soviets had not had time to give us any lice. But nobody thought of giving us medical treatment, which we needed. It was therefore a great relief to be eventually released from the quarantine. Our cell had 24 inmates. Within two weeks we had told each other our life-stories and from then on we just stared at each other. One can bear such life for a few months, but when it goes on for years, one begins to think that everybody is going mad. We were mostly oppressed by the drabness of our narrow cell and life. As time went by, I felt animosity toward my cell comrades and they reciprocated it. The only ray of sunshine in our life was a former Latvian partisan, Valdemars S., 28 years old, who had lost his leg when fighting the Soviet mopping-up units. He hobbled around on his wooden leg and was invariably gay. When we could not free ourselves of our

gloomy thoughts, he would detach his wooden leg and sing merry songs for us, imitating a guitar player. I still feel grateful to him.

"We were permitted to read books. But it was of little help, since one book was like the next — Stalin's life, Lenin's life, Marx' life, the short and long history of the communist party, minutes of party meetings, and so on. Many prisoners therefore did not read anything at all or restricted their reading to the Moscow dailies *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*. The best way to use one's time was to study languages. However, not more than one out of ten actually did it. Others became apathetic and indifferent, and sank so low as to pass their time in catching flies and telling each other recipes for delicious meals, hungry as they were. The brains of some were affected — they lost the ability to concentrate. An increasing number complained of weakening eye-sight. Due to lack of vitamins, prisoners were afflicted by various skin eruptions. Influenza epidemics raged in the spring and fall. The bread which was served us was unsavory and of poor quality. We developed digestive troubles. Special food was authorized only for very short periods. When we asked the Russian doctors to have pity of us, a Russian woman doctor told us frankly that her task was not to cure us, but only to keep us in a state which would permit us to serve our sentences. Indeed, when we were affected by grave illnesses and it seemed that death would free us from our plight, the doctors did truly incredible things to make us recover. We were not allowed to die.

"It must however be stated that nervous breakdowns were the most common affliction among the prisoners. One of the direct causes was the strict isolation, especially in the solitary cells. The nerves were undermined by worries about family members, the continuous spying by stool pigeons, and the petty disputes with the other inmates of the crowded cells left their mark.

"When we complained to the prison administration that the food was bad, we were told that it was not healthy to eat much while in prison. This reply reminded us of a statement which my cell comrade, a Lithuanian, had heard in Vorkuta from a Soviet physician: "The best method to combat scurvy is hard work."

Although conditions are on the whole similar in all prisons, there are some local differences, particularly as regards the number of prisoners in a cell. There are prisons where up to 80 prisoners are crowded in a cell. Likewise, the time allowed for the daily walk varies. While an entire hour was authorized for this purpose in the Vladimir prison in the last few years, in other places walks were limited to 20 or 30 minutes. Equipment, too, varies. While some communal cells have double-decker double beds, others have four-men beds.

Otherwise, prison routine is strictly regulated and is uniform throughout the Soviet Union. Prisoners rise at five a.m. and go to bed at nine p.m. Breakfast is at seven o'clock, lunch at one p.m. and supper at seven p.m.

Bars are fixed to the outside of the windows. In general, the guarding is heavy and precludes any opportunity of escape. The larger prisons have special rooms for the execution of especially dangerous adversaries of the Soviet Union.

From the moment a prisoner enters a prison, he becomes a number. He is no longer addressed by his name, but, for instance, in the following manner: "Cell 39, Bed 2." The man occupying this place must respond to such a call.

There are different regulations concerning letters. Since March 1953, it would seem that all political prisoners are permitted to write and receive letters, while formerly the prisoners were divided into categories in this respect. Those who had been tried by the so-called *troika* were not allowed to correspond at all. At present, the most privileged prisoners may write and receive one letter every month. The prisoners may receive money from their relatives for use in buying some articles in the prison canteen, and they may receive food parcels.

A German Legation Councillor, who was interned in the Aleksandrovsk prison near Irkutsk until the fall of 1956, serving a term of ten years, has informed the Latvian Lutheran Archbishop Dr. Th. Grünbergs — who now lives in exile in West Germany — that his cellmates had included Dr. Alberts Freijs, a Latvian professor of theology, Reverend V. Dunis, and Dr. Morics, a Latvian M. P. A

few score other Latvians were interned in the Aleksandrovskaia prison at the same time. They included a man, called Rozenbergs, a Latvian from Russia, who had been in prison ever since the Soviet purges in 1937. Balts who had stayed in Russia after the October Revolution but had later been persecuted as trotskyites are also to be found in other Soviet prisons.

Since 1945, many Latvian and other Baltic women have been brought to the Lubyanka prison in Moscow. Most of them have been charged with belonging to resistance organizations or supporting the partisans.

The foregoing individual testimonies indicate that the composition of Soviet prison inmates is varied. There are political prisoners who have been sentenced, while other people remain in prison for years without trial.

In principle, the Soviet regime prefers not to keep its political adversaries in prisons where they cannot be used as labor. The Soviets send people to prisons either for isolation, as in the case of persons deemed especially dangerous to the regime, or because they are 100 percent invalids who are not suited for work in the Soviet forced labor camps.

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## EPILOGUE

Soviet leaders and ideologists are well aware of the wrongs which the Soviet system does to people on which it has been imposed. Accordingly, they go to great pains to justify the system and its individual institutions, as well as its legislative, judicial and administrative procedures. They try to translate Soviet phenomena into notions understandable to the Western world or else give a deliberately distorted interpretation to arbitrary Soviet actions. Also dialectic materialism serves this end.

In order to see the true face of bolshevism we, on the other hand, are anxious to see the political, social, economic and other features of the Soviet hemisphere as they are in actual life, we wish to tear down the screen of communist dialectics and behold the naked truth. In the pages of this book, the author has consistently used eye-witness testimony and has furnished material on the *actual* situation. The Soviet Union is still an enigma to the western world; brief improvised visits by western tourists to Moscow or other places authorized for tourist traffic have done more harm than good to the understanding of Soviet realities. In recent years, the bolsheviks have even not refrained from "showing" sections of forced labor camps and collective labor colonies; in such cases, camp watchowers were temporarily removed and the foreign visitor was shown and explained everything in an "impeccable light." Moscow usually achieved its end — to mislead the Western nations, to whom Soviet methods are inherently foreign. When Moscow could not disguise, it cynically denied, or simply refused to answer.

This method has been so successful that a committee on forced labor, appointed by the United Nations and composed of representatives of the world organization and the International Labor Organization, after seven years of investigations, in 1957, made the

following statement in a report on Soviet deportations: "440. The Committee refrained from drawing any conclusions in connection with the mass deportations referred to in the allegations, in some cases because they were stated to have taken place in a relatively distant past, in others because it was not established that they were accompanied by forced labor, and in others again because the Committee did not have sufficient information to come to the conclusion that they actually occurred."<sup>22</sup>)

Concerning this highly significant and peculiar statement it should be said that the Committee was appointed in June 1951 and ceased its activities in 1957 and that during this period mass deportations of both Balts and Hungarians to the Soviet Union took place. The testimony used in this book as well as that collected by the International Commission of Jurists<sup>20</sup>) serves at least to show convincingly that the Baltic mass deportations were accompanied by forced labor. And truly astounding is the Committee's aforesaid statement on mass deportations, i. e. "because the Committee did not have sufficient information to come to the conclusion that they actually occurred." Moscow gives out no official information on forced labor and mass deportations; indeed until the 20th Congress of the Communist Party on February 25, 1956 it consistently denied that it had carried out such mass deportations combined with forced labor.

To justify his new course and settle accounts with adversaries in his own camp, Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party said at the Congress:

"All the more monstrous are the acts initiated by Stalin, which are crude violations of the basic Leninist principles of the nationality policy of the Soviet State. We refer to the mass deportations from their native places of whole nations, together with all communists and komsomols; this deportation action was not dictated by any military considerations.

"Thus, as early as the end of 1943 when a permanent Soviet breakthrough took place during the Great Patriotic War, a decision was taken and executed concerning the deportation of all the Karachai from the lands on which they lived. In the same period, at the end of December 1943, the same lot befell the whole population of the

Autonomous Kalmyk Republic. In March 1944 all the Chechen and Ingush peoples were deported and the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic was liquidated. In April 1944, all Balkars were deported to places far-away from the territory of the Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Republic and the Republic itself was renamed the Autonomous Kabardynian Republic. The Ukrainians escaped this fate only because there were too many of them and there was no place to which to deport them. Otherwise, he would have deported them also."

In his address before an official forum, Khrushchev thus confirmed the fact of mass deportation. Indirectly, he described these Soviet actions as offenses. The only question left is: why did he avoid mentioning the Baltic mass deportations?

There may have been various reasons for this, but by deliberately refraining from mentioning them, Khrushchev evidently accepted as late as 1956 the forcible deportations of Balts in 1941 and later as well as the contingent process of annihilation. It is unlikely that a mere lapse of memory was responsible for Khrushchev's failure to mention the Baltic deportations and the decimation of ethnic groups.

An eye-witness who managed to leave the Baltic countries in the summer of 1958, maintains that during the large-scale deportations of Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians in 1949 to outlying regions with a harsh climate, Soviet officials privately stated that it was planned to continue the deportations until the whole Baltic area was cleared of Balts. It is not known what prevented the implementation of this plan. Baltic deportations continued after 1949, but on a reduced scale. Individual deportations and the deportations of Baltic youth under the guise of "voluntary migration", as has been stated in previous chapters, continued as late as 1958. The rule of terror which began during the October Revolution, which was directed by Lenin and reached its climax in the Stalin era, has not died out under Khrushchev.

#### *Exploitation of Man by Man — After 1917*

The Soviet Constitution introduced by Stalin, Soviet literature and memoranda submitted to international organizations by the

Kremlin potentates have all consistently claimed that since the great October Socialist Revolution of 1917, a socialist system has been set up which rules out the exploitation of man by man in the Soviet Union. Article 118 of the Constitution stipulates: "Citizens of the Soviet Union have the right to work, that is, the right to guaranteed employment and to payment for their work in accordance with its quantity and quality."

The contradiction between the promised rights and Soviet reality is made evident by testimony obtained from former members of the 15 million slave labor force, which is one of the mainstays of the Soviet economic system.

In the first place, politically persecuted persons provided the Soviet authorities with cheap manpower. It has been argued in the free world that it would be much more economical to use the labor of free people who are paid decent wages and are permitted to choose their employment. Those arguing along these lines fail to realize that no Soviet worker, let alone those interned in forced labor camps and colonies, is paid adequately, in accordance with his performance. Even those not subject to the punitive regime are not allowed to change their employer freely. Secondly, the system of forced labor enables the Soviet authorities to send labor where it is in short supply, i. e. on large-scale projects, in mining areas under development or previously uncultivated regions, on military and railroad construction projects, in the lumbering industry, in harbor improvement work, in canal digging, the chemical industry, and the cultivation and settlement of economically and strategically important areas.

It may be mentioned here that several returnees have testified that Latvian dairy-farmers have been used by the Soviet authorities as pioneers in cattle and dairy farming, especially in Siberia. Although forced farm collectivization has ruined the well-developed Baltic dairy-farming industry, deported Latvian and neighboring farmers and veterinaries are an asset in the Soviet Trans-Ural sovkhoses and kolkhoses.

Long experience shows that forced labor has become an integral part of the Soviet economic system.

It should be remembered that slave workers constitute a vast labor force that can be readily transferred from one place to another as required by momentary needs and plans. This would not be possible with free people, since such transfers would have to take into account the wishes of individual workers, family considerations and the transportation of the goods and chattels of transferees. Under the present system there are no such obstacles — political prisoners and deportees have no will of their own, those who are interned in forced labor camps have been separated from their families from the very outset and they do not possess any goods which would have to be transported in the event of transfers. These characteristics alone should suffice to show that forced laborers have the same status as slaves.

The ruthless exploitation of this labor force is also indicated by the fact that forced labor institutions were and are under the control of the State police, which derived profits by hiring out workers and making deductions from their earnings. A portion of the profits was paid as a bonus to the State police officials.

A few important findings have been made by the Committee appointed by the United Nations and the International Labor Organization:<sup>24)</sup>

“When the profits of a forced labor institution are shared out, some are put back into the institution and used for its development and some go towards a bonus fund for its officials (Article 138 of the Corrective Labor Code). It is consequently to the advantage of the officials to obtain a maximum output by setting very high production norms, to keep down expenditure on upkeep and food, to use hunger as a means of exploitation and even eliminate the less productive elements altogether.

“The prisoners are kept on a starvation diet, they are forced to do work beyond their physical capacities, and their living conditions are extremely primitive.”

Although this statement is dated 1953, subsequent testimony continues to show that the Soviet regime is still exploiting the persons interned in forced labor camps, colonies and exile areas.

Of great significance is the piece-work method which in Soviet terminology is described as filling and exceeding the work norm and

which determines the size of earnings in cash or kind. In the event of sickness or inability to work, forced laborers do not receive any wages. A highly characteristic type of exploitation is the use of women for extremely hard work. In addition to what has already been stated on this subject in this book, we refer to the testimony submitted by G. J., a German woman to the International Commission of Jurists. She was employed in brick-kiln No. 2 at Vorkuta, subject to the punitive regime together with 150 Baltic women. The testimony (Document No. 219) runs as follows:<sup>25)</sup>

“Our entire camp worked in a brick-kiln which was exclusively operated by women, with the exception of the overseers, uniformed officials of the MGB. All work was done by women, including such jobs as molding, drying, burning, refuelling and emptying the furnaces. Furthermore, the loading and unloading of wagons with wood, coal and cement, as well as the carrying away of the bricks was done exclusively by women.”

In other camps, too, women are obliged to perform work beyond their physical capacities, hard physical work which has to be performed for the same number of hours as those required of male prisoners. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of guards in MVD or MGB uniforms do nothing but try to get more work out of the forced laborers.

This ruthless system of exploitation and its importance to the Soviet economy is well summed up in a statement given under oath on December 20th, 1954, by Dr. Konrad Schlom, a lawyer:<sup>26)</sup>

“I know that the entire production of the region (Vorkuta) depends on the existence of forced laborers. If the camps were dissolved or if new prisoners failed to arrive, production up there in the north would have to be discontinued . . . I am also convinced that in view of local working and living conditions, even if very high supplementary wages were paid, a sufficient number of volunteers for work in this region would never be found. Moreover, the supplementary wages for work in the Arctic have been recently abolished so that there is no incentive at all to work there. Hence, if the government does not wish to discontinue operation of the Arctic mines, it is bound to use forced laborers. In addition, there must be a constant flow of prisoners

to this punitive area. It may, therefore, be reasonably supposed that the courts have been advised to "produce" the number of prisoners necessary at a given time . . . I can only restate that, in my opinion, the Soviet Union's entire penal policy, for instance in such matters as the length of sentence and the choice of place where a sentence is to be served, are dictated by questions of production."

Since the American Federation of Labor and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions have come to the same conclusion on the basis of a careful study of evidence on the actual situation in the Soviet Union, we shall only stress once more the worthless character of the articles of the Soviet constitution and the stark contradiction implied in the allegation that the Soviet system does not know of exploitation of man by man. Communist dialectics are least convincing when they seek to justify exploitation by words such as "the fruits of their labor belong to the workers themselves and are not appropriated by capitalist owners, as there are no capitalists in the Soviet Union." If every eighth or tenth able-bodied Soviet citizen serves 10 to 25 years at forced labor and if this practice is inherent in the Soviet economic system, how can one assert that the "fruits of their labor belong to the workers themselves" and that there is no exploitation.

In general, bolshevism shows little interest in the welfare of the individual or the individual's earnings.

Nobody should, therefore, be surprised by a slogan which appeared on May 1, 1949 on the administration building of a Soviet camp at Zuslovo: "We have had enough of communism, we want to see what capitalism looks like!" And no less significant are other slogans which in recent years have appeared on the walls of forced labor camps and of railway cars in various parts of the Soviet Union, such as "Russians! Defend your fatherland against the internal enemy — against bolshevism" and the caustic slogan: "Proletarians of the world, unite — for death by starvation."

Forced labor in the Soviet Union is the core of both the political and economic system. Politically, it serves the purpose of annihilating the real or imagined enemies of the Soviet regime, and economically

it has found a lasting place in Soviet life. The past 40 years have shown that the Soviet political system is unthinkable without forced labor.

### *The Formula of "Enemy of the People"*

Once more we refer to Nikita Khrushchev's historical address at the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party in Moscow, for even this versatile communist leader deemed it important to find out how the concept of an "enemy of the people" has arisen and what it implies for persons branded as such by the Soviet regime.

Khrushchev said: "Originator of this concept is Stalin. This designation, when applied to a person or group of persons, whose views clashed with those of Stalin, sufficed to doom any one, without any evidence of his ideological aberrations being required. This term permitted the most ruthless oppression and violation of the norms of revolutionary legality, harming those who at some point disagreed with Stalin or who were held in suspicion, however, slight, of hostile views, or who were simply disliked. The term 'enemy of the people' made any kind of ideological controversy impossible and it was not even possible to exchange ideas on specific questions; even on purely practical matters. Contrary to all legal concepts the accused person's admission was considered the only evidence. As was subsequently conceded, this confession was extorted from the accused through physical coercion.

"This led to flagrant violations of revolutionary legality and entirely innocent people who in former years had advocated the party line were sacrificed to these methods.

"We must state that even in the case of persons who had deviated from the party line for some time it was not possible to find sufficient cause for their physical annihilation. The designation of enemy of the people served well for the physical extermination of these persons."

Although Khrushchev mainly spoke of victims among the communists themselves, what he said applied all the more to the millions of persecuted among the broad masses of the population and especially among peoples subject to the Soviet rule as a result of occupation.

The minutes of the 20th party meeting are now an important

document and first-class evidence of the Soviet rule of terror, which was inaugurated by mass deportations and found its clearest expression in forced labor, the clever exploitation system designed to profit from the work of the "enemies of the people."

It would be wrong to assume that Khrushchev's 1956 address signified an end to the rule of terror. It is entirely irrelevant whether a person is called an "enemy of the people," a "class-hostile element" or a "socially dangerous element." The two latter and other similar designations are being applied even after Khrushchev's speech, and this means that people continue to be deported with or without trial and sentenced to forced labor, especially members of the oppressed nations.

Since we have referred to Khrushchev's address of February 25, 1956, which describes Soviet methods under Stalin, we must also mention another major speech which Khrushchev made a few weeks later, on April 11th, and which marked the beginning of his new policy. The Soviet news agency TASS gave a version of the speech on the following day. We read in it: "Our enemies hope that we will lower our guard and will weaken the institutions of state security. However, this will never occur. The proletariat's sword must remain sharp. It must be able to defend skilfully the achievements of the revolution, of the working class and of the toiling people." And in the same breath he announced that 500,000 "volunteers" will be recruited for the implementation of the 6th five-year plan which extended to 1960.

That practically nothing has changed in the Soviet regime even under Khrushchev is graphically shown by another document. This document is a secret report which the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet Cabinet of Ministers sent to the Chief of the Secret Police, General Serov, in December 1957.<sup>27</sup>) It states: "The state security institutions always stood on guard to safeguard the achievements of the October Revolution; they served the interests of the people and were a reliable weapon of the socialist state in the fight against its enemies. The close association of the state security institutions with the Party guarantees the strength and the successful work of the Soviet Russian secret police. The state security

institutions must follow even in the future the principles of revolutionary vigilance and of socialist legality and thus serve the interests of the people."

What does this "socialist legality" actually mean?

An authoritative answer to this question has been provided by the Soviet jurist Andrei Vyshinsky<sup>28</sup>) who later became Soviet Foreign Minister and also directed the Soviet aggression against and subsequent measures in Latvia. Vyshinsky stated in 1940:

"The law of the Soviet regime is a political directive, and a judge's work is not to apply the law according to the requirements of bourgeois legal logics but to execute the law unwaveringly as *an expression of the policy of the Party and the Government.*" Vyshinsky went on to analyze and refute the ideas of a number of penologists who, arguing on the basis of "bourgeois liberal" concepts hold the view that the purpose of a court is to apply the law and to apply it uniformly to all classes of society. To hold such views, Vyshinsky maintains, is to "ignore the task of stamping out class enemies," "to emasculate the class content of judicial practice" and "refuse to understand that there is no contradiction between revolutionary legality and the suppression of class enemies, and that the task of revolutionary legality is so to organize summary justice and the suppression of class enemies that the courts under the dictatorship of the proletariat are turned into an unerring weapon against class enemies, pitilessly suppressing them and mercilessly dispensing justice."

Soviet legal literature and the practice of Soviet courts show clearly and unmistakably that Soviet courts are merely a tool in the hands of the Communist party and the Soviet Government. The Soviet courts, dependent as they are on the executive power, are, alongside with the security police, a means to ensure the rule of the Communist party which in the Soviet state represents only a small minority. Moreover, Soviet trials are conducted in the same manner as Soviet parliamentary or other elections; in other words, whatever judgment is passed, the result is invariably the same — it is the result needed by the Soviet regime and which has been decided in advance. In passing sentences, a Soviet court does not consider the seriousness of the accused person's guilt, but how dangerous he might be for the Soviet

regime. The offenses, such as treason, sabotage, diversionism and counterrevolutionary activity, which are listed in the Soviet penal code and which are usually applied to political adversaries, are elastic concepts which permit of any interpretation, in other words, an interpretation which at a given moment and in a given political situation is desired or required by the Soviet authorities. Moreover, Soviet justice does not recognize the principle of "*nulla poena sine lege stricta et scripta*" or "*nulla poena sine lege praevia*," in other words the rule that no one may be prosecuted for an offense which at the time of its commission was not qualified as such by law. The disregard of this principle, which is recognized and applied throughout the entire civilized world, is reflected in the sentences imposed by Soviet tribunals on thousands of Balts for fighting against the bolsheviks during and after the October Revolution of 1917.

The major role played by Soviet penal legislation in the life of people who daily witness and experience Soviet despotism is borne out by the fact that it is impossible to find a person in the Soviet Union who does not know what Article 58 of the Soviet penal code means. Normally, in other countries, only lawyers, judges and prosecutors are familiar with the articles of the penal code, but in the Soviet empire, including the occupied Baltic countries, every citizen knows the contents of Article 58 with its 14 paragraphs which cover several printed pages.

The emphasis in the Soviet penal system is not placed on the Soviet courts but on administrative and police procedures.

Of the Balts deported in 1941 and later, no one was tried or given a formal 25-year sentence. They were simply taken out of their beds at night and from that moment they began to serve their sentence. Even unweaned infants were deported with their parents and thus they too were subject to this punitive procedure. And the way the deportations were carried out is also significant of the Soviet penal system and its application.

It is, therefore, useless to discuss in detail the Soviet legal system, the Soviet penal code and legal principles — as in the case of the Soviet constitution, they only provide a deceitful façade for crude despotism and cruelty.

### *Power Without Scruples*

Loss of freedom in itself is a severe punishment, but the Soviet regime deprives its real or imagined adversaries of freedom for life — since this is the penalty imposed on political prisoners. There are few who can survive a 25-year sentence under the brutal Soviet punitive and exploitative system. Even if a man is able to live through all the hardships, or is amnestied or rehabilitated, his youth and the best part of his life have been ruined, his family has been disrupted and he has been torn away forcibly from the work which he had chosen. Even in the place of punishment or exile he is subject to spying, derision, humiliation, and debasement, so as to deprive him of the last traces of human dignity.

The Soviet regime sees in these prisoners only beasts of burden, contemptible persons and creatures worthy of arbitrary treatment.

They are driven to the steppe, taiga and tundra and are deprived of the pleasure and satisfaction which every man derives from his country, its scenery, the affection of his family, his accustomed surroundings, his national culture, in short, of the air of his native country. We can therefore understand a man who said he would not exchange a prison in Latvia for freedom in Russia.

We can well understand the Latvian farmer who has been deprived of his farm, of his fields which he has learned to till and love, his groves of birches, his domestic animals and cattle. More than others farmers suffered from the "dekulakization" which took away from them their country and the affection of people to whom they belonged organically and without whom they feel psychically paralyzed. In other words, these people have been uprooted.

A few words should also be said here of people who rose in the labor camps against Soviet tyranny. This subject has been discussed in Chapter 3 of this book. These uprisings against the Soviet oppressor were not the last ones and therefore we wish briefly to mention the feelings of the unfortunate people, which led them to rise in the midst of misery and despondence.

To stand like a living wall — with no weapon but a stone yet with a song on one's lips — in front of machine and sub-machine guns,

trench mortars and tanks might seem an impossible thing to do for someone who has never been impelled to rise against the oppressor in proud defiance and contempt of death. Some will say that this was sheer folly.

Whatever judgment may be passed on the fight of the oppressed people for their own freedom and the liberty of their country, no one can question the gigantic scope of this fight. Not those who came in tanks and with deadly weapons in their hands were the strong ones. No, the strong ones were those who even in deepest humiliation and abandonment could feel the joy of being able at least to fight and resist, who believed that along the steps of death they marched toward the hour of liberation of all human beings, an hour which millions of oppressed people are waiting for.

Those who died, lost their lives but in dying also lost their chains.

There is a question which still awaits its answer: Is this the only way to shake off these chains?

When political strikes and uprisings broke out in the Arctic regions and various parts of Siberia, the rebels asked: "Does the free world know of our uprising?", "Do they know what we are fighting for?", "Do they support us, at least by understanding our fight and do they view with sympathy our struggle for freedom and justice?" and "Will they support us when we start the decisive fight?"

We leave the answers — if any there are — to these questions, to the judgment of our readers.

The oppressed nations which suffer under the Soviet tyranny, also suffer from the isolation which they now endure.<sup>29)</sup>

They have not accepted slavery. Fighting for freedom and justice — these inalienable eternal values — they fight for the fundamental rights and a social order in which a man may feel happy and at peace with himself and where he sees a natural place for himself and his fellow-men in the order created by God.



## APPENDIX

### R.S.F.S.R. CRIMINAL CODE AS IN FORCE ON OCTOBER 1, 1953

#### Counterrevolutionary Crimes

*Section 58<sup>1</sup>*. Any act intended to overthrow, to undermine, or to weaken the power of workers' and peasants' soviets, and of the workers' and peasants' governments of the U.S.S.R., the constituent and autonomous republics elected by the soviets in accordance with the constitutions of the U.S.S.R. and the constituent republics, or to undermine or weaken the external safety of the U.S.S.R. or the basic economic, political and national conquests of the proletarian revolution shall be considered counterrevolutionary.

In view of the international solidarity of the interests of all the toilers, similar crimes directed against another state of toilers, even if it is not incorporated in the U.S.S.R., shall also be considered counterrevolutionary crimes. (As amended June 26, 1927, R.S.F.S.R., No. 49, Laws, Text 330).

*Section 58<sup>1a</sup>*. Treason to the country, that is, acts committed by nationals of the U.S.S.R. to the prejudice of the military might of the U.S.S.R., its independence as a state, or the integrity of its territory, such as espionage, betrayal of a military or state secret, going over to the enemy or taking flight abroad by air or otherwise, shall be punished by the supreme measure of criminal penalty — death by shooting with confiscation of all property and under extenuating circumstances — confinement for a period of ten years with the confiscation of all property (enacted July 20, 1934, R.S.F.S.R. Law, No. 30, text 173, amended May 20, 1938, text 141; June 8, 1939, U.S.S.R. Laws 1934, text 255).

*Section 58<sup>1c</sup>*. If a person in military service takes flight abroad by air or otherwise, any adult member of his family who assisted in any manner whatsoever the planned treason or even barely knew of it but failed to report it to the authorities shall be punished by confinement for a period of from five to ten years with confiscation of all property (enacted *ibidem*).

Any other adult member of the traitor's family who lives in his household or was his dependent at the time when the crime was committed shall be deprived of electoral rights and exiled to remote localities of Siberia for five years (enacted *ibidem*).

*Section 58<sup>1d</sup>*. Any person in the military service who fails to report (an act of treason, in preparation or committed, shall be punished by confinement for a period of ten years.

Any other citizen (a person not in the military service) who fails to report shall be prosecuted under Section 58<sup>12</sup> (enacted *ibidem*).

*Section 58<sup>2</sup>*. Any armed uprising, any invasion of Soviet territory by armed bands for counterrevolutionary purposes, and seizure for such purpose of central or local (government) power and, in particular, for the purpose of forcibly

detaching from the U.S.S.R. or from any individual constituent republic of the Union any part of its territory or of breaking any treaty concluded by the U.S.S.R. with any foreign government, shall be punished by:

The supreme measure of social defense — death by shooting or a sentence declaring that the accused is an enemy of the toilers, confiscating all his property, depriving him of nationality of the constituent republic and thereby of nationality of the U.S.S.R., and expelling him from the confines of the U.S.S.R. forever; under extenuating circumstances the sentence may be reduced to confinement for not less than three years with confiscation of property in whole or in part (as amended June 6, 1927, R.S.F.S.R. Laws, No. 49, text 330).

*Section 58<sup>3</sup>.* Any communication for counterrevolutionary intent with a foreign government or with its individual representative, as well as aiding in any manner whatsoever a foreign government which is in a state of war with the U.S.S.R. or is carrying on a struggle with the Union by means of intervention or blockade shall be punished by the measures of social defense laid down in Section 58<sup>2</sup> of the present Code (enacted *ibidem*).

*Section 58<sup>4</sup>.* Aid in carrying on hostile activities against the U.S.S.R., given in any manner whatsoever to that portion of the international bourgeoisie which does not recognize the equal rights of the communist system, destined to replace capitalism, and is striving to overthrow that system, or (such assistance) to any social group or organization which is directly organized by such bourgeoisie or is under its influence, shall be punished by confinement for a period of not less than three years with confiscation of property in whole or in part, but if there are especially aggravating circumstances the penalty shall be increased to the supreme measure of social defense — death by shooting or a declaration that the accused is an enemy of the toilers who loses citizenship of the constituent republic and thereby citizenship of the U.S.S.R. and is expelled forever from the confines of the U.S.S.R. with confiscation of property (enacted *ibidem*).

*Section 58<sup>5</sup>.* Anyone inducing a foreign country or any social group in it, by communicating with their representatives, by the use of false documents or by any other means, to declare war on or engage in any other hostile activity, in particular blockade, seizure of government property of the U.S.S.R. or of a constituent republic, severance of diplomatic relations, or rescission of any treaty made with the U.S.S.R. and the like, shall be punished by the measures of social defense laid down in Section 58<sup>1a</sup> of the present Code (*ibidem*).

*Section 58<sup>6</sup>.* Espionage, i. e., the transmission, or the stealing or collecting with the purpose of transmission, to foreign governments, counterrevolutionary organizations or private persons, of data which are by their nature specially protected state secrets, shall be punished by confinement for a period of not less than three years with confiscation of property, in whole or in part, or — in case where the espionage has caused or might have caused particularly grave consequences to the interests of the U.S.S.R. — either the supreme measure of social defense, death by shooting, or a declaration that the accused is an enemy of the toilers who loses citizenship of the constituent republic and thereby citizenship of the U.S.S.R. and is expelled forever with confiscation of property (enacted *ibidem*).

Transmission, stealing or collection with the purpose of transmission to the organizations or persons mentioned above, whether for remuneration or gratuit-

ously, of economic information which by its content is not a specially protected state secret but which is prohibited from being made public by law or decree by the head of a branch of government, of an agency or an enterprise, shall be punished by confinement for a period not to exceed three years (enacted *ibidem*).

Note 1. Information enumerated in a special list approved by the Council of People's Commissars (Translator's note: since 1946, the Council of Ministers) in agreement with the Councils of Ministers of the constituent republics and published for general information shall be considered specially protected state secrets.

Note 2. In case of espionage of persons mentioned in Section 193<sup>1</sup> (persons in the service of armed forces) Section 193<sup>24</sup> shall apply.

Section 587. The undermining of government industry, transport, trade, currency, or system of credit, or of the cooperatives, with counterrevolutionary purpose, by appropriately utilizing the government institutions or enterprises or by working against their normal activities or the utilization of government institutions or enterprises, or working against their activities, in the interests of the former owner or of interested capitalistic organizations, shall be punished by the measures of social defense specified in Section 58<sup>2</sup> of the present Code (enacted *ibidem*).

Section 58<sup>8</sup>. Commission of acts of terrorism against representatives of the Soviet power or persons active in revolutionary workers' or peasants' organization, and participation in the accomplishment of such acts even by persons who do not belong to a counterrevolutionary organization, shall be punished by measures of social defense specified in Section 58<sup>2</sup> of the present Code (*ibidem*).

Section 58<sup>9</sup>. Destruction or damage, with a counterrevolutionary intent, by means of explosives, setting afire, or by any other method, of railway lines or any other ways or means of transportation, means of public communication, water supply system, public warehouses or any other installations or government or public property, shall be punished by the measures of social defense specified in Section 58<sup>2</sup> of the present Code (*ibidem*).

Section 58<sup>10</sup>. Propaganda or incitement containing an appeal to overthrow, undermine, or weaken the Soviet government, or commit individual counterrevolutionary crimes provided for in the present Code (Sections 58<sup>2</sup> through 58<sup>9</sup>), as well as dissemination, preparation, or keeping of literatures containing any such matter shall be punished by confinement for a period of not less than six months.

The same acts if committed during mass disturbances or by utilizing religious or racial prejudices of the masses, or under war conditions, or in localities placed under martial law, shall be punished by the measures of social defense specified in Section 58<sup>2</sup> (enacted *ibidem*).

Section 58<sup>11</sup>. Any organized activity of any kind which is directed towards the preparation or commission of any of the crimes dealt with in the present chapter, or any participation in any organization formed for the preparation or the commission of any of the crimes dealt with in the present chapter, shall be punished by the measures of social defense prescribed in the related sections of the present chapter (enacted *ibidem*).

Section 58<sup>12</sup>. Failure to report a counterrevolutionary crime in preparation or committed in spite of credible knowledge thereof shall be punished by confinement for a period of not less than six months (enacted *ibidem*).

Section 58<sup>13</sup>. Any act or active struggle against the working class or the revolutionary movement carried on by a person in a responsible or secret post (undercover agent) under the czarist regime or with any counterrevolutionary government during the period of the civil war shall be punished by the measures of social defense specified in Section 58<sup>2</sup> of the present Code (enacted *ibidem*).

Section 58<sup>14</sup>. Counterrevolutionary sabotage; that is, the deliberate failure by any person to discharge a definite duty or the discharging of it with deliberate carelessness with the special aim of weakening government authority and the operation of government machinery, shall be punished by confinement for not less than one year with confiscation of property, in whole or in part, but if there are especially aggravating circumstances the penalty shall be increased to the supreme measure of social defense — death by shooting, with confiscation of property (enacted *ibidem*).

## NOTES

1) Professor Dr. Kārlis Balodis, a Latvian economist, who transferred his scientific activity from Berlin to Riga after World War I, accepted a call from the Latvian Government to join the Latvian peace negotiators in Moscow as a financial expert. Being a convinced socialist, he used the time from May 3rd to July 12th 1920 for intensive studies. His aim, as he put it, was "to study conditions in the only country where convinced and radical Marxian socialists have government control." The results of his studies and economic observations appeared in a 60-page booklet entitled *Sowjet-Rußland*, Verlagsgenossenschaft „Freiheit“ G. m. b. H., Berlin 1920.

Nothing surprised Professor Balodis more than the rule of terror in the Soviet Union, a socialist country. "Are there any chances," asked Balodis, "of improving economic conditions under the Bolshevik government? Yes, there are. However, the current economic methods must be thoroughly reviewed. But first of all, the rule of terror must be abolished, and capital punishment must be done away with in practice and not only on paper."

2) See: Thierry Maulnier, *La Face de Méduse du Communisme*, Gallimard, Paris 1951.

3) V. I. Lenin, in a letter, dated May 17, 1922, to D. I. Kursky, states on the rule of terror: "The courts must not abolish the rule of terror; to promise it, would be self-deceit or deceit. Instead, the courts must offer reasons for and legalize the rule of terror, as a matter of principle, clearly, without pretense or embellishments. The formulation should be as broad as possible, since only the revolutionary sense of justice and the revolutionary conscience will create, on a more or less broad basis, the conditions for the practical application (of terror)."

4) After the Latvian democratic parties and national organizations had proclaimed the independence of the Latvian Republic on November 18, 1918, in accordance with the principle of self-determination, the bolsheviks set up in Moscow a Latvian puppet government on December 25th of the same year. Immediately thereafter, the Red Army invaded Latvia and took Riga, the Latvian capital, on January 3, 1919. Riga remained in the hands of the bolsheviks until May 22nd of the same year, while Latvia's eastern province, Latgale, was freed from the bolshevik rule by January 30, 1920. This also marked the definitive failure of this bolshevik invasion. Western Latvia remained under the control of the democratic Latvian government all the time.

5) On the Soviet rule of terror in Latvia in 1919 see also: Dr. Arnolds Spekke, *History of Latvia*, Stockholm 1951, pp. 347—348.

6) See: Pastor O. Schabert, *Märtyrer. Der Leidensweg der baltischen Christen*, Hamburg 1920, pp. 27, 28 ff.

7) See *These Names Accuse*. Nominal List of Latvians deported to Soviet Russia in 1940—41. Published by the Latvian National Fund in the Scandinavian Countries. Stockholm 1951. See also *Genocide in the Baltic States*, by Prof. Arveds Svabe, LL.D., p. 31. Published by the Latvian National Fund in Scandinavia. Stockholm 1952.

8) See Aleksander Kaelas: *The Colonial Policy of the Soviet Union in Occupied Estonia*, Estonian National Council. Stockholm 1956, p. 3.

9) See the *Appeal to the United Nations on Genocide*, p. 12. Published by the Lithuanian Foreign Service. 1951.

10) See B. S. Utevski: *Sovetskaya Ispravitelno-Trudovaya Politika*, 1935, p. 32. See also I. L. Averbach: *Ot Prestupleniya k Trudu*, p. 15. Published by the Institute of Soviet Construction and Law, Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Moscow, 1936. He pointed to the Decree dated September 15, 1918, which was "to protect the Soviet Republic from class enemies by isolating them in concentration camps."

11) The population of the Western Ukraine came under bolshevik rule as early as the end of 1939 as a result of the Soviet invasion of Poland. Deportation of West Ukrainians began in January and February 1940. The Soviet occupation authorities deported the rural inhabitants and thereafter the urban population as well. See Marta Rudzka, *Workuta, Weg zur Knechtschaft*, Thomas-Verlag, Zuerich, pp. 12—14.

12) The fact that these "released" have not been given easier jobs, but are required to fill and exceed the work norms is indicated by the official organ of the Latvian communist party, the daily *Cina*. On September 7, 1956, No. 211, it published a report entitled "Visit to Vorkuta Miners." This report stated: "Vorkuta is rich in 'black gold.' Tens of heavily loaded trains daily leave Vorkuta with high-quality fuel. The trains proceed to different parts of our fatherland.

"More coal for our fatherland! This is the slogan under which Vorkuta miners fight during the 6th five-year plan. The first place in this competition is now held by the personnel of mine No. 19

of the *Vorkuta-ugol kombinat*. This mine turns out daily from 150 to 200 tons of coal in excess of the plan."

13) The Red Army took Riga on October 13, 1944. The units of the Latvian Legion, together with German forces, then continued to defend what was known as the "Fortress of Kurzeme." The bolsheviks occupied Kurzeme, Latvia's western province, after Germany's capitulation on May 8, 1945. Even before that date — as can be seen from the testimony of a released German war prisoner — the Soviet authorities began deportations to the Komi area from Latvian territory which they had seized earlier.

14) The value of the Latvian monetary unit *lats* (Ls.) was thus equal to one Swiss franc. One British pound sterling was equal to Ls.25.22, one U.S.dollar to Ls.5.18. See Dr. Alfred Bilmanis, *Latvia as An Independent State*, Washington, D.C., 1947.

15) Reinholds Berzins, the first chief of the *Dalstroj*, a Latvian communist who played an important role in the Russian October Revolution. He was executed in 1938 during one of Stalin's purges.

16) *General Jaeckeln* — German police chief in the Baltic area in 1941—45.

17) *Vlassov*, Red Army General, Commander of Army, in World War II. Made German war prisoner, he took the lead in forming voluntary anti-bolshevik military units from among Russian soldiers in German prisonership.

18) Monta Kroma and Boris Burlaks. *Neskarto zemju plasumos*. Latvijas valsts izdevnieciba Riga, 1955, Padomju licence JT 00700. See p. 161 ff.

19) See: Wilhelm Starlinger, *Grenzen der Sowjetmacht*, Holzner-Verlag, Würzburg 1955, p. 69.

20) Latgale is Latvia's eastern province. The demographic pattern of Latgale is characterized by a fairly large percentage of ethnic minorities. Alongside 61 percent of Latvians, there were about 30 percent of Russians. The relations between the two groups were good in free Latvia, although most Russians had come to Latgale during the past 100 years. It should be noted that after 1945 the Soviet occupation authorities separated an area of about 500 square miles in Latgale's northeastern corner from Latvia and joined it to Russia. See: *Enzyklopädie der Union der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepubliken*, Verlag Kultur und Fortschritt, Berlin 1950, chapter "Letland."

21) This was reported by the Soviet news agency *Tass* and the daily *Cina* (No. 297, December 20, 1956).

22) See International Labour Conference. Fortieth Session, Geneva, 1957. *Forced Labour* — Supplement: Report of the I.L.O. Committee on Forced Labour, p. 92.

23) *Recht in Fesseln*. Eine Sammlung von Dokumenten über die Vergewaltigung des Rechtes für politische Zwecke. Internationale Juristen-Kommission. 1955. P. 311—321. Documents 217, 218, 219, 220.

24) Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labour, p. 444. Geneva 1953.

25) *Recht in Fesseln*, p. 318.

26) *Idem*, Document 218, p. 311—317.

27) General Serov, Deputy Commissar of State Security of the USSR. On October 11, 1939 he signed, under No. 001223, a secret and very extensive instruction regarding the procedure for carrying out the deportation of the anti-Soviet elements from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The district offices of the NKGB (People's Commissariat of State Security) in the Baltic States afterwards always used to refer to this Instruction No. 001223. It has been published by the Latvian Legation in Washington. See *Latvian-Russian Relations, 1944*, p. 227—231, and K. Pelekis *Genocide, 1949*, p. 273—278.

28) A. J. Vyshinski and V. S. Undrevich, *Course in Criminal Procedure*, p. 54—55 and 324.

29) On September 20, 1954 the rightful representatives of nine European nations, victims of Soviet aggression during and after World War II, formed in the free world an organization for joint political action aimed at the restauration of freedom and independence. This and associated organizations follow developments in their Soviet-enslaved countris in an effort to counteract a total isolation. Th body, known as the Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN), under the chairmanship of Dr. Vilis Mäsešns, keeps the United Nations and Western Governments informed on the current political situation in their Soviet-dominated countries and voices the views of one hundred million Europeans behind the Iron Curtain. ACEN has also collected extensive material on the most recent deportations carried out by Moscow.

## INDEX

- Abez camp 25, 44—53, 200, 207  
Accidents 33, 57, 182  
Acclimatization 192  
Adenauer, West German Chancellor 201  
Akmolinsk 158, 167, 171  
Aktas camp 160  
Aleksandrovsk, prison 196, 262, 275  
Alma-Ata 171—172, 214, 270  
Altai region 119, 120, 156, 171  
Americans 58  
American Federation of Labor 283  
Amnesty 199—208  
Amputees 69, 189  
Amur region 148—150, 204  
Anderma, harbor 67  
Angara river 122, 130  
Angarlag 129  
Arkagal camp 143  
Arctic region 25—67  
Archangel 25, 60, 62—64, 124  
Artists 59  
Assembly of Captive European Nations 296  
Atlantic Charter 218  
Austrians 56, 79, 123, 142  
  
Babikov, Lt.Col. of MVD 46—47  
Balkhash 167, 170, 214, 258  
Batagay 134  
Baltic Council 15  
Baltic youth 154, 156, 200, 233  
Balts 15, 17, 28, 47, 48, 54, 57, 59, 60—62, 65, 66, 69, 73, 74, 80, 113, 114, 115, 120, 123, 127, 130, 134, 140, 142, 143, 146, 148, 160, 164, 171, 178, 194, 198, 203—204, 213, 215, 216, 217, 233, 244, 278, 279, 287  
Banderists 247  
Baykal, Lake 130  
Belomorstroi camp 65  
Beria 72, 142, 222  
Berlag 143  
Bērzīņš, Reinholds, Latvian communist 143  
Bezprizorniye 245  
Blatnois 38—42, 74, 144, 187, 220, 224  
Blizzards 138  
Blood pressure 185  
  
Bolshechensk 114  
Bolshevik invasion 13  
Bolshevism 13—14  
Botinki 183  
Bourgeois 114  
Boy Scouts 17  
Bratsk 113, 120—129  
Budzis 16  
Bukhta Kristy 143  
Bukhta Nakhodka 138  
Buldovichak camp 143  
Bulganan, Soviet Prime Minister 51  
Bur 35, 46, 72, 164, 176, 216  
Burki 184  
Burlaks, Boriss, Communist reporter 154—155  
Buryat, Mongolian Republic 130  
Bushlat 30, 181  
Butyrki, prison 262  
Bychkov, Deputy Chief of GULAG 250—251, 255—256  
Byelorussians 26, 73  
  
Canteen 128, 177  
CARM 122  
Catholic Church 141, 157  
Caucasians 61, 65, 73, 79  
Caucasus 217  
Central Asia 119, 151—172, 207, 227  
Ceplitis, R. J., Latvian officer 205  
Chechens 217, 279  
Cheka 20, 262—265, 267, 272  
Chelyabinsk 141  
Cherlak district 114—117  
Chikhayev 133  
Children of the politically persecuted 113, 114, 116, 193—194  
Children's home 193—194  
Chinese 79, 160, 221  
Chita 130, 148  
Chkalov region 153—155, 158  
Christmas 72, 125—126, 139, 157, 159, 161  
Chukhotsk peninsula 143  
Chuvashia 67  
Cīņa, organ of the Latvian communist party 73, 124, 153

- Classics 124  
 Closed camp 142  
 Clothing 70, 146, 183—184  
 Coal 29  
 Collectivization 16, 17, 172, 178, 197  
 Colonies for the re-education 21  
 Communist youth 124  
 Copper 65, 66, 134, 166  
 Corrective Labor Code 281  
 Czar 27  
 Czechs 26, 61, 142, 221  
  
 Dalstroi 137—145, 146, 148  
 Déclassé 149  
 Dekulakization 288  
 Deportations of Balts 7, 19, 62, 64, 149, 153,  
 193, 206, 278, 279  
 Deportees 119, 120, 132  
 Depression 198  
 Diarrhea 80  
 Derevianko, MVD General 233, 236—238  
 Diseases 185—193  
 Dispensaries 71  
 Dnieprovsky camp 142  
 Dolgish, MVD General 250  
 Dolinka 160  
 Dublag 68  
 Dubovka 160, 206  
 Dugouts 139, 142  
 Dundaga 267—268  
 Dūnis, V. Reverend 274  
 Dysentery 61, 65, 167, 186  
 Dystrophy 57, 80, 185  
 Dzhezkazgan 166—168, 214, 258  
 Dzhumabek camp 160  
  
 East Prussians 243  
 Easter 72  
 Edzhid-Kyrta 61  
 Ekibastus 170  
 Elghen 142, 143  
 "Enemy of the People" Formula 284  
 Epidemics 65, 80, 167, 186  
 Escape 74—75  
 Estonian partisans 268  
 Estonian Red Cross 15  
 Estonians 18, 39, 43, 46, 50, 53, 54, 61, 62, 65,  
 66, 75—76, 113, 114, 119, 120, 124, 138, 160,  
 166, 184, 218, 279  
 Evangelical Lutheran Church 39  
 Exploitation 175, 279—284  
  
 Fabrichnoye camp 79—80, 216  
 Far East region 73, 132, 137—150, 213  
 Farm collectivization 39  
  
 Farmers 149  
 Fight against the bolshevik ideology 197  
 Finns 65, 142, 197  
 Fishing 66  
 Food, 74, 146  
 Free workers 140  
 Freedom 289  
 Freijs, Dr. Alberts, Latvian professor of  
 theology 274  
 Friedland 75, 184  
 Frostbite victims 189  
 Fufaika 63  
 Funeral rites 65  
  
 General plan 80  
 Genocide Convention 21  
 Georgians 194  
 Gestapo 265  
 Germans 56, 62, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 73, 75, 79,  
 120, 145, 164, 167, 168, 178, 184, 196, 197,  
 215, 221, 226  
 Graves (also: cemeteries) 42, 55, 65, 126  
 Gold miners 134, 137—145, 149  
 GrInbergs, Dr. T., Latvian Lutheran  
 Archbishop 274  
 GUITK 16  
 GULAG 15  
 Health conditions 184—193  
 Holy Scripture 72, 161  
 Hospitals 71  
 Hozrashot 178, 182—183  
 Hungarians 61, 73, 79, 80, 120, 142, 145, 160,  
 197, 216, 221, 278  
 Hunger 65, 67, 191, 281  
 Hunger strikes 145, 218  
 Hypertonia 185  
  
 Ilyanovsk 114  
 Independent Latvia and Independence of the  
 Baltic States 195—196, 197  
 Indigirka 137, 145  
 Ingush 279  
 Inta 17, 25, 44—53, 61, 66, 186, 200, 207  
 Intellectuals 124  
 International Commission of Jurists 278, 282  
 International Confederation of Free Trade  
 Unions 283  
 International Labor Organization 191, 277, 281  
 Inquisition 261—265  
 Invalids 34, 43, 69, 74, 114, 188  
 Iriklin steppe 156  
 Irtysh river 113, 116  
 Italians 221  
 Izhma river 53

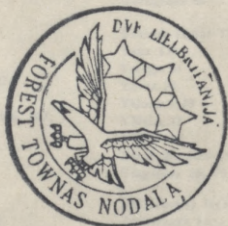
- Izhma, town 54  
 Izvestiya, newspaper 125, 273
- Jäckeln, German General 66—67  
 Jelgava, Latvian town 185  
 Japanese 120, 127, 168, 213, 221, 225, 226  
 Jews 26, 62, 73, 162  
 Judicial practice 286—287
- Kabardino - Balkar Autonomous Republic 279  
 Kalmyk Autonomous Republic 279  
 Kamchatka 145—146  
 Kandava, Latvian town 268  
 Karachai 278  
 Karaganda 58, 75, 153, 159—166, 167, 214, 231, 258  
 Kara Kalpaks 156  
 Kazakhstan 119, 153—159  
 Karelia 65  
 Kasion camp 142  
 Katorga 140  
 Kazakhs 156, 166  
 Khabarovsk region 145, 147—148, 204  
 Khantimansk region 131—132, 134  
 Kharpidh 218, 227  
 Khrushchev 158, 159, 278—279, 284—286  
 Kingir 167, 168—170, 244—257  
 Kinkanshe camp 143  
 Kirghizs 154  
 Kirghizian steppe 166  
 Kirov 66  
 Kirzovoi 183  
 Kochmes 53  
 Kokchetovo 158  
 Kola peninsula 66  
 Kolkhozes 117, 119, 131, 158, 163, 164—165, 206, 280  
 Kolya 17, 134, 137—145, 176, 181, 212  
 Kolya river 137  
 Kombinat 28, 166, 170, 219, 232  
 Komendantsky lagher 57  
 Komsa, fish 30  
 Komsomolsk 122, 148, 149  
 Komsomolskaya Pravda 158  
 Koreans 113, 221  
 Koshyma 44, 45  
 Kosyu 44  
 Kozhva 61  
 Kremlin 178  
 Kroma, Monta, Communist reporter 154—155  
 Krasnoyarsk region 67, 123, 204  
 Krutinsk 114  
 Kulaks 16, 172, 194  
 Kulikan 149  
 Kurile Islands 145—146
- Kurzeme forests 266  
 Kurzeme front (Courland) 66  
 Kuznetsk coal kombinat 160  
 Kuznetsov, Soviet Colonel 246—249, 251  
 Lacies, Vilis, Latvian communist 124  
 Laso camp 142  
 Lats, Latvian monetary unit 114  
 Latvian communists 59  
 Latvians Legionaries 18, 134, 139—140, 202—204, 225  
 Latvian partisans 67, 68, 69, 114, 140, 266, 268—269, 272  
 Latvian Red Cross 122, 225  
 Latvians 39, 43, 50, 54, 59, 60, 61, 63—66, 73—76, 79, 113, 114, 117, 119, 120, 124, 138, 144, 148, 160, 162, 166, 167, 184, 212, 218, 279  
 Latvians of Russia 54  
 Lavrinenko, Soviet Captain 60  
 Lena river 132  
 Lenin 279  
 Leningrad 25  
 Leningrad, prison 196  
 Levy Bereg, camp 143  
 Library of Congress 8  
 Liepāja, Latvian town 265, 267  
 Lithuanian partisans 264, 268  
 Lithuanians 38, 39, 43, 46, 50, 54, 62, 64, 65, 66, 74—76, 113, 114, 119, 120, 124, 138, 144, 160, 162, 166, 184, 218, 244, 273, 279  
 Loan bonds, internal 179, 181  
 Low - Voltage Technical Institute 75  
 Lubāna forests 266  
 Lubyanka 196, 262, 275  
 Lukiskiai, prison 196  
 Lutheran Church 141, 165—166  
 Lyubinsk 114
- Magadan 137—145  
 Makhorka 69  
 Malenkov, Soviet Prime Minister 73, 114, 217, 221, 234  
 Marfino 75—76  
 Marxism-Leninism 169  
 Maryanovsk 114  
 Masens, Vilis, President of the ACEN 296  
 Maslennikov, Deputy Interior Minister of the Soviet Union 234, 237—239  
 Matrosov camp 143  
 Medical aid 65, 270  
 Medical examinations 161  
 Medicine 48, 71, 161, 187  
 Medsestra 189—190  
 Medvezhegorsk 65—66

- MGB, Ministry of National Security 28, 247, 282  
 Militia 114, 269  
 Mine workers 175  
 Minlag 45  
 Molotovabad 171—172  
 Mirnoye 217  
 Molotovsk (also: Severno-Dvinsk) 64, 271  
 Monashki 124, 164  
 Mongolia, Outer 130  
 Mongols 241  
 Moods 194—199  
 Morics, Dr., Latvian M.P. and trade-unionist 274  
 Mordovians (also Mordvas) 68  
 Mordva Autonomous Republic 68  
 Mortality 63, 80, 119, 184—193  
 Moscow 75, 153, 193, 205, 250, 266, 277, 284  
 Moslems 73  
 Mosquitoes 68, 70, 183—184  
 Murmansk 66  
 MVD 18, 25, 26, 35, 36, 38, 46—47, 53, 58, 73, 80, 116, 119, 121, 164, 177, 205, 213, 217, 220, 235, 245, 248, 269, 272  
  
 Nagaiev harbor 144  
 Nakhodka 144—145  
 Naphtha 58  
 Naryan Mar 64  
 Narym 119  
 Navigation 144  
 Nazivayev 114  
 Nenetsk national territory 64  
 Nevelsk 123, 127  
 Nickel 65, 66, 217  
 Nikolayevsk 147  
 Nizhny-Udinsk 130  
 NKVD 61, 75, 119, 165  
 Norms 47, 69  
 North Dvina 58, 62  
 Northern supplement 124  
 Norilsk 17, 217—230  
 Novaya Zemlya 64, 66—67  
 Novoderkassk 262  
 Novy Marken 79  
 Norilsk 17, 217—230  
 Novo-Orsk 156, 157  
 Novosibirsk region 119—120  
 Nura, river 214  
 Nuremberg trials 234, 239  
 Nurses 48, 161, 189—190, 270  
 Nutrition as compensation for work 175—178  
 Nutrition (also: food) 175—178  
 Nyuksha punitive area 149  
  
 Occupatio bellica 14  
 October Revolution 13, 18, 47, 261, 279, 285, 287  
 Oka river 70  
 Okhotsk, sea 137, 144, 146  
 Okunyevev 79  
 OLP 35  
 Omsk region 113—118  
 Omsk town 113  
 Optimism 199  
 Ora steppe 153  
 Orutukan camp 143  
 Osoboye Soveshchaniye 20, 53, 266  
 Osyomshik camp 143  
 Ozerlag 122  
  
 Panikov, Soviet General 222  
 Parabela, camp 119  
 Parcels 74  
 Pardon 207  
 Partisans 114  
 Pavlodar 171  
 Pavlograd 114  
 Payment for slave labor 69, 164—165  
 Pechora 44, 60—61, 207  
 Pechorstroi 60  
 Pellagra 61, 186  
 PEN Club 17  
 Peresyilki, transit camps 117, 124  
 Peslag 159, 178, 180  
 Petitioners 60  
 Petropavlovsk 145, 167  
 Physicians 43, 48, 58, 71, 119, 124, 147, 176, 185, 189—192, 270  
 Pininga 59  
 Podgornaya 79  
 Polar climate 145  
 Poles 26, 61, 67, 79, 127, 145, 146, 196, 212, 221, 226  
 Polevoi steppe 156  
 Political clubs 113  
 Potma 68—75, 204, 217  
 Povenets 65—66  
 Pravda, newspaper 125, 158  
 Predshakhta 33  
 Presidium of the U.S.S.R. 200—  
 Prisons 18, 196  
 Prohibited zone 34  
 Pyatistenka 79  
  
 Railway building 60  
 Rations, food 176—177  
 Razvod 33  
 Rechlag 45  
 Red Army 18, 223, 225—226, 235—239, 264, 268

- Red corners 113  
 Rehabilitation 205  
 Released, the, 17, 51, 61, 63, 73, 123, 143, 181, 193, 197, 213  
 Repatriation of Balts 39  
 Reshoty 217  
 Resistance 144, 194—197, 211—257  
 Revda 216  
 Rēzekne, Latvian town 153  
 Rheumatism 187  
 Riflewomen 14  
 Riga 65, 265, 268  
 Riga Central Prison 66, 149, 265—266  
 R.M.S. 45  
 Rozenbergs, Pauls, Provost 39—40  
 Rudenko, Soviet Prosecutor 215, 234, 240—241  
 Rumanians 26, 73, 79, 127, 142, 145  
 Russian-Chinese railway line 117  
 Russians 26, 39, 52, 56, 61, 62, 73, 124, 149, 154, 156, 196  
  
 Sakhalin island 144, 146—147, 148, 217  
 Salekharda 25, 213  
 Sangorodok 43, 189—191  
 Sanitary conditions 192  
 Schlom, Konrad, lawyer 282  
 Section 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code 16, 17, 19, 21, 46, 53, 66, 75, 114, 116, 131, 138, 163, 202—204, 211, 291—294  
 Serov, Chief of Soviet Secret Police 285, 296  
 Seguezh 65  
 Sentences in absentia 20  
 Settlement 80  
 Seymchan 142  
 Sharyguino 79  
 Sherbakul 114  
 Sherubai 214, 258  
 Shimanovskaya 150  
 Shoes 70  
 Shtrafolf 35, 48  
 Siberia, forced labors camps 73, 89—134, 280  
 Simka camp 57  
 Sisvetskaya camp 215  
 Slave holders 175  
 Slavery Convention 21  
 Smirnov, Soviet General 230  
 Smytsk 79  
 Solikamsk 258  
 Soviet Council of Ministers 7, 21  
 Soviet internal loan bonds 70  
 Soviet Latvian Government 118  
 Soviet Ministry of Justice 36  
 Soviet occupation of the Baltic States 7  
 Soviet penal legislation 287  
  
 Sovkhozes 53, 74, 143, 149, 158, 280  
 Spāde, Latvian Admiral 166  
 Spanish prisoners 216  
 Spask 159—166  
 Special contingent 140, 144  
 Specialists 75, 132, 171, 192  
 Stakhanovites 71  
 Starvation 65  
 Stalin 27, 268, 278, 279  
 Stalin's death 29, 72, 142, 178, 200  
 Stalin's purges 54  
 Stary Marken 79  
 Steplag 166—167, 178  
 Strikes 211—258  
 Stukachi 38  
 Suki 38, 42  
 Sundays 126  
 Supreme Soviet 19  
 Sushilka 30  
 Sverdlovsk 271  
 Sweden 167  
 Syktyvkar 59—60, 200  
 Tadjijs 154, 156, 171  
 Taganlyk 156  
 Taiga 122  
 Taimyr peninsula 230  
 Talcis, Adolf, Communist reporter 153  
 Tarsk 114  
 Talsi, Latvian town 268  
 Tartars 79, 146  
 TASS, Soviet news agency 285  
 Tavda river 79  
 Tavrichesk 114  
 Tayshet 17, 114, 120—129, 207, 216  
 Telegreika 183  
 TEZ 28  
 Terrorism 13—14  
 Tigda 150  
 Torture 263  
 Troika 266, 274  
 Trans-Baykal region 137  
 Trans-Siberian line 113, 119, 122, 167  
 Trans-Ural 156  
 Tsinga 186  
 Tuberculosis 63, 68, 69, 80, 127, 186, 188  
 Tukhachevsky, Soviet Marshal 124  
 Tukums, Latvian town 268  
 Tundra 55, 61, 236  
 Turkmens 73, 154, 156, 195  
 Typhus 65, 187  
 Ukrainians 17, 26, 33, 56, 58, 61, 73, 75, 79, 146, 156, 160, 166, 194, 213, 215, 217, 218, 225, 226, 244  
 United Nations 191, 277, 281

- Uprisings 211—258  
 Urals 79—86  
 Ust-Ner 145  
 Ust-Ukhta 25, 53—56, 204, 207, 212  
 Ust-Usa camp 60  
 Ust-Vym 56, 58—59, 207, 212  
 Uzbeks 154, 156  
  
 Valka, Latvian town 269  
 Valenki 183  
 Vasyutin, Soviet professor 158  
 Ventspils, Latvian town 267—268  
 Verkhny Imbatskoye camp 217  
 Verkhny Uralsk 262, 271  
 Verkhoyansk 134  
 Veslyana camp 58  
 Veryshaghino 217  
 Vilgort 59  
 Visits by family members 129  
 Vitamins, lack of, 61, 186—187  
 Virgin soil 153—159  
 Vlasov army 64, 145  
 Vladimir, prison 196, 262, 271—274  
 Vodny 54  
 Vorkuta 26—44, 45, 62, 66, 70, 186, 207,  
     214, 230—244, 282  
 Vorkutugol 28  
 Vostodny sovkhose 114  
 Volga Germans 166  
 Volga-Don Canal 216  
 "Voluntariness" 22, 154, 157, 285  
 Vologda prison 270  
 Voroshilov, Soviet President, 201  
 Vozhael 56—58, 212  
 Vyhegda 58, 62  
  
 Vykharevka 123  
 Vyshinsky, Andrei, Soviet Foreign Minister 286  
 Vyshka, watch-tower 34, 37, 46, 181  
  
 Wages 175—183  
 War-criminals 140  
 Watchdogs 140, 181  
 Weight of prisoners 63  
 West Germany 125  
 West Ukraine 33, 58  
 Western Siberia 153  
 White Sea 64  
 White Sea canal 65  
 Woodworking 58, 59, 61, 62, 65, 114, 119,  
     124, 143  
 Work conditions 128, 141  
 Work premiums 175  
 Workshops 69  
  
 Yakutsk region 114, 117, 132—134  
 Yana 134  
 Yarega 54  
 Yavas 74  
 Yelosovo 79  
 YMCA 17  
 YWCA 17  
 Youth 22, 200—201  
 Yugoslavs 26, 79  
  
 Zakluchonny lagher 142  
 Zapretnaya zona 220  
 Zayarsk 123  
 Zernograd 156  
 Zeya 150  
 Zuslovo camp 283





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# Documented map of forced labor camps for Baltic deportees in U.S.S.R.



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**EXPLANATIONS**

- Forced labour camps
- Prisons
- Exact location unknown
- ▨ Indicates area where forced labour employed for public works on itinerant basis.

Documented map of forced labor camps for Baltic deportees



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