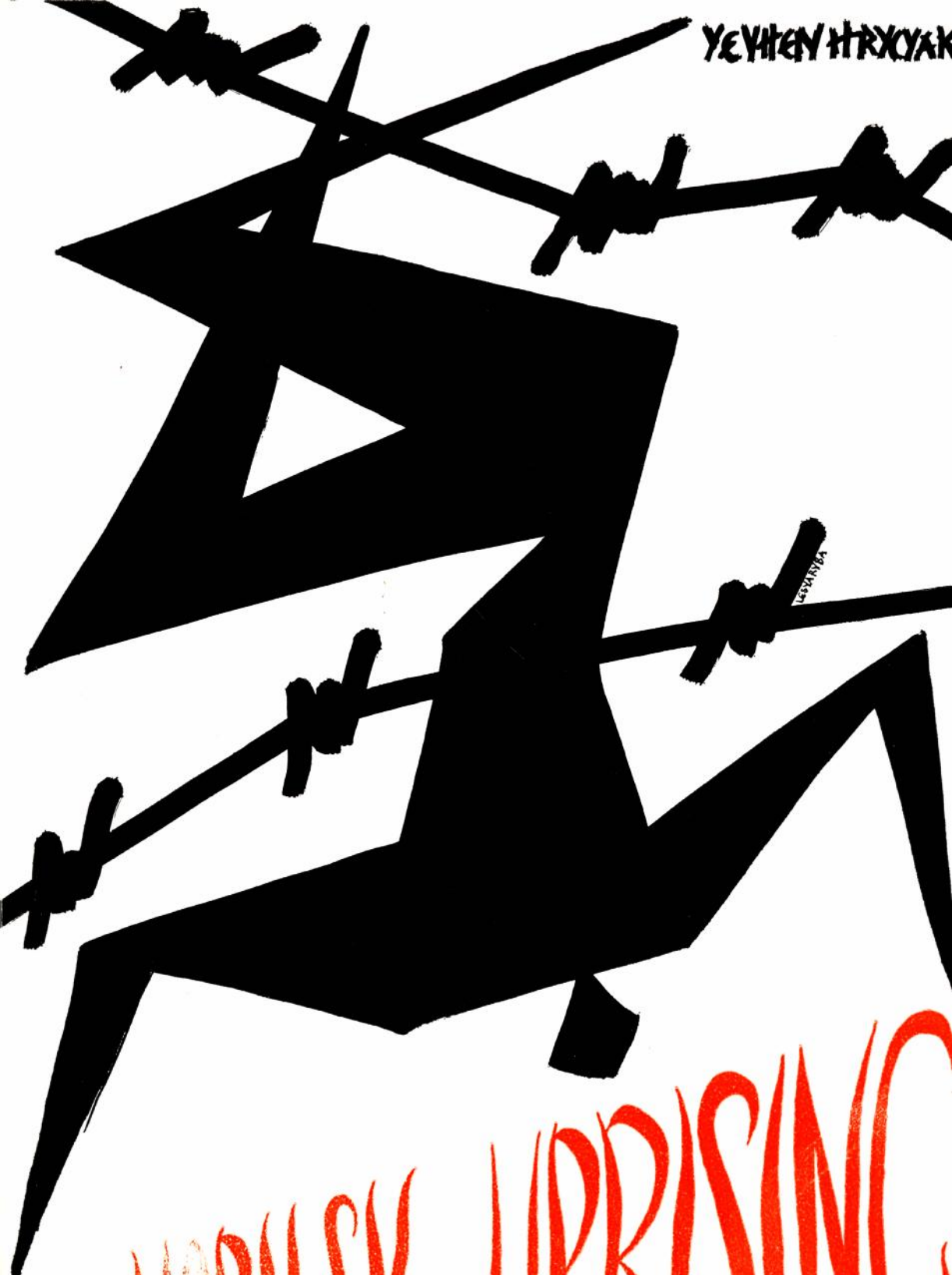

THE NORILSK UPRISING

YEVHEN HRYCYAK

The Norilsk Uprising

SHORT MEMOIRS

Foreword by

Prof. Leo Magnino

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FOREWORD

The legacy of communism is evident throughout the world.

It is responsible for the hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children who are systematically massacred by chemical weapons on the experimental lands of Cambodia, Laos and Afghanistan.

Communism is also responsible for the countless number of prisoners who have died, or are dying in the Soviet Russian GULags and mental institutions of the USSR.

Yevhen Hrycyak describes life in the GULag in this very moving narrative *The Norilsk Uprising*. The hostile attitude of the prison guards is directed particularly against the Ukrainians. After reading these pages about Yevhen Hrycyak's imprisonment in Norilsk we have a very clear idea of the meaning of Soviet Russian "liberty".

The strength of communism is based upon cruelty and is fundamentally against nature because it ignores the fact that mankind has thoughts and desires. Only by use of brutal force can the USSR maintain a cohesiveness between the different ethnic groups.

Everyone here today knows of the terrible pain that this ideology has inflicted upon humanity. We only have to look at the frequent uprisings and the internal struggles in the different countries in order to safeguard their liberty.

All communists in the world are one of a kind. They cannot be divided into good communists and bad communists, nor can they be classified as moderate.

Moscow's persecution is particularly aimed at the non-Russian nationalities which compose the Soviet Union, in the first place against Ukraine. That is what Yevhen Hrycyak's book brings to light.

It suffices to recall the trials against the Ukrainian "separatists" which took place between 1936 and 1938 and the great trial against the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine, an organization whose aim was to free Ukraine from Soviet Russian domination.

Moscow's domination of Ukraine became more severe from day to day — with executions, with or without trials and suicides committed even by Ukrainian communists, whose only guilt was, being Ukrainian.

It is necessary to recall the massacres of the Ukrainian population which took place between 1945 and 1948 and the murder of true heroes — like Bandera.

It is also vital to mention the constant persecution of the Ukrainian Church and of those who systematically followed the development of the struggle against religion in the USSR.

Clearly, the fight against religion and the Church in all of the countries of Central Europe is inspired and directed by Moscow. Even the most important communist leaders of the repressive campaign received their intellectual and technical education in the USSR.

Finally, even today false Soviet Russian PEACE propaganda finds many people in the West who either through short-sightedness or mere stupidity believe in this myth!

However, today, words have no meaning but the importance of their very strength becomes an actual fact. When the USSR throws the slogan word PEACE then only a small amount of propaganda is necessary to be built around this word for the general public, which is caught up in the Soviet Russian propaganda campaign, to feel that the USSR is truly rescuing peace.

The Norilsk Uprising is a valuable document which recognizes the Soviet Russian threat and Moscow's method, or rather technique, of silencing those who are against communism.

The whole of the human race should clearly be aware of this opposition to the communist regime from which we can also learn a lot and open their eyes to see how those prospered who escaped from communism, how many millions perished who remained, and how many others are still enslaved.

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Introduction

The memoirs of Yevhen Hrycyak about the uprising of political prisoners in the concentration camps of Norilsk in 1953, which have been originally disseminated in sam-vydav[1] *form, were recently transmitted to the West. The detailed description of this uprising — is the latest important document about the savage, inhuman Russian-Bolshevik system of rule over subjugated nations, as well as about the courage of political prisoners of different nationalities, who, even in prisons and concentration camps, struggle against this system in defense of their human and national rights.*

The author of the memoirs, Yevhen Hrycyak, was born in 1926, in the village of Stecev, Snyatyn County, Ivano-Frankivsk Province, was arrested in 1949 for his membership in Ukrainian nationalist underground during the time of Germany's occupation of Ukraine, and sentenced to death. This sentence was commuted to twenty-five years of imprisonment.

To date, Yevhen Hrycyak is well known because of his 1976 declaration to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (see Appendix "A"), which reached the West in 1977 and was disseminated widely in Ukrainian press.

Yevhen Hrycyak's memoirs about the Norilsk uprising are valuable because of their documentary-autobiographical character, and because of their deep insight into the conditions of USSR concentration camps and the bestiality of character of the creators and administrators of those camps.

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[1] Sam-vydav means literally "published by oneself", and refers to unauthorized publication and dissemination of handwritten, typed, mimeographed or printed material.

The Karaganda-Norilsk Transit Points

August of 1952. Zone 8 of the Pishchan camp, MVS,[2] USSR, city of Karaganda.

"Attention prisoners! Fall in! Form up! Don't look back, don't talk, don't smoke, don't change from one row to another! One step to the right or left and we'll fire without warning! Hands behind your backs! Forward! March!"

Four hundred tired and hungry prisoners plodded heavily in their felt shoes over the hard Kazakhstan ground. The long workday at the construction site ended and we were led home — to the camp. We walked in the customary way demanded by the convoy[3] guards — in silence. Each one kept to himself with his own thoughts.

Several weeks ago, Stepan U. suggested to me the idea of organizing a political strike throughout the *entire Gulag*.[4] But in spite of being totally captivated by the idea, I declined it as impossible to accomplish and, instead, suggested organizing such a strike in just our own zone. Hopefully, in time, this action would spread in a chain reaction throughout the *entire Gulag*.

Now, returning from work, I pondered (for the hundredth time) my position. In my opinion, a strike involving the *entire Gulag* was a utopian idea primarily because of our own impenetrable isolation. We did not and could not have any positive contact not only with camps distant from us, but even with the different zones in our own camp. We were just incapable of organizing any coordinated action. Besides, we would still have to overcome such subjective obstacles as the constant fear which enveloped, not without cause, all the prisoners, and the infectious inertia and the endless internal quarrels.

These difficulties were so vast, we had neither the strength nor the skill to overcome them even in one specific area. Only some particular external force could rouse, unite and incite us — an incident which would deeply affect each of us.

Unfortunately, because we were not ready, advantage of such an incident was not taken.

This is how it happened — for some reason, only one brigade was being escorted from the work site. En route, the convoy guard behaved in such a brutal and vicious manner, the men stopped and sat down in protest. The convoy guards discharged several sub-machine gun volleys over the prisoners' heads, but no one got up. Then the guards released the dogs... Prisoners arrived at the camp torn and bloody.

This incident served as a good lesson to us, and now we were ready to capitalize on another such opportunity.

We came to the guardhouse and my thoughts were suddenly cut off. I was separated from the group of prisoners and, without any formal charges, thrown

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[2] MVS — Ministry of Internal Affairs.

[3] Convoy — the term in Ukrainian is "konvoy" meaning escort guard.

[4] Gulag — the Soviet penal system under Stalin; an acronym for Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps.

into a *punishment cell*. That same day, more than twenty men were placed in the *punishment block* — all Ukrainians.

After that, events started unfolding quickly.

The next day, one more Ukrainian was thrown into our cell, Vasyl B., who explained that he had purposely behaved in such a manner as to be placed among us, because he had an important message for us: "The prisoners here want you to announce a hunger-strike tomorrow morning, and then, as a sign of solidarity, they will begin their general strike".

The next morning, we announced our hunger-strike, but to our great disappointment, the general strike did not materialize. We waited another day, but, again — nothing. Completely losing our hope, we discontinued our hunger-strike.

As it became clear later, the entire zone was ready to act, but no one was willing to assume the responsibility. This served as another valuable lesson to us.

The next day we all were transported to zone 5, which served as a deportation point. In addition to ourselves, other prisoners, consisting mainly of Ukrainians and Lithuanians, were brought here from the entire Pishchan camp. We understood that we were being sent out of the Karaganda area, but no one could say where we would be taken and what would be awaiting us there.

In the meantime, our first surprise was being prepared for us. We, two hundred and fifty Ukrainians and Lithuanians were consigned to the second barrack. Forty other prisoners, of whom some were Ukrainians and the rest representatives of other nationalities, were placed in one section of the first barrack. After some time, eighteen more men were added to that section. These were members of the Mykola Vorobyov gang, well known in the entire Pishchan camp, because their function was to terrorize and to do away with Ukrainians.

The *Vorobyov thugs* arrived armed with knives and immediately began threatening the few Ukrainians who were in the first barrack.

From the window of the barrack, someone desperately called out to us: "Boys, the *suki*[6] want to murder us!"

We jumped to our feet and feverishly tried to find a way out of our locked barrack. Some attempted to break the bars on the windows, while others tried to break down the door — but to no avail.

There was a large barrel of drinking water standing in the corridor. I poured the water out and, together with Bohdan M., started battering the door with it, but the door would not give way. Our only reward was the sound of the blows, which reminded us of distant cannon fire.

Meanwhile an exit was found. Someone managed to pull a brick out from under one of the windows and a small opening was made through which we were all able to crawl outside.

Here, we all gathered and formed a quick plan of attack. We had old scores to settle with the *Vorobyov gang* members and were all fired up with the desire to settle them. If only we could find a way of reaching them!

We all rushed to the door of their barrack, because we thought they would be easier to handle outside. It was hoped to either pull off the door hinges or

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[6] Suki — "Bitches", term used for professional criminals who chose to collaborate with the authorities.

knock out the lock. Since, we couldn't manage it with our bare hands and didn't want to show our helplessness, we had no choice but to continue pushing against that unbreakable door.

This door differed from those in the other barracks in that it opened unto the barbed barricade of the restricted zone instead of unto the center of the camp. Close by was the guard tower on which stood not the customary one but two convoy guards. Soon an officer also appeared on it. I watched his every move. He took out his pistol and slowly aimed it at us. A shot was fired, then a second, and a third... Shattered bricks and mortar showered down on our heads, the officer was firing over our heads at the wall. We did not retreat. Finally, we heard submachine gun fire. With a cry of pain, Vasyl Shcherba fell to the ground, seriously wounded. We scattered. The wounded Shcherba was carried to the hospital.

The camp "hospital" was located in this very same first barrack. The section we were trying to break into was separated from the hospital by a reinforced wooden barricade. Discovering this, we entered the adjacent room and ordered the patients to leave.

Then we broke up a metal bed and, armed with pieces of it, started to batter down the barricade. After a few minutes, a man-size opening was created. We met the *Vorobyov thugs* face to face.

But the gang members defended themselves courageously. Two of them, hiding behind a wall, stood at either side of the opening, ready to stab anyone who dared stick his head through. Others, having overturned the stove which stood in the middle of the room, started hurling bricks at us and, when the brick supply became exhausted, they threw chunks of crystal sugar.

The two defenders at the wall opening proved to be the most dangerous to us. We tried in every way possible to grab or at least chase them away, but we just could not manage to do this. Noticing two fire extinguishers on the wall, we took them down, and started spraying the two with the foam. The foam got into one man's eyes. He roared in pain and ran away, holding his hands to his eyes. However, another man immediately replaced him.

I realized that we would never overtake them in this manner and suggested that we climb up to the attic, break through the ceiling, and attack them from above. Everyone left the room and started searching for a way to the attic. Upon stepping outside, we were stopped cold. Armed soldiers were running, directly toward us from the guardhouse. With them was the chief administrator of the Pishchan camp — Lieutenant-General Serhienko. That finished it!

On reaching us, Serhienko ordered us to immediately enter the barracks and allow ourselves to be locked up. When we protested, he threatened to use firearms. When we mentioned that he did not have the right to fire at us, since we were not posing a threat to him, he answered: "Oh, yes! We have the right. We know whom we are dealing with!"

We continued arguing with Serhienko for quite a while before reaching a compromise — we would re-enter our barracks and he would remove the *Vorobyov gang*.

We were locked up; the *Vorobyov gang* was removed. Night came and we all laid down to sleep, wherever one could.

The next evening, a *red echelon*[6] left Karaganda, moving northward. Its freight cars were loaded with twelve hundred political prisoners, mainly Ukrainians and Lithuanians. At Petropavlovsk the train turned east and, after a few days, it arrived at Krasnoyarsk. Here the train stopped for the entire night and in the morning, after slowly crossing the Yenisei, halted again. Perhaps we had arrived!

Yes, we had arrived. We were released from the cars and escorted to a tiny transit prison which, as we knew, provided prisoners for the Norilsk camps.

We were ordered to sit down in front of the guardhouse, since they were not ready to receive us as yet.

From the other side of the tall board fence of the restricted zone, we heard the following exchange between the *blatnye*[7] prisoners of the punishment block:

"Prosecutor! Prosecutor! Is that you?"

"It's me."

"What's new?"

"Oh, nothing. Just some new boys have arrived."

"From where?"

"From Karaganda."

"Are they rich?"

"No. India!"

We hadn't even entered the compound, no one there had seen us, but the *blatnye* prisoners inside already knew that a fresh shipment of convicts had arrived from Karaganda, and that they were like residents of India, which, in their jargon, meant paupers who had nothing worth stealing.

The amount of information they had did not surprise us, because it was common knowledge that guards informed them of everything, as they always united with the *blatnye* prisoners against us — politicals.

We entered the compound, which was spread over a somewhat sloping terrain. On the left, the lower row of barracks was occupied by the *blatnye* prisoners and the upper row was assigned to us. The rows were separated from each other with a barbed wire barricade and a gatehouse, where a guard was always posted.

Before we even had a chance to get settled in the barracks, we found out that the *blatnye* prisoners were preparing to attack us. Since we knew that they could not do this without the blessings of the administration, we entered into negotiations with the transport chief. The result of these talks was that the chief threatened to use firearms against us. In answer to our claim that, in such cases, the guards did not have the right to fire at us, he said: "We do have the right, because we know *who* we have here!"

After getting settled in the barracks, we started going outside and gathering in small groups. In one group, someone began to sing:

A girl took a pail
And went for water,

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[6] Red echelon — a train for transporting prisoners, consisting of freight cars painted red.

[7] Blatnye — literal slang translation "thieves", but used throughout concentration camps and prisons in a broad sense, meaning criminal prisoners.

When young fishermen
Of Cossack blood...

The song was picked up by others; the group of singers quickly grew. More and more men wanted to sing, so that another choral group was formed, again spontaneously. Probably for the first time in the history of the Yenisei river, the sound of Ukrainian songs flowed over it. When a singer tired, another took his place, and the singing continued until late in the evening. Our Lithuanian friends also could not control the urge to sing and formed their own choral group. Although we did not understand their language, we sensed that they, just as we, began by singing folk songs, and went on to nationalistic-patriotic songs.

I stepped aside from the group and listened. It seemed as though the song was coming from some giant, whom no one dared to restrain — and no one did. The guards did not attempt to disperse us, and the *blatnye* prisoners did not try to attack us. For four days no one bothered us.

On the fifth day, we were crammed into prison barges and transported down the Yenisei river.

Judging from the kinds of prisoners chosen for this trip and the manner in which General Serhienko at Karaganda and the transport chief at Minusinsk spoke to us, we easily surmised that we were not an ordinary group of prisoners to be used for some development project, but a group condemned to death. We were to be subdued and destroyed. Who could then say what kind of welcome we would receive at our destination, if indeed we ever reached it and were not instead drowned and lost, along with the barges, at the bottom of the Yenisei. There were many theories floating around, but no one knew anything for certain.

On March 8, 1952, we arrived safely at Dudinka. That same day, our train reached Norilsk. Here we were separated into two groups. The first, containing five hundred men, was led into zone 1 of *Gorlag*,[8] located on the Vedmezha Mountain or "Vedmezhka"; the second, containing seven hundred men, was taken to zone 5, which was located close to town.

Thus ended the Karaganda-Norilsk stage of our imprisonment.

Acclimatization

The *Gorlag* camp was prepared for our reception. The barracks assigned to us were separated from the main area by barbed wire. All the camp *suki* had received knives for "self-defense", because, as was explained to them, a large transport of *Banderist*[9] cutthroats, who intended to wipe out all the camp activists, was arriving at Norilsk.

We were processed during the next four days. First we were thoroughly searched and given identification numbers. These numbers consisted of two parts — a letter of the Russian alphabet and three numerals. We received numbers accompanied only by letters "U" or "F", which made it easy to identify us amid the crush of other prisoners.

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[8] Gorlag — Mountain Camp.

[9] Banderists — in Ukrainian pronounced "banderivtsi", is a colloquial term derived from the name of the leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), Stepan Bandera (1909-1959), to describe members and sympathisers of the OUN led by Stepan Bandera.

After this initial phase was completed, we were then divided into brigades, each brigade being assigned an administration-trusted brigadier. Each brigadier wore an arm band on his left sleeve with the word "Brigadier" on it.

On the fifth day, we were taken out to work. To our surprise, we did not hear the traditional "Attention, prisoners!" The convoy guards were not leading us, but stood on both sides of our path, creating a living protective corridor. We walked down this corridor in our brigade units. Brigadiers, like army sergeants, walked alongside their brigades.

After moving about one hundred and fifty or two hundred meters, we were halted before the gatehouse of the work zone, which was called "Gorstroy". This was a huge, surrounded by barbed wire and guard towers, tundra territory, inside which construction in various stages was taking place. The prisoners of *Gorlag* were building the city of Norilsk. All the work, from the conception of the projects to their completion, was carried out by prisoners.

We happened to come upon this enormous construction at a time when the city's central plaza was being built. We had the job of levelling the land and moving wheelbarrows of gravel from one place to another.

During the hour long lunch break, we scattered in all directions, searching for countrymen and new acquaintances. Here, as opposed to the residence compound, we were not separated from the other prisoners by barbed wire. Furthermore, the workers here were not just from zone 5, but also from zone 4 and, next to us, although separated by a narrow *barrier*, were the women of zone 6. Through the prism of the barbed wire, these women seemed incredibly beautiful and alluring.

But above all, we were interested in the behavior of our countrymen, who were afraid to approach us, when we called them to the barbed fence in the compound. Only a few of them returned our calls from a distance, and only in the Russian language.

Ukrainian language was not officially forbidden, but it was very dangerous to use it. Our language exposed us as Ukrainians or, as we were contemptuously called "*Banderists*", and drew upon us the heavy burden of additional persecution and degradations. In Karaganda we had won the right to national pride, but here, in Norilsk, this right would still have to be fought for.

The countrymen whom we met here, asked us to moderate our behavior and gradually blend in — if we wanted to survive. "You have no idea what Norilsk is like", they cautioned us.

After we returned from work, we were all thoroughly searched at the guardhouse and again escorted to the prison yard. Our brigadiers then returned to the "staff headquarters" to inform the administration of our behavior and obtain new instructions.

The second working day differed in no way from the first.

On the third day, during the lunch hour, we again scattered over the entire work zone. I was walking alone, when suddenly I noticed a foreman's aid heading very decisively and aggressively toward me. I stepped aside, but he blocked my path, and asked in a threatening manner:

"You scum, what are you doing here? Where is your brigade?"

"We work on the site," I answered, "but this is our lunch hour and I have the right to be anywhere I want."

"I'll give you rights, you *Banderist!* You want to be a hero? We've seen worse than you and cut them down to size, and as for you, you snakes, we'll roast you like shish kebabs!"

I did not answer, but went on my way.

Separation from one's brigade and wandering around the work zone, even during the lunch break, was considered a breach of discipline and evidence of an unrepentant attitude. The foreman's aid had come to the construction site specifically for the purpose of putting an end to such flagrant behavior.

During the afternoon, the brigadier approached me with the complaint that we were not fulfilling our quota.

"Just look at us," I answered, "we are barely standing on our feet. What kind of quota do you expect from us? Have patience, don't be hostile. When we get back a little of our strength, which was exhausted during the transport, then you can demand work from us."

"And besides, aren't you a prisoner here, just like we are?" I continued. "You didn't volunteer to come here, anymore than we did. So why do you want to keep harassing us?"

The brigadier silently turned away and left us.

The work day ended. At the guardhouse, eight men were separated from us, handcuffed, and led to the *punishment block*. There, still handcuffed, they were beaten, thrown against the cement floor, kicked, and finally locked up in a separate cell.

On the next day, before leaving for work, my brigadier pulled a note from his pocket, and read: "Hrycyak, Yevhen and Melnyk, Dmytro are to remain in camp."

We stayed behind and, after receiving the appropriate signal, went out for inspection.

"What's this?" — the foreman's aid growled when he saw us. "Shirkers?"

"No," I answered assertively, "our brigadier left us behind."

"You are lying, you filth! The brigadier had no such orders from the administration."

"Check it."

We two and another of our countrymen were locked up in the corridor of the punishment block. We were not thrown in a cell, because we have not as yet passed through the "*molotoboyka*",[10] since the "*molotoboytsi*"[11] were probably occupied elsewhere.

After two or three hours, the outer door suddenly opened and the chief of *Gorlag's* DD Section 1, Lieutenant Colonel Sarychev, entered, accompanied by one of the guards.

"Well, you scum," he growled like one of the *blatnye* prisoners, "doesn't the climate here appeal to you? Ha? Well, no matter! We'll immunize you to the climate... Half of you bastards we will cut up and send to the devil's mother!"

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[10] Molotoboyka — a prison slang term used to describe a system of beatings executed by a group of *suki*, professional criminals who chose to collaborate with the authorities; same term is also used to describe the cell where such beatings took place.

[11] Molotoboytsi — a prison slang term used to describe a group of *suki*, professional criminals who chose to collaborate with the authorities, whose only function was to perform the beatings or "*molotoboyka*".

(Here Sarychev used vulgarities from the vocabulary of *blatnye* prisoners.)

We looked him straight in the eye and kept silent.

"Open the cell," he roared at the guard.

The guard first opened the metal plated doors and then the massive barred doors, and we all entered the cell, which was already overfilled with different *blatnye* and other regular prisoners.

"Who is your ringleader?", asked Sarychev.

"We don't have a ringleader, it's forbidden," someone answered.

"Forbidden! I have brought some men here, so who is going to *accept*[12] them, if there is no leader?"

"We accept only Russians — non-Russians we do not *accept*," another voice threw in.

"These are Ukrainians."

Apparently the cell occupants had no desire whatsoever to *accept* us. Sarychev understood this and began getting nervous.

"Mylovanov, are you in charge here?" he addressed a serious looking prisoner, standing in the center of the cell, who did not at all resemble a *blatnye* prisoner.

"No."

"This fellow here," Sarychev pointed at me, "said that if you ever leave the *punishment block*, he'll slash your throat."

"That's not true," Mylovanov answered. "He doesn't know me and I him. Why would he want to slash my throat?"

Sarychev angrily walked away. Some of the prisoners began asking him how long they were to be kept in the *punishment block*.

Sarychev answered in mid-stride that this would depend on their *behavior* and, upon reaching the barred door, he raised his fist in a threatening gesture and spoke:

"I'll expect you to *accept* the new men in accordance with all the rules!"

Sarychev was obviously in a hurry. He was not backing off from his threat to cut us up indefinitely, but planned to have it realized that very same day.

Before the work day ended and the prisoners of our section returned to camp, Sarychev had armed himself against us. The guardhouse defense was strengthened by several dozen convoy guards armed with machine guns and submachine guns. Six *suki* stood at the gate, armed with knives and metal clubs.

The entry into camp began. The guards searched the first five prisoners very thoroughly. As soon as they passed inside, the *suki* knocked them down, beating them with clubs, kicking them, threatening them with knives, and chasing them through the mud to the barracks where they were immediately locked up. This was repeated with the next group of five, and so on until the end.

Sarychev was counting on the hope that the "mutinous *Banderists*" could not tolerate the pressure and would riot. Then, under the pretext of suppressing a riot, he could open fire and thus fulfill his assignment perfectly.

The punishment block that night was comparatively peaceful.

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[12] Accept — the word *accept*, in the prison dialect, meant the person to be accepted was to be beaten to unconsciousness and pushed underneath the sleeping berths.

Next morning, the aid to the *punishment block's* chief prisoner Ivan Gorozhankin burst into our cell. There were gleaming handcuffs visibly protruding from his pocket and a knife was thrust into his boot leg.

"You! You! You!" screamed Gorozhankin, pointing out individual prisoners. "To work! To work!"

Coming closer to us, he trembled with rage and began contemptuously:

"You base *Banderists,* with your filthy mouths! How did you manage to get here still dry? Good, good!... Well, am I going to have fun with you. Now get to work! Move! Move!"

Seven men were led out of another cell. They had been there two days, their faces bruised and swollen. One of them stayed behind, because he could not get up.

Gorozhankin divided us (the ones originally from Karaganda) into two groups of five and handcuffed the members of each group to each other. Then he ordered us to sit. There were other groups of five behind us, but they were not handcuffed.

We sat. Gorozhankin stepped aside, critically observing us in silence for some time, then whipped out the knife from his boot leg (its blade was wrapped in heavy paper), grasped it with both hands and struck us at random with the handle.

Having vented his rage, Gorozhankin led us to the guardhouse. Suddenly, he again became crazed with anger and ordered us to stop. We all halted together and sat down in the mud, because anyone who hesitated would have gotten beaten.

Here Gorozhankin had another outburst of rage, and then let us go on. I was in the first row on the right side. Gorozhankin walked a little behind, so I did not see him. Suddenly I felt a jarring blow at the back of my head, the pain rushing from my eyes, through my whole body, all the way down to the soles of my feet. Everything went black, and I thought I was going to faint. This was Gorozhankin giving me a generous taste of his knife handle.

Beyond the gate of the guardhouse, we walked accompanied by convoy guards. At a designated spot, Gorozhankin removed our handcuffs, distributed crowbars and shovels, and directed us to dig holes for utility posts. The holes were to be a meter square and a meter deep. The quota was ten holes per person.

I dug out few shovelfulls of softer soil and underneath found the ground frozen solid. Gorozhankin stood around with convoy guards and prodded us.

"Dig, dig you snakes! Chew that frozen ground! I want it to be one meter by one meter, or else..."

I dug out one corner of the hole, which instantly filled with water. Gorozhankin came up to me to see how much I had accomplished.

"Ah, yes," he said, feigning a pleasant, courteous manner, "just a little more, and it will be enough; we don't need it any wider here. Why should you wear yourself out unnecessarily?" Then he stepped back a safe distance and again screamed: "All right, you scum! Look alive! One meter by one meter!"

Later that afternoon, Gorozhankin suddenly separated us again into our groups of five, handcuffed us, and led us back to the compound. On the way, he sneered at us:

"Well my brave fellows, it appears that you are very delicate. And how they described you! Ho! Ho! Now you finally showed us what you're really like. Yesterday six men were able to chase your whole brotherhood from the guardhouse gate all the way to the barracks, and not one bastard so much as raised his head. With such spirit, all you're good for is to hide underneath your berths! Ha! Ha!"

"And now, boys, I will tell you why you were released so early from work today. You will be divided into two groups — three hundred fifty men will be sent to zone 4, and the other three hundred fifty will remain here. In zone 4 as well as here, you will be separated and assigned by twos and threes throughout different brigades. Then you won't be able to make any moves. We will twist all of you into rams' horns."

That same evening we were marched through the tundra to zone 4, and the next morning were sent to work in our different brigades. In this manner, we left the internal isolation and found ourselves in the midst of prisoners of both zones 4 and 5.

Sometime during the next two weeks, the prisoners of both zones were shaken by the news: *Gorozhankin had had his head chopped off!*

Change of Climate

A cold polar winter came. We worked in two shifts, with no days off. Each shift was twelve hours long, and we spent two hours travelling to and from the work site. At least two and sometimes four to five hours were spent waiting before the guardhouse in line to pass through search and inspection. The cold was bone chilling. We stood in line silently; no one spoke, because every bit of energy was precious. Time would sometimes pass more quickly, when we could watch the glimmering of the mysterious and overwhelming northern lights. We were so intent in following this heavenly play of fires, that it seemed we not only saw but heard them. I had the impression that the sensation created by these lights could be transmitted with the aid of music. No other art form would be powerful enough.

When we finally neared the guardhouse, we would reluctantly force our eyes away from the sky and lower them to the ground, at the same time falling to our knees and in this fashion creeping up to the guards who carried out the search and inspection. If anyone merely crouched or stooped, instead of actually kneeling, he would receive a blow on the head with a club. Sometimes, on impulse, the guards would club each and everyone of us. Special security guards were chosen for this work. The most infamous of them all was Officer Mykhnik.

In front of the guards, we clumsily unbuttoned our coats with our frozen fingers, and stood up. They searched us, sometimes thoroughly and at other times only perfunctorily. The most carefully searched were the prisoners with an identification number beginning with letters "U" or "F". Often, we were kept out in the cold until one o'clock in the morning, and then at 6:00 a.m., we had to get up for work, because *"work ennobles a person!"*

Some men were not permitted to work, but were placed in prison cells as a restraining and intimidating measure. The *Gorlag* prison was located in our zone. Here, as in all other Norilsk prisons, there was a deeply engraved tra-

dition that all newcomers must pass through the *molotoboyka,* which was a cell occupied by well nourished *suki,* whose sole purpose was to beat up anyone thrown therein.

In addition, the *molotoboyka* was a hideout for those *suki* who had to avoid guard duty outside, in order to escape the vengeance of angered prisoners. So it was no wonder that they unleashed their hatred by punishing everyone who fell into their clutches.

Once, when the *molotoboytsi* were working over a new victim, the prisoners in the neighboring cell created a tremendous uproar. They whistled, yelled, and pounded the door with boards removed from sleeping berths. Instantly, they were answered with a round of gun fire. My townsman, Stepan Fylypchuk, was in great danger there — it was a wonder that he survived. No one was killed, but they were all suppressed.

Suki wholeheartedly supported the camp regime and collaborated with the administration, because they could lead their debauched lives only under such a harsh regime and corruption. On the other hand, the administration always supported and protected the *suki,* because their help was crucial in maintaining the camp regime at the level prescribed for it.

Nonetheless, the *molotoboytsi* could not stay in their cells indefinitely, since it was, after all, a prison; so, when they believed things were safe for them, they would go out into the compound.

Under such conditions, one of the *molotoboytsi,* Sikorskyj, left his prison cell. He then, immediately, headed a brigade and led it out to work. But even before his brigade could begin its work, the brigadier was gone. He lay dead in the snow with no visible wounds.

The *molotoboytsi* somewhat moderated their brutality.

However, it was not Sikorskyj but Bukhtuyev, who constituted the greatest threat to the prisoners. This giant did not seek the hideout of the *molotoboyka.* He feared no one, but everyone feared him. Everyone gave him a wide berth and, if possible, avoided him altogether. But, eventually, some were found who did not step out of his way, but sought him out...

Bukhtuyev was not killed. And even though he eventually regained his health, his psyche was irreversibly changed — he had learned to fear. To fear everyone!

The administration did not discard him altogether — he might still prove to be of some use, so they hid him in one of the *punishment blocks* in one of the zones of the Norilsk camps. In this way, Bukhtuyev ended up in a *dacha,*[13] as the prisoners sarcastically called it. There, he appeared to set a trend. In his wake, the number of *dachnyky*[14] increased until there were close to thirty.

The leadership of the *Gorlag* could not accept this situation. They could not discover who was guilty of the deaths of Gorozhankin and Sikorskyj, and the beating of Bukhtuyev. An interrogation prison was established. Suspects

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[13] Dacha — literal translation "summer villa" — a cell in the *punishment block,* the location of which was unknown to the other prisoners, where some *molotoboytsi, suki* and *blatnye* were hidden for their own safety.

[14] Dachnyky — residents of the *dacha. Dachnyky* — plural; dachnyk — singular.

were subjected to the *molotoboyka* and were then questioned. But instead of giving answers, the prisoners made a demand — cancel the *molotoboyka*.

The impossible happened — the *molotoboyka* was cancelled!

After that, no one feared the brigadiers, no one concealed the use of his own language. A miracle like this had never occurred in Norilsk before. The climate which had been created and maintained throughout the Solovkas was visibly changed, but for Lieutenant Colonel Sarychev and others like him, this new climate was highly distasteful.

The Uprising

We realized that the *Gulag* could not tolerate such a situation and would institute decisive action against us. We were prepared for anything, save for relinquishing our gains. The Russians proposed that we jointly make preparations for three prisoners to escape, who would cross the frontier and inform the world community of our plight.

Suddenly Stalin died. The prisoners celebrated — they had hopes for amnesty. But for naught. As true Bolsheviks, Stalin's successors had not the slightest intention of leaning in the direction of *rotten liberal reforms*. The Soviet government remained firm, immovable and merciless.

We felt this on our own skins. They began to shoot at us without reservation. In the *Gorstroy*, a convoy guard, for no reason whatsoever, shot a prisoner who was lifting a board to his work station. After some time, they took one prisoner and led him into the tundra, where he was shot *while attempting to escape*.

Yet, this was but a test of nerves or a minor skirmish. The principal attack began when General Semenov, chief of the *Gorlag* administration, returned from his trip to Moscow.

It started like this: In zone 5, they hastily separated several barracks as a penal sector and began to collect all the suspect and unrepentive prisoners there to be suppressed. At the same time, they carried out a series of executions in several zones. In this manner, two men were shot in zone 1 (First Lieutenant Shiryayev did the shooting), one man, Petro Safroniuk, was shot in zone 4, and in zone 3, the hard labor zone, all of the barracks were unexpectedly machine-gunned. As a result, six prisoners were killed and fifteen wounded.

On the 25th day of May, 1953, we came out of the barracks, totally depressed. Suddenly, from zone 5, which lay adjacent to the *Gorstroy*, we heard the crackle of automatic weapons. Everyone's arms dropped. We were certain that this time, it would not pass without casualties. Finally we heard the news — one killed, six wounded.

Work at the *Gorstroy* stopped spontaneously. No one worked. People bustled about. The entire *Gortroy* was filled with running prisoners, shouting: *"We are being murdered! We will not work! We demand a commission from Moscow!"*

But as the initial anger decreased, the enraged elements subsided. Some of the more fearful and cautious prisoners returned to work. Around the entire *Gorstroy*, first here, then there, the grinding sound of the ubiquitous pneumatic hammers began biting into the permafrost, as though announcing to everyone to return to work.

We, the supporters of the strike, had to do something to halt the work, for after all, this was exactly the incident which *touched everyone* and for which we had been waiting since Karaganda. To allow such an opportunity to slip away would have been an unforgivable sin.

We dispersed in small groups throughout the entire construction area in order to stop those who were already working. The people listened to us, agreed with us, but, upon hearing the grinding of the pneumatic hammers, all of which could not be silenced at once, they again returned to work. All of our efforts seemed to be in vain. Finally, an idea struck me to proceed to the compressor station, which supplied compressed air for the entire *Gorstroy*, and shut it down. All of the pneumatic hammers became silent at once and work stopped everywhere. And this time it was final. In this manner, our spontaneous fury developed into an organized action.

The *Gorlag* administration fell silent. Now no one shot at us, no one even threatened us. But, they did decide to subdue us through hunger. There was no food brought to the *Gorstroy* the first day, the second, nor the third.

On the morning of the third day we were approached by Lieutenant Colonel Sarychev and several officers, accompanying Major General Paniukov, who had flown in especially from Krasnoyarsk. Authoritatively and self-assuredly he demanded that we immediately return to work and stated that he supposedly would investigate all of the illegalities having taken place here.

We did not come to any agreement with him and told him that we would return to work only after a governmental commission arrives at Norilsk from Moscow.

"You are hampering the governmental plan!" Sarychev began to threaten. "The *Gorstroy* has been idle for three days now! This is sabotage! If you don't want to, the devil with you, don't work! Go to your zones and wait for the commission there, and we will bring in other workers. We have plenty of people!"

"Hrycyak," he turned to me in order to make it clear that I would be responsible for everything, "lead your people out of the *Gorstroy!*"

"There is no hampering of plans here," I answered. "Let us be analytical — since the end of war (we won't count the war), eight years have passed. During that entire time, the Norilsk prisoners have not had a single day off. It appears that we preempted the construction graphics by more than four hundred days. So what kind of hampering of plans are you talking about?"

Sarychev remained silent for a minute, then turned to address all the prisoners: "Go into the camp," he said. "Here you are hungry, but there your rations await you. Get going!"

We did not accept any compromise. However, many of the prisoners began to lean toward returning to the camp. As they say — hunger is no friend of anybody's. And, in addition, the smokers had exhausted their supplies of tobacco, which bothered them more than hunger.

In order to somehow handle this weakness, a sign was placed on one of the buildings that we were erecting, which stated: "*We are being killed and starved!*"

The sign accomplished its purpose, that same day supper was brought;

however, no one ate it. Most of the prisoners were pressing for an immediate return to the camp.

After reaching agreement with prisoners from zone 5 that we would continue the fight in the camp, we parted company.

In our own zone 4, we found the following situation. As a symbol of solidarity with us, all of the prisoners who remained in the zone announced a hunger strike and had also gone hungry for three days. We decided to discontinue the hunger strike, but not to come out for work in the morning.

The administration felt triumphant. In the morning, as though nothing had happened, the electric bells sounded in all the barracks, announcing which columns were to report to the guardhouse to be led to work. The zone was divided into four columns. The first column was to approach the guardhouse first, then the second, and so forth. I was in the fourth column, which usually proceeded to the guardhouse last. In our barrack, as had been agreed, no one was preparing to go out to work and, we thought, that similar situations existed everywhere. Suddenly, one prisoner ran up to me and told me that the first column was moving out to go to work. This constituted a total collapse. I ran to the guardhouse.

Seeing that twenty-five to thirty prisoners from the first column were already standing outside the open gate, with the remainder ready to leave, I approached the senior guard commanding the exodus and, unexpectedly, snapped at him:

"What's this?" I asked in an insistent tone. "Who gave you the right to let people out for work? What kind of self-rule is this? Close the gate!"

"And where do you think you are going, you sheep?" I turned to the prisoners. "To be slaughtered? March right into your barracks, so that not a soul is left here!"

Everyone scattered. Those who were already outside the gate returned. The gate closed; the work party was halted.

For years, the electric bells had called the prisoners of zone 4 out for work; they had replaced the command: *"Every last one of you out!"* So-called work *refusers* did not exist in Norilsk. All individual protests were smothered promptly, absolutely and brutally.

Once, a prisoner of zone 4 decided not to come out for work. So that he could not be forcibly removed from the barrack, he laid down on his berth unclothed. Outside there was a crackling frost. After the prisoners had left for work, the guards pulled him off his berth, dragged him outside, shoved him into a wooden crate for transporting corpses, threw his clothes in with him and, having carried him out beyond the guardhouse, overturned him into the snow. The poor fellow had no other choice, but to quickly dress and accompany the special convoy guard to work.

Six other prisoners, who had been brought under guard to the bathhouse in zone 5, refused to dress and leave the bathhouse until they met with the public prosecutor. But, instead of the public prosecutor, they were met by a first sergeant, who stood before them with a sub-machine gun in his hands.

"Here is your public prosecutor!" he said and shot all six on the spot.

In this manner in Norilsk — and not only in Norilsk — any notion of

protest was crushed at its very inception. All attempts at opposition produced only negative results.

Therefore, it wasn't surprising that the prisoners, despite their wishes, still left their barracks when they heard the ill-tiding signal to *"Get out!"*

Even on the fourth and fifth days of our strike, people would still dress for work. However, on the sixth day, we disconnected the electric bells and none of the prisoners even stirred.

The camp administration bolstered the external guards, but did not attempt any decisive action. Only in zone 5 did the administration try to let loose upon the prisoners soldiers armed with clubs. But the soldiers could not manage to do anything and were repulsed. Then General Semenov gathered all the officers of the Norilsk garrison and led them into the zone. The officers advanced, shooting off their pistols into the ground in front of them. When they neared the solid wall of prisoners, a fistfight erupted. The officers were also repulsed. Attempts to take the prisoners with bare hands failed. We totally paralyzed the internal camp administration and governed ourselves.

Taking advantage of this uncontrolled situation, we put on a performance of Taras Shevchenko's "Nazar Stodola" on the stage of the camp club. This play had been rehearsed prior to the strike, but, upon seeing the stage decorated for the first act, the chief of the *cultural-educational section* attempted to ban it, because, as he put it, said play contained too much Ukrainian patriotism. But this play enjoyed such tumultuous success among all the prisoners, it had to be performed six times...

On June 6th a group of highly placed individuals entered our zone. One of them, wearing the uniform of a colonel, stepped forward and said:

"Moscow has become aware of the disorder going on in Norilsk, including your zone 4. In order to investigate the matter on the spot, Moscow has sent a governmental commission. I, Colonel Kuznyetsov, as chief of the prison administration of MVS of the USSR and personal assistant of Lavrentiy Pavlovych Beria, have been placed in charge of the commission. Commission members are commander of the prison convoy guard forces of MVS of the USSR, Lieutenant-General Seryodkin, and representative of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, comrade Kiselyov. Since we cannot speak with all of you, we suggest that you choose five representatives, who could present to us all of your grievances. We guarantee that none of your parliamentarians will be punished."

Shortly thereafter, each of the more numerous national groups in the camp named a single representative. The Ukrainians were represented by myself, the Russians by Volodymyr Nedorostkov, the Byelorussians by Hryhoriy Klymovych; the names of the Lithuanian and Latvian representatives are unknown to me.

In the meantime, near the guardhouse and, presumably for greater security, close to the watchtower, a red-covered table was placed, behind which were seated the members of the Moscow commission with their secretary.

Slowly, hands behind our backs, we approached the table. One of the commission members, whom Kuznyetsov had called comrade Kiselyov, pointed his finger at me and asked, "Name? Name?" I did not answer, just looked pointedly at my identification number. Kuznyetsov understood the hint and

said: "What do you need his name for? Don't you see his number, U-777? That is his name." Then, turning to me, he added: "That's okay. We will dispose of those numbers, they are not necessary for you nor for us. Sit down and talk. But, specifically, did you come on your own, or were you sent by the people?"

With my hand I indicated the prisoners, who stood as a solid wall at a distance of thirty to forty meters, and said: "Ask them."

"Very well, very well, we believe you," Kuznyetsov said, accepting us as rightful representatives. "Speak, we are listening."

At this point, General Semenov came to the table; I stated that we would not talk in his presence.

"Semenov," roared Kuznyetsov. "What are you doing here? Get out of here!"

I began with the most blatant incidents of illegality, which had taken place in 1946. Crimson with anger, Kuznyetsov cut me off.

"What are you talking about? You yourself, when did you arrive here?"

"Less than a year ago," I answered, "but I am relating to you the facts which, the people who are standing here before you, have mandated me to relate. This is what they are telling you."

Kuznyetsov did not interrupt me again and, after I had enumerated all of our grievances, I dictated to him our demands, which sounded approximately like this:

1. To halt the shootings and all other incidents of arbitrariness in the prisons and camps.
2. To change the entire administration of the *Gorlag*.
3. To shorten the work day in the *Gulag* camps to 8 hours.
4. To guarantee prisoners days off from work.
5. To improve prisoners' food.
6. To permit correspondence and visits with family.
7. To transfer all invalids from Norilsk to the mainland.
8. To remove locks and bars from the barracks and identification numbers from the people.
9. To revoke the decisions of the so-called *Special Consultation Commission*[15] as an unconstitutional organ.
10. To halt tortures during questioning, as well as the practice of closed trials.
11. To organize a review of individual cases of all of the political prisoners.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Kuznyetsov stated that he would bring all of our demands to the government's attention and, guaranteeing that we would no longer be shot at, recommended that we go back to work. We agreed.

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[15] Special Consultation Commission or OSO was a three-member commission created as an arm of the NKVD (Soviet secret police) in November, 1934, consisting of the two highest ranking NKVD officials and the Attorney General of the Soviet Union. This commission was empowered to impose penal sentences by administrative decree, initially for five year terms, then, from 1936 on, for terms of from three to twenty-five years. Said commission was finally liquidated in December, 1953, six months after the events related herein took place.

Later Kuznyetsov held similar discussions with representatives of zones 5, 6 and 1 of the *Gorlag*. To his great amazement, he revealed that, despite being strictly isolated, all of the zones presented identical statements and demands.

Zone 3, the hard labor zone, acted differently. The prisoners of this zone did not accept the mandate of the commission and did not enter into any discussions with it.

The women of zone 6, numbering over six thousand, proved themselves especially steadfast in the face of this unequal battle. In addition to refusing to work, they proclaimed a hunger strike, which lasted for six days before the arrival of the commission.

On the 9th day of June, all of the zones, except for zone 3, returned to work.

That same day, Kuznyetsov related that the government had examined some of our grievances and had resolved the following:

1. To change the *Gorlag* administration.
2. To shorten the work day to 8 hours.
3. To guarantee days off from work.
4. To permit the prisoners to send up to two letters per month and to receive visits from family.
5. To remove locks and bars from the barracks and identification numbers from prisoners.
6. To transfer all of the invalids out of Norilsk.

"In addition to this," stated Kuznyetsov in conclusion, "the Soviet government gave assurances that, in time, all of the individual cases of the prisoners would be reviewed."

The first stage of our struggle ended with this great victory. The battle had progressed far beyond the limits of an ordinary strike in terms of its scope and its implications.

Resumption of Struggle

We raised our heads high and our jailers hung theirs down. No matter what, but a promise to change the entire camp administration did not prophesize anything good for them. And indeed, in a short while, we were informed that Major-General Semenov was removed from the post of administration chief and reassigned as second-in-command. The new chief became Lieutenant-General Tsaryov. In addition, we were told that First Lieutenant Shiryayev and officer Beyner, whom we had accused of the murders of many prisoners, were themselves thrown into prison.

Yet all of this was done for show only, so we continued to be on our guard. We realized what our fate would be, after the commission returned to Moscow, and we would again find ourselves eye-to-eye with the old administration.

The commission, however, was in no rush to leave Norilsk. Zone 3 of hard labor prisoners continued its opposition. Enraged Kuznyetsov tried to subdue them through hunger. Food shipments into the zone were halted, the water was shut off. The prisoners decided to inform the city civilian population of this. It was discovered that prisoner Petro Mykolaychuk was able to pour out printers' type using tin. This type was set into a brief text and anchored into an appropriate frame. The people gathered all of their reserves of paper and leaflets were

printed. The first series of leaflets informed the city's inhabitants that the prisoners were being starved and deprived of water.

The leaflets were distributed around the city in a most ingenious manner. For this task, seven paper kites were fashioned, which, when lifted into the air, carried with them three hundred leaflets apiece. The leaflets were rolled-up and tied with a thread underneath the kite. Beneath the thread hung a lit wadded wick. As the kite rose up, the wick smoldered, burned through the thread, and the leaflets floated down in all directions. The wind carried them throughout the city and even far beyond it.

As the kites rose into the air, the guards shot at them, at times even hitting the target, but to no avail — no harm came to the kites. In this manner about forty thousand leaflets were released over the city. Special Komsomol[16] brigades were organized in the city to gather up the leaflets.

Nonetheless, the first series of leaflets accomplished their purpose; food was brought into the zone and the water was turned on.

Encouraged by their victory, the prisoners of zone 3, on a daily basis, were informing the city population of their situation and their demands to the government.

But Kuznyetsov could not focus all of his attention on zone 3, because he feared that the other zones could again revolt; this time, as a sign of solidarity with the hard labor prisoners. Therefore, he decided to punish the initiators and activists of the opposition in those zones that had already abandoned their fight and only then would he deal with the hard labor prisoners.

In the meantime, Assistant Attorney General, State Legal Advisor Second Rank Vavilov arrived at Norilsk from Moscow.

The reprisals began in this manner: On June 22nd, seven hundred prisoners were being transferred from zone 3 to zone 4, "for economic reasons". The transfer list was compiled in such a way that it contained, in addition to the ordinary, unobtrusive prisoners, all of those who were to be subjected to immediate isolation. As usual, the prisoners were led by convoy guards, but not all together, rather in groups of about a hundred. And, they were led straight through the tundra. In the middle of the tundra, in a hollow where they could not be observed from any direction, the first group was met by Colonel Kuznyetsov, accompanied by members of his commission and a group of officers and guards from the *Gorlag*. Five prisoners were separated from the group and taken under special guard in an unknown direction. The rest were led into our zone 4. All seven groups of prisoners, before completing their transfer from zone 3, went through this weeding-out procedure.

In this mode, the reprisals, which we had expected only after the departure of the Moscow commission from Norilsk, began not only in its presence, but under its immediate direction. We realized that this was only the beginning, that this weeding-out process would unfailingly take place in all of the zones, and somehow we felt that the reprisals against us would be "wet".

"They will all be shot!" I appealed to the prisoners who had arrived from zone 3. "We have to save them! Let us do this: You go to the guardhouse and demand that everyone be returned. If they are not returned — you will refuse

[16] Komsomol — The Young Communist League.

to work and we, as a sign of solidarity, will also refuse to leave for work. We must make them understand that they simply cannot do with us whatever they wish."

Unfortunately, the prisoners of zone 3 rejected my proposal. Perhaps their attitude regarding this problem was elicited primarily by their instinct of self-preservation. Now, when the storm had passed over their heads without touching them, they preferred to remain silent, rather than, once safe, risk calling down misfortune upon themselves. No one wanted to place his life on the line.

Like it or not, we prepared to leave for work, but were still waiting for the return of the first shift. Suddenly the electric bells rang in each barrack, the guards ran up, quickly herding the people to the guardhouse.

I went to the guardhouse, but some of the prisoners climbed onto the roof of the tallest barrack, to scout out what was going on in the *Gorstroy*, where our first shift was working.

The guardhouse gate was already open; near it stood the commander of the zone, First Lieutenant Vlasov.

"What is going on, Vlasov?" I asked him.

"What do you mean? The usual work shift transfer," he answered.

"Why are you starting it early?"

"It's not early. It's time for you to leave."

"Do you know that, since the establishment of an eight hour work day, we leave for work only after the first shift returns from work?"

"The first shift is already on its way back. You will meet it."

In the meantime, the roof-top lookouts reported that no one had as yet left the *Gorstroy*.

"Not true," I contradicted Vlasov. "No one has as yet left the *Gorstroy*. So be advised that, until the first shift enters the zone, we will not leave for work!"

Vlasov went to the telephone and I remained on watch near the guardhouse. The next announcement came from the roof: A group of prisoners, approximately one hundred men, had left the *Gorstroy* and was headed for the tundra.

Vlasov came up to me and said:

"Your people are coming now. Go out and convince yourselves of this."

"One hundred men left the *Gorstroy* and they are being led into the tundra, not towards the camp," I told Vlasov. "I am again informing you that we are not leaving for work until we see everyone here and become convinced that no harm has come to them."

Seeing that the first group of men was being led by the guards into the tundra, the rest of the prisoners of the first work shift refused to leave the *Gorstroy*. In this way, not only the plan to weed-out the prisoners of zone 4 collapsed, but it sparked a new wave of organized protest.

Eventually the group of prisoners, that had originally been led from the *Gorstroy* into the tundra, approached the guardhouse. This constituted the last attempt by the camp administration to correct the situation.

"Well, Hrycyak," Vlasov said, "the people have arrived, now get out to work!"

"One hundred men have returned," I answered, "but more than two thousand were at work. Where are the rest?"

"We are not even a hundred," some prisoners called out from beyond the gate, having overheard my conversation with Vlasov. "Seven of us were taken away in the tundra."

"In that case,"I told Vlasov, "our conversation is ended. We are not leaving for work until you return the seven that were kidnapped from us in such a criminal fashion."

Then, turning to the prisoners who had gathered nearby, I explained the entire situation and advised them all to retreat from the guardhouse and not to go to work.

We all scattered. Ninety-three men from the first shift entered the zone. The second stage of our fight for the right to live had begun. Along with us, the prisoners of men's zone 5 and women's zone 6 resumed their struggle.

The prisoners of the first work shift, who had remained at the *Gorstroy,* finally agreed to return to the camp, but only on the condition that they would not be led in separate groups, but all together.

We felt intuitively that we had to continue the fight at all costs, that our gains were not steadfast, that the concessions which Moscow had so easily agreed to were just a delaying manoeuver, which inevitably will be followed by reprisals and renewed pressure by the regime.

For this, there was no lack of precedents. We knew very well that any attempts at organized or individual protest would end, for those who were protesting or complaining, tragically. Among us, rumors were circulating that in one of the camps near Salekhard four hundred men were shot for attempting to organize a protest.

My fellow countryman, Borys Horbulevych, related to us that in 1947, in one of the zones of the *Ivdel-lag*[17], the following occurrence took place:

A former Colonel of the Red Army, prisoner Vyshniakov, in some way expressed his indignation against the high-handedness and outrages to which the camp administration subjected the prisoners. He was immediately placed under guard and put through the investigation process. Along with him, the investigation involved additional twenty-nine former army officers and two prisoners, who had never served in the army.

One of the latter two was Borys Horbulevych. This entire group, the leader of which was considered to be Colonel Vyshniakov, was accused of maintaining contacts with foreign intelligence agencies and having had as its purpose no more and no less than the overthrow of the Soviet government. *The plan* for this overthrow was absolutely simple — Vyshniakov's group would organize an attack on the guards of their zone, disarm them, and distribute the weapons to the prisoners. The armed prisoners would then attack the neighboring zones, again disarming the guards, arming the freed prisoners, and then, having joined forces, would conquer the city of Sverdlovsk. In Sverdlovsk, Vyshniakov would announce a provisional government, organize a march on Moscow, and — period!

Moscow was immediately informed of Vyshniakov's *plan.* The investigators were given the task of obtaining confessions from the entire group as soon as

[17] Ivdel-lag — a camp, providing labor for the logging industry, located in the Ivdel region

possible. Of course, the investigators performed their task honorably — all thirty-two prisoners not only confessed their guilt, but indicated where, when, and from whom they received their orders.

Inasmuch as no one was able to resist the tortures of the interrogation, they all decided to "confess" and purposely told absurdities, so that afterwards, during the trial, these could be contradicted and the entire investigation placed in an idiotic position.

Thus, Colonel Vyshniakov recalled an episode from a detective novel and utilized it in his "confession". He named a restaurant in the city of Gdansk and the name of an agent who gave him his orders. The names of the restaurant and the agent were taken from the novel.

Another prisoner, former Comintern[18] courier Trybrat, gave the name and Viennese address of a real person — the Sectretary General of the Austrian Communist Party, to whom he, Trybrat, had at one time relayed Comintern mail. In this manner, the chief of the Austrian communists was transformed, at least in Trybrat's testimony, into an agent of the CIA.

The investigation was concluded. A special commission from Moscow arrived at Ivdel to look first-hand at these dangerous rebels.

Finally the trial began. But to the great surprise of the accused, the court accepted all of their confessions as credible and utilized them as basis of the trial. They were all sentenced to twenty-five years of incarceration (at that time, the death penalty had been abolished).

Well, what were we up against, now that we had stirred up all of Norilsk and challenged Moscow itself?

No matter what dangers threatened us, we decided to fight as long as our strength lasted. The first step in our resumption of struggle was the proclamation of a period of mourning for those who had been taken away from us for punishment. As a sign of mourning, a black banner was placed atop each of our two tallest barracks. Black banners also appeared atop the barracks of zone 5.

These banners distressed the administration more than our refusal to work. Many prisoners also objected to them. Numerous prisoners approached me with questions as to the significance of the black flags. I explained that this was a symbol of mourning for those who had been taken from us, as well as a symbol of our sorrowful existence. There were arguments:

"This is the anarchist flag. What are you doing, proclaiming anarchy? The flag of mourning is red with a black border!"

"The anarchists have a skull-and-cross-bones on their flag," I rebounded, "and a red flag with a black border is a bolshevik flag. We will not rally underneath such a flag. Our flag is black, as black as our existence."

We could not come to any agreement, the lack of which resulted in division into two groups — the first in favor of the black banner, the second — against it. However, this was only the outward expression of our differences, the roots of which were hidden far deeper. The group which was against the black banner

[18] Communist International — an international forum dominated by Soviet Russia, dedicated to the spread of world communism by concerted activities of the various Communist Parties that were members of the Comintern. Actually and historically this was a Soviet Russian rubber-stamp organization.

included those prisoners who were against continuing the struggle, believing that by it we would simply strengthen Moscow's anger and bring down upon ourselves even greater misfortune.

This group was headed by Ivan Klachenko-Bozhko. He was an old man, a former communist, who by then had completed his twenty-first year of imprisonment (such persons were scarce at the time). He was well-known and respected by all the prisoners in our camp. In his twenty-one years of imprisonment, Klachenko-Bozhko had seen everything, thereby having good reason not to believe in the potential of success of any kind of fight. Since this group was in the minority, it limited itself to the status of opposition.

After a short time, the following conversation took place between Klachenko and myself:

"Why are you doing this?" Klachenko asked me.

"In order to make it more difficult for them to finish off those who were taken from us and to caution them against further repressions against us. We must convince them that, at the slightest attempt at additional pressure, we will again rebel."

"They'll shoot all of us, and then be absolutely certain that there won't be any more rebellions."

"They won't shoot us!" I rashly cut him off.

"And what will they do, maybe feel ashamed? Haven't you heard what happened in East Berlin? Before the eyes of all of Europe, they crushed German workers with tanks; but, of course, here, in the uninhabited tundra, they will be ashamed to shoot their own political prisoners? Are you thinking about what you are saying?"

"They won't be ashamed and they won't be afraid," I answered. "We know what they are capable of doing. But I say once again, we rebelled in order to put a stop to the shootings, not to induce them. I will not force any one into a bullet's path, and I will not allow them to shoot at us. For the time being, we have no reason whatsoever to fear and capitulate."

Klachenko remained dissatisfied by our conversation, and we coldly went our separate ways.

I was called to the guardhouse. I went together with Volodymyr Nedorostkov. Kuznyetsov and Vavilov entered the zone, accompanied by the members of the Moscow commission and senior officers of the *Gorlag* administration.

"What's this!" Kuznyetsov barked angrily. "This is how you come to terms with me? Thank you! I obtained such grand improvements for you, I was successful in getting the Soviet government to promise to review all of your individual cases. And this is how you repay me? Into what kind of position are you placing me?"

After this general introduction, he appealed to Nedorostkov and me:

"What do you want?"

"We want you to return all those who have been taken from us, because we have reason to fear that you have taken them to be shot."

"Where did you get that idea from?" Vavilov interjected. "Tell the truth, now, have you heard even one shot fired since the Moscow commission arrived here?"

"No, we haven't. But explain to us, why you grab people in the tundra and take them away to parts unknown?"

"They were transferred," Kuznyetsov explained. "The camp administration always has the right to do this."

"We were not born yesterday and we know how transfers are carried out. For transfers, people are taken directly from the zone, not grabbed in the tundra."

"We assure you that no harm has come to them. Now go back to work."

"So return them all and we'll go."

"Again we assure you," said Kuznyetsov, "that they are quite safe. Here before you stands the Assistant Attorney General. He has come here to ascertain that there have been no violations of socialist legality here at Norilsk. We will take whomever we need; we have an absolute right to do this."

"In that case," I said, "let's compromise. We will choose a delegation from among us that will go with you and see where those people are and what their condition is. When the delegates return and assure us that everything is in order, and if you agree never to repeat this kind of behavior, then we will come out in an organized fashion to work."

Kuznyetsov did not accept my proposal and left the zone.

Now, he decided to leave us without water, which was supplied to the zone from the tundra via a water pumping station. A prisoner was always stationed there, watched by two convoy guards. During the work shift of a prisoner with the grand name of Lev[19], an officer approached him and ordered him to shut off the water. Lev categorically refused. The officer became threatening. Then Lev told the officer. "Have you considered what could happen if we shut off the water? A fire will immediately start in the zone. The prisoners will burn all the barracks. Who will answer for that? If you will take all of the responsibility upon yourself, then write it down in the log, and I'll carry out your order."

The officer returned empty-handed.

At first glance, it would appear that Lev acted absolutely logically and that there was nothing unusual in his action. But actually, this was an extremely heroic deed, since Lev realized very well in whose hands he was and that, for such insubordination to a guard officer, he could have been shot on the spot.

I was acquainted with this man, who was Polish, born in Zhytomyr, Ukraine, and studied at the Taras Shevchenko University in Kyiv. This is all that I know of him. Of the other heroes, I don't even know that much. Weren't those heroes, who picketed the guardhouse to prevent the entry of camp guards, convoy guards and officers into the zone? They steadfastedly stood there at a distance of fifteen to twenty meters from the bore of a machine gun that was pointed at them, which, at any moment, could spit death-bearing fire. Nonetheless, they stood firm!

Others, more cautious, were stopping me at every step of the way, questioning, what more were we demanding, why the black banners, and whether this struggle was worth being shot for.

"It's worth it," I answered. "We rebelled in order to stop the shootings, not

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[19] Lev — literal translation — lion — nomenclature in English — Leo.

to induce them. Who can say how many thousands of our brothers have been laid to rest at the foot of the Schmidtykha[20] for no reason at all? One way or another, death awaits each of us daily. Why, you who are not afraid of dying individually, are so afraid of dying together? After all, no one is forcing anyone to die. If I see that a critical point has been reached, we will stop the fight, and there won't be any shootings."

Again I went to the guardhouse, because a messenger informed me that Vlasov wanted to see me.

He stood on the threshold of the open door, intentionally awaiting me there, so that I will be forced to approach as close as possible. But I stopped at a safe distance — with two prisoners guarding me on either side — and asked what he wanted.

"Come with me to headquarters," Vlasov said, gesturing with his head. "Vavilov wants to speak with you."

"Let him come to me."

"He can't, because he is ill."

"That's too bad," I said, "but there's no hurry. When he is feeling better, let him come. I'll wait."

In the meantime, the guards watching Lev at the water pumping station told him: "Soon this will all be at an end. Your leader has been arrested. He has been called to headquarters on the pretext of negotiations and the idiot believed that we really wanted to talk with him, so he went. But as soon as he crossed the threshold of the guardhouse, he was seized, handcuffed and thrown into a car. Now you won't last even two more days."

Kuznyetsov had spread this rumor among the soldiers, probably because he was certain that this plan would be successful. Also, he had to give the tired and worried soldiers at least some hope in order to bolster their morale.

We didn't ignore the soldiers either; we threw notes to them in which we explained who we were and what we were demanding, and called to them not to shoot at us.

The commanders could no longer depend on such spoiled soldiers, so they were all replaced by others.

This change put us on our guard. New soldiers, who didn't know us at all, were very dangerous to us.

As a result of this change, the opposition among the prisoners began to grow and became more active. It was reported to me that the Lithuanians, Byelorussians, and even some of the Ukrainians who had followed Klachenko, were threatening to return to work as an organized group. Sad but true!

I sought out Klachenko, who was at the time lying on his berth in the barrack. Upon seeing me, he asked.

"Why did you come here?"

"I want to talk with you."

"I have nothing to say to you, and don't wish to. Get out!"

I left him and met the Byelorussian Klymovych.

"Hrisha," I said to him, "I want to talk to you."

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[20] Schmidtykha — Schmidt Mountain.

"I have nothing to talk to you about," was his answer.

After this, I didn't even go to the Lithuanians.

So, ultimately, we divided into two opposing camps — for and against continuing the struggle. The supporters of the struggle were still considerably more numerous.

Now we began to expect that the soldiers would burst into the zone and engage us in fistfights, as happened in zone 5; so we prepared our defense.

In the face of the danger hanging over us, people's feelings of blood-unity sharpened and everyone began to group more closely by nationality. However, this did not mean we splintered. On the contrary.

Three Estonians came up to me and said:

"We are Estonians. In this dangerous time, we want to be together with everyone. For this reason, we would like you to keep us informed, in detail, of your negotiations with Kuznyetsov and of the situation in general. We also want you, in time of need, to completely depend on us. There aren't many of us, but we are all former Estonian military officers. We assure you that we will do everything that you ask of us. We ask that you do not forget about us. Here is our representative, through whom we will be maintaining constant contact with you."

The Latvians behaved the same way, as did the Poles and the Germans. With the other national groups, I was in personal contact from the very beginning.

After all this, yet another delegation approached me in order to establish contact.

"We are Germans," they said.

I scrutinized them and explained that there must be some misunderstanding, that Germans had already been to see me and that I was already in contact with them.

"Who could that have been?" the Germans asked, bewildered.

After I explained, they laughed.

"What kind of Germans are those? They are German Germans. We are the true Germans — Russian Germans."

In this manner, each national group expressed its willingness to unitedly carry on our fight.

At the same time, the prisoner opposition groups consolidated. With increasing forcefulness, they demanded a stop to the fight. Leaflets appeared calling on the prisoners to concede. In addition, the administration was successful in spreading among the prisoners the rumor that the "disorder" at Norilsk was created by the Ukrainians, wanting to take advantage of this situation to break away the Soviet transpolar region from Russia and annex it to Ukraine. Idiotic? Yes. But the more idiotic the rumor, the more difficult it was to contradict.

In the meantime, the Ukrainians were led to believe that they could wipe their slates clean, if they themselves would liquidate their leader.

Our guess was that the administration was spreading these rumors among the prisoners through the female doctors, who were not only permitted into the clinic, but were guaranteed complete safety.

Again Kuznyetsov entered the zone and called me out. Again I went with Nedorostkov.

"Who gave you the authority?" Kuznyetsov asked derisively. "How is it, that you can be the representatives of a working people? Come on, show me your hands, let me see your callouses."

I did not show my hands, but Nedorostkov somehow reflexively pushed his forward. Nedorostkov was an invalid with a weak heart and, therefore, did not go out to work; his hands were soft and smooth.

Kuznyetsov looked at them and began again:

"So, what kind of laborers are you? There aren't even any callouses on your hands. Now everything is clear to me! The people want to work, but Hrycyak is holding a knife to them. We will talk with the people yet, and without Hrycyak."

I raised the flaps of my field jacket and said:

"Look, no knives! If you want to talk with the people, then please, approach closer and speak. If the people express a desire to go back to work, then let them. No one will prevent them."

Kuznyetsov did not indicate the slightest desire to approach the prisoners, who stood in a throng at a distance of thirty to forty meters from us. First Lieutenant Vlasov glanced at Kuznyetsov, then turned his gaze to me and said:

"Come on! I'll go and speak with them."

After nearing the prisoners, Vlasov asked in a weak and somewhat trembling voice:

"Well, boys, are we going back to work?"

"Until the Attorney General arrives at Norilsk, no one is going to work," was the answer given by Stepan Venhryn, whose voice I recognized.

"So, you see, Hrycyak, how it is?" Vlasov spoke up with more certainty. "Someone here needs the Attorney General, and five thousand refrain from work. Leave them be, let them go; the people want to work."

"Work?" the prisoners answered in a chorus. "You work. We have worked enough for you. You are asking for our callouses? What kind of callouses do you need? Bloody ones? You bloodthirsty devils!"

Kuznyetsov immediately rushed beyond the guardhouse, but Vlasov at first fearfully retreated backwards, then turned and also ran to the guardhouse.

We felt that Kuznyetsov had used up all of his patience and that Moscow was not exactly patting his head over the fact that he was taking such a long time to deal with us. We knew that the end for us was near, but we did not want to give in. We were pleased that we had forced Moscow to deal seriously with us.

Although on the surface we appeared to be united, internally the debate among us never ended, not for a moment. Should we continue the fight or should we end it?

Some of the prisoners asked me:

"Well, are we going back to work?"

"What work? Who told you that?"

"Klachenko. We have known Klachenko for a long time, but you only briefly. Klachenko says to go back to work, and you — not to. Who are we to listen to?"

"Listen to whoever you wish," I answered, because I saw that the reason they were asking was because they would rather listen to Klachenko.

These types of conversations between me and many other prisoners were taking place ever more frequently. Some of the prisoners even began to act more aggressively toward me, and some questioned:

"All right, at first we rebelled against the shootings and demanded a commission from Moscow. The commission arrived, reviewed our grievances, gave us great concessions... so what more can we demand?"

In the meantime, a group of highly educated prisoners wrote an appeal from the prisoners of zone 4 of the *Gorlag* to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., to the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., and to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R.

The appeal began with criticism of the socio-economic structures which led to the formulation of the most favorable conditions for the trampling of all of the basic human rights and freedoms. Then they explained the plight of political prisoners in the prisons and camps of the *Gulag*, and finally they repeated and expanded on the demands which we had orally presented before the commission. Contained in this appeal were clearly stated demands to halt throughout the country the practice of closed trials and tortures during pre-trial investigations, to abolish all of the decisions of the *Special Consultation Commission* or OSO, so-called "triumvirate", as an unconstitutional organ, to halt the arbitrary shootings in prisons and camps and, finally, to review the individual cases of all the political prisoners.

However, regardless of such open criticism of the existing order and the protests against the pressures to which we were constantly subjected, we did not take a hostile stand in relation to the central government itself, because we expected that, after Stalin's death, the newly formed government would at least attempt to lead the country onto the straight and narrow path. Therefore, we declared to the government: "Our goal is freedom..." and "We want to be talked to not through sub-machine guns, but in a language of father and son." The appeal ended with a warning to the government: "If our demands are not realized, we will continue our present tactics, no matter where we may find ourselves!"

Then, we had to somehow manage to read this appeal to all of the prisoners and obtain their acceptance. However, I did not dare call a meeting, because I was afraid that my opponents would break it up. But, if there is a will, there is a way. I asked two young boys to carry out of the club a table and a podium and set them up on the dais in front of the doors to the library; then cover the table with a blanket, place a glass of water on it, and step aside. I revealed my plan only to Volodymyr Nedorostkov.

When the construction of this improvised tribune was completed, I locked myself in the club and observed through the window the behavior of the prisoners. The people gathered in no time, as though drawn by some irresistible magnetic force. Everyone understood, of course, that something very important was about to happen — someone was going to speak. Speculation spread as to who would be doing the talking; perhaps it would be Kuznyetsov himself.

At that time, our zone numbered five thousand two hundred twenty-one (5,221) men. And, undoubtedly there was no one who wouldn't come to find out for himself what was going to be said.

When, in this manner, the gathering was completed, I left the club and, together with Nedorostkov, who was already waiting for me, climbed onto the dais. Nedorostkov opened the meeting and gave me the floor.

"Dear friends!" I began. "Everything that is taking place today in Norilsk is not a separate or isolated matter, but part of a great struggle of all our people for their dignity and human rights..."

The people all around had been transformed into attention itself. Everyone stood silent and poised, as though turned to stone. It was easy to speak. It was obvious that everyone was listening attentively. This deathly silence and tension were the result of two factors. Firstly, everyone wanted to hear something new and, secondly, everyone was afraid that the guards might not tolerate such a large gathering of people and open fire.

As it happened, in a moment of the greatest tension, one of the prisoners unexpectedly, in a whisper, warned me:

"Hide, they are shooting!"

The irreparable happened — in a second all of the prisoners fell face-down to the ground. The panic spread even to the soldiers, who stood grouped near the barbed wire, and they all began to run away. I became lost and did not know how to behave — should I also hide, or should I somehow try to correct the situation?

I had placed a lot of faith in this meeting, because I was somehow certain that it would unify us, that here we would be able to overcome all of our differences. I had even prepared the convening of this meeting so very carefully, that no one could disrupt it. And now? Everything was lost.

In order to somehow salvage the situation, I stepped down from the dais and tried to lift one or two prisoners to their feet, so that the others, seeing them, would get up. However, I was not successful; it was as though the people had frozen to the ground. Upon returning to the dais, I stepped back to my original place and, leaning my elbows on the podium, began to watch calmly to see what would come of all this.

Finally, some of the prisoners, who were in the back rows, one by one, began to get up and flee to the barracks. But the others, who had risen earlier, tried to stop them:

"Cowards, where are you off to? Get back here, all of you!"

The people quickly quieted down and again started to wait tensely. I continued my speech and this time completed it successfully. The prisoners listened with their previous attentiveness and tension, as though nothing had happened.

After I had finished reading the appeal, all of the prisoners answered with a joyous "Hurrah!", throwing their caps into the air. Everyone was as happy, as though we had already attained our goals.

As I was stepping off the dais, a courier came up to me and handed me a message. I was reading the note and saw, from the corner of my eye, an aged man, by appearance an Asian, who was not taking his eyes off me and edging ever closer. When I put the note in my pocket, the Asian removed the cap from his gray head, shook my hand and said:

"Well, dear brother, permit me to thank you for all that you have done for us!" and, squeezing my hand tightly, he added, "I am Chinese."

"I am Ukrainian," I answered, also strongly squeezing his hand.

Many other prisoners followed the example of this old Chinese.

"I am Estonian!"

"I am Polish!"

"I am German!"

"I am Byelorussian!"

I have to admit that I could not suppress my national pride and replied to everyone that I was Ukrainian.

My close acquaintances and friends greeted me silently. Lastly, Ivan Klachenko-Bozhko came up to me. He also shook my hand and said:

"Greetings! I too wish to tell you that I have known this regime since its inception and, I can assure you with certainty, that since its establishment in Russia, a freer meeting on its territory has never been held. Greetings!"

Our hostility ended. My relations with Hryhoriy Klymovych also improved considerably.

However, this meeting also had some negative results; some of my closer friends began to fear for me, and some even began to avoid me, to escape bringing some sort of evil down upon themselves. One of my countrymen, Stepan S., called me aside for a secret conversation. It seems that even today I recall every word.

"What are you doing?" he asked contritely. "Do you know that they will shoot you?"

"I know."

"So why don't you watch out for yourself? What's with you, don't you know how many of us have already been destroyed? No other nation has suffered as much as we. Now let some others sacrifice themselves a little."

"I am not sending anyone to be sacrificed," I replied to him. "But I have the right to sacrifice myself. And besides, what is the meaning of one more life in comparison to all those losses which we have sustained? If you see me doing something bad — tell me and I will listen to you."

"No, I don't see anything bad, on the contrary, everything is commendable, but I am worried for you."

"There is no reason to be afraid now. What I had done at the *Gorstroy* was enough reason for them to shoot me. Now I do not fear anything, except perhaps inactivity. The more I annoy them, the easier it will be to die."

Another similar meeting took place with two Latvians, who told me the following:

"We see that one of our young, fair-haired boys often talks to you. We beg you not to allow him near you, send him away. You don't know what kind of boy he is. He is our nation's pride and all of our hope! We can't allow him to risk his life but, because he meets with you so often, he could be shot. We will be very grateful to you!"

I explained to them that their young countryman gave me many helpful suggestions, that he helped me quite a bit, and that I had no reason for turning

away from him. However, I calmed them by the fact that I understood their anxiety and that in the future I would try to avoid him. I thought to myself, "My dear Latvians! Your small nation will never die when you so carefully watch over your prominent people!"

The next day, which was, as I recall, June 29, a messenger from the picketers at the guardhouse ran up to me and said that administration officials had entered the zone and were heading directly for the people. The picketers did not know what to do.

"Form a wall and do not let them pass," I said and headed for the guardhouse. Suddenly — machine gun fire. I ran. Along the way I saw a prisoner, his face covered with blood, running among the people and calming them:

"Brothers, don't be afraid, they are using blanks!"

The shooting quickly ended, the people quieted down. There was no panic, everyone stood his ground.

This incident happened when Kuznyetsov, together with his retinue, approached the people and the picketers tried to stop them by shouting *halt!* But he paid no attention and came closer. Then one of the picketers lost control and angrily threw a rock which hit Colonel Mykhaylov in the head. Mykhaylov grabbed his head and also angrily gave the command: "Convoy guards, fire!" The soldiers opened fire and wounded twenty persons. There were no dead.

Kuznyetsov retreated with his retinue back to the guardhouse, from where he silently began to watch us. We, for our part, silently watched him. A deathly silence descended. Finally, General Seryodkin couldn't stand the silence and, cupping his hands, shouted:

"Soviet youth! Drop everything and come over to us!"

The prisoners burst out laughing; witty and not-so-witty remarks showered down. When everything had quieted down, I shouted to Seryodkin:

"Why are you conversing with your youth from such a distance? Come here closer and talk. Who knows? Maybe the Soviet youth is really sick of this place and will gladly go with you."

"How am I supposed to come nearer?" Seryodkin replied in a trembling voice. "They have busted the Colonel's head; they could even kill me!"

Again there was a burst of laughter.

The commission left the zone and we broke up. I went to surgeon Omelchuk to determine the condition of the severely injured. One of them was already lying on the operating table. The surgeon was preparing himself for the operation.

Leaving the clinic, I met a young German, who was being accompanied by two older prisoners, also Germans. Inasmuch as they did not speak Russian very well, nor I German, we communicated in a mixture of Russian and German. Here is our conversation, almost word-for-word:

"Oh, it's good that I met you," said the young German.

"How may I serve you?"

"I heard that there are seriously wounded here. Is this true?"

"Yes."

"I want to donate my blood. Don't refuse to accept it. I am young, healthy, and I cannot help in any other way. I would like to be with you in this, but, unfortunately, I haven't got the courage nor the fortitude. Therefore, I ask you to accept my blood, so that at least in this small way I can be of assistance in your battle."

"In that case, go and see the doctor," I advised him.

The German became visibly happy and, darting past me, quickly disappeared into the dark corridor of the clinic. I never saw him again and don't know his name.

It was as though the people had been reborn, their souls having been uplifted. Examples of self-dedication occurred at every step of the way. Some were visible, others passed unnoticed. The characteristic trait of nearly all the people was the prominent feeling of responsibility and individual accountability. Everyone felt that the entire brunt of the battle lay specifically on his shoulders, that on him alone "the status of millions depends"[21]. And this was true. For without a deep understanding of the issue by each and every one of us individually, we couldn't have lasted even one day.

Here I would like to point out yet another striking example of dedication from zone 3.

The term of incarceration ended for one of the hard labor prisoners, a former Captain in the Rumanian army, at the precise time that our battle sparked. He was summoned to have his papers drawn up. When he came to the guardhouse, he declared:

"Inasmuch as my term of imprisonment has ended, I am not participating in this fight. However, until it comes to an end, I cannot leave the zone, so as not to breach the principle of insubordination established by my comrades and so as not to induce envy in those who remain here behind the barbed wire."

Incidents of returns of prodigal sons also occurred.

Serving his term of punishment in our zone was a prisoner, Popov, who held the post of manager of the *construction operations*. He was very insolvent toward the prisoners and everyone hated him. Similarly, the prisoners hated his lackey, our countryman, Pavluk, who served Popov faithfully and trustingly, as Sancho Panza did the courageous Don Quixote.

This happened on June 22, when our first shift returned from the *Gorstroy*. Seeing Popov and Pavluk standing side-by-side at the head of the column, the prisoners began shouting from the zone:

"Popov, don't try to enter the zone, we will kill you! Stay there with your beloved superiors!"

Popov gladly stepped aside.

"And you, Pavluk, why did you stop? Get over there with your lord and master, so you can serve him further!"

Pavluk angrily looked at Popov and, waving his hand, headed straight for the gates.

"Pavluk, go back! Pavluk, we'll kill you, go back!"

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[21] A quotation from a poem entitled *Preparation for the Great Moment*, by Ukrainian poet Ivan Franko.

Pavluk did not stop. When he had come closer, the crowd opened up to allow him to get further inside the zone. I rushed after him, in order to prevent mob-law court.

"You scoundrel, why did you come here? Where is your place?" the enraged prisoners shouted at him.

"My place is here, among you," Pavluk said and sat down on the ground. "If you don't want me alive, then kill me on the spot, so that at least in death I can be with you!"...

After the June 29th incident, a complete lull set in. Kuznyetsov left and did not appear again. On June 30, we noticed that none of the officers of our camp could be seen beyond the zone. What did this all mean? Perhaps they were holding a council of war... The quiet put us on our guard.

On the morning of the 1st of July, 1953, the prisoners of zone 5 were fired upon by sub-machine guns and automatic rifles. As a result, twenty-seven men were killed and an unknown number wounded.

From the roofs of our barracks we could only see the roofs of the barracks of zone 5. Everything that took place below was invisible. We only heard the sub-machine gun fire and the angry, despairing cries of the men and women.

The men's zone 5 and the women's zone 6 were situated side-by-side. When they began to shoot at the prisoners of zone 5, the women approached the forbidden zone and, with pleading outstretched arms (many of which held babies), shouted:

"Do not shoot at them, shoot at us!"

Finally everything quieted down. The banners disappeared from the barracks.

"Again the blood of our brothers has been spilled," I appealed to the prisoners of our zone. "Let us commemorate this incident on our banner!"

After about a half hour, a huge black flag with a red stripe in the middle floated from the tall chimney of our bakery.

Someone had even composed a hymn of the Norilsk prisoners, written in Russian, and ending in these words:

"And the black flag with the blood-red stripe.
Will point out the path in our righteous fight!"

On July 2nd, the young fair-haired Latvian approached me and said that two loudspeakers had been affixed to the soldiers' barracks, aimed at our zone.

"This is a dangerous development," he explained. "With sub-machine guns they will only bring us closer together, but with words they can corrupt us completely. But I have an idea how to prevent this. The electricity for them is supplied by our transformer. We must cut off their energy."

I sought out the electrician. He began to beg off, saying that he had only six months of his term left to serve and was afraid to jeopardize his position by fooling around with the electricity. However, he gladly gave me the key to the shack, and I assured him that, if asked about this, I would tell them that I took the key away from him by force.

Spontaneously, the people started to gather closer to the loudspeakers, not unlike several days ago — to my improvised tribune.

Kuznyetsov arrived from the city. The radio-announcement began:

"Attention, attention! This is an important announcement from the administration of the Mountain Camp! Repeat!..."

At the word "repeat", I shut off the electricity. The transmission was cut off. The prisoners began to scorn:

"Well, let's go, let's go, repeat it. Why did you shut up?"

After waiting a while longer and seeing that the transmission would not resume, the people dispersed.

Then, after about two hours, the lookouts reported that soldiers were laying a cable through the tundra.

I entered the shack and switched on the electricity. When they saw that the power was restored, they probably thought, as I had anticipated, that we, interested in hearing what they had to say, decided not to hinder them further.

The soldiers stopped laying the cable. The announcer made an adjustment and the transmission resumed:

"Attention, attention! This is an important announcement from the administration of the Mountain Camp! Repeating..."

At the word "repeating", the transmission was again cut off, although the electricity remained unimpaired. The announcer blew into the microphone, made an adjustment, and again:

"Attention, attention! Repeating..."

At the word "repeating", the transmission was again cut off, again the lines were checked, another adjustment, and again:

"Attention, attention!..."

The same thing again. The prisoners burst into uncontrollable laughter. But, undoubtedly, the poor announcer did not see the humor. However, there was nothing he could do, while I sat in the shack and, after each "repeating", snapped off the feeder, then, in order to confuse them, turned it back on immediately.

Only after the fifth attempt to continue the transmission, did Kuznyetsov understand that he had been made a fool of. He climbed into his car and drove off.

The soldiers again took to laying the cable and this time completed the task.

In the morning on July 3, Kuznyetsov came back. The announcement began:

"Attention, attention!... You will now hear the list of people who have been designated for transfer..."

A thousand people were named.

After reading the entire list, the announcer added:

"All those who have been designated for transfer should appear immediately at the guardhouse with their personal belongings!"

No one moved. Then the announcer started to attack me personally, calling on the prisoners not to fear me or to listen to me.

Afterwards, a list of some seven hundred invalids, who had supposedly been designated for transfer to the mainland, was read.

The invalids bustled about and began to gather. In response to my warning that it was only a provocation and that, at this time, no transfer to the mainland could take place, they started to complain that the administration wanted to transfer them from here and that I was preventing their going.

I did not contradict them and they quickly gathered and headed for the guardhouse. The gate opened; the inspector of the special formation entered the zone with a list in his hand. I came up to him to make arrangements for the exit of the invalids out of the zone. At that instant, a messenger ran up to me and stated that the soldiers had cut through the barbed wire at the rear of the zone, making a wide opening in the *barrier*.

"What's this?" I asked the inspector. "What did you do, dream up this transport so that, while we were involved with the transfer of the invalids, you could hit us from behind?"

"What are they doing there? I cannot function under such conditions!" the inspector stated angrily and left the zone.

"Now you understand to what mainland they were transferring you?" I turned to the invalids. "We stated our demands to Moscow that you should be transferred from here and we will continue to insist on this. But you've got to understand that you are not going anywhere at this time. If you don't want to stand firm with us, go to your barracks, lay down on your berths, and stay there; just don't cause any trouble!"

Obviously unhappy, the invalids dispersed. The gate did not close and the path to the forbidden zone also remained open. Our defenses became vulnerable from both sides.

In the meantime, the announcer had begun to attack me and my close friends ever more vehemently:

"We know," he kept repeating continuously, "that the honest people here are innocent, that they are being enticed and terrorized by a small band of trouble makers, such as Yevhen Hrycyak, Ivan Klachenko-Bozhko, Ivan Halchynskyj, Volodymyr Nedorostkov, and Ivan Strygin. Prisoners, don't be afraid of them and don't listen to them. Break down windows, doors, come over to us through the guardhouse gate or through the opening to the forbidden zone. We will welcome you gladly."

"Do you hear what they are saying about you?" asked my good Georgian friend Chubuk.

"I hear."

"And what are you thinking of doing now?"

"The same."

"I think, that it would be better for you to go to the guardhouse and declare the following: 'You say that I started everything. Here I am in front of you; take me away and you will see that nothing in the zone will change.' In this manner," continued Chubuk, "you will be able to somewhat ease your fate."

"No! I will never do this!"

The announcer ever more pointedly repeated his hypnotic formula:

"Break down windows and doors, come over to us."

The announcer's voice, magnified by two loudspeakers, fell on the heads of the prisoners, not unlike heavy blows from a sledge hammer. It seemed as though, with each such blow, the prisoners squirmed and became ever smaller.

Suddenly — shouts and whistles were heard from the vicinity of the guardhouse gates. What happened?

One of the prisoners had heeded the announcer's call and escaped to the guardhouse. After some time, shouting began near the passage through the *barrier* — again someone had escaped.

Finally, three more openings were cut into the forbidden zone and the gate to the *recreation yard* was opened. Our defenses became vulnerable from all sides. Each passage was guarded from outside by a reinforced detachment of convoy guards, and from the inside — by us. We had to defend the passageways not only from the soldiers, but also from potential escapees.

However, the soldiers did not enter the zone and it was impossible to stop the escapees because, anyone deciding to escape would join the front line of defenders and then, having chosen the right moment, would break away from the rest of the prisoners and run as fast as possible to the passage, where soldiers were waiting.

But, at one point I was told that one escapee was nonetheless caught and was being beaten in the second barrack. I ran there.

"Stop!"

Everyone stepped aside. The terrified prisoner was sitting on the floor.

"What happened?" I asked him. "Why were you running away? Perhaps you noticed that we were doing something wrong?"

"Oh, no!" he said. "On the contrary, I like it here, but believe me, I've never been in such a situation before and my nerves simply can't take it."

I ordered the prisoners not to touch him, and told him not to be afraid, because what would happen to everyone would also happen to him.

Former activists of the camp were given the opportunity to rehabilitate themselves. We did not remind them of their past and we did not push them aside, when they wanted to stand next to us. Many of them were successful in finding the strength within themselves to make a stand on the side of the majority. Others remained faithful servants of the regime.

They fled, with knives in their fists, so that no one would stop them. At one point, after the escape of two activists from the fourth column, the announcer commented:

"We have become aware that among you are many prisoners, who would like to come over to us, but are afraid of reprisals from the current mutineers. Don't be afraid of them! Come on over! We guarantee that not one of these bandits will ever be together with you again. Break down the windows, doors...!"

The announcer would periodically call on us to break down windows and doors, solely to create disorder among us. No one, regardless of whether they wanted or did not want to escape, was locked in the barracks. On the contrary, all of the barracks were empty, not a living soul in them. The first barrack constituted the only exception, the said barrack being occupied by the engineering and technical workers, or, as they were called by the prisoners, "half-wits".

These people had privileged jobs. They worked in the project office or as foremen or skilled laborers directly involved in the construction. Most of them were afraid of losing their favorable positions and did not wish to take part in the struggle with the rest of us. Also, they did not flee, but only lolled around on their berths reading books.

But, among them were also such who actively participated in the fight and

placed their lives on the line as did the other prisoners. One of these was the Estonian engineer Skeyres. At the very time that our situation had become most difficult, he grabbed some sort of stick, flew into the barrack, and began to hammer each and every one within his reach.

"Oh, you, you mercenaries!" Skeyres insulted them. "Now when our fate is being decided, when the people have placed their bare chests against sub-machine guns, you loll around and read books? Let's go, march outside!"

There were very few escapees. But at one point a prisoner approached me and told me that a handful of Poles, whose actions aroused suspicion, were gathered near the second barrack. It appeared that they were planning something.

"We have very good contact with them," I answered. "I'll go and find their representative right away and get an explanation for everything. I meet with him very often. It is true that lately he has disappeared from my view and, for some reason, doesn't show himself. But, there he is now!"

At that very moment, the Polish representative Yura, as he was called in the Russian fashion, was walking past us. He threw a not very friendly glance in my direction and went on.

"Yura, hold on! What's happened? How are your people?"

"So, so," Yura replied evasively. "They are standing over there near the second barrack, but what each of them is thinking — I cannot tell. You cannot enter into a person's soul!"

We parted coldly. Suddenly, near the second barrack, we heard violent screaming, whistling and hooting. I ran over there only to find that fifty-two Poles, headed by Dr. Matoshko, with a sudden bolt, darted out of the zone.

The people had already overextended themselves and were hardpressed to withstand such great tension. After all, since the prisoners of zone 5 had been shot at, none of us had slept a wink, no one entered the barracks; everyone remained on his feet and waited for them to begin shooting at us. We could not expect anything else.

Nonetheless, escapes from the zone became more infrequent. Kuznyetsov realized that he could not defeat us in this manner, so, amending his tactics, he changed from persuasion to ultimatum.

"All prisoners are to take their personal belongings and prepare to vacate the zone!" echoed his harsh voice over the loudspeakers.

Afterwards the loudspeakers fell silent.

We realized that this was Kuznyetsov's final demand and that he would not talk with us any further.

I called Nedorostkov and went with him to the guardhouse, where I announced that I wanted to talk with Kuznyetsov. Following us, almost stepping on our heels, were several dozens of warmly dressed prisoners.

Kuznyetsov asked angrily:

"What are we going to talk about? Didn't you hear my order for everyone to leave the zone?"

"We heard it," I replied. "Tomorrow we will pack up and leave."

"No tomorrows," stated Kuznyetsov. "Today or never!"

In the meantime, a prisoner on my left, pushed forward and said in a frightened voice:

"Citizen Commander! Citizen Commander!" (This was the official mode of address of a prisoner to any commander.) "Permit me to speak, permit me to speak!"

"So speak up already," Kuznyetsov snapped contemptuously.

But the prisoner did not say anything more, he just rushed, past Kuznyetsov, to the guardhouse.

From my right side, another prisoner took to fleeing, and after him yet another.

"Why are you doing this? Isn't there a time for everything? Return to your barracks, take your things, and quietly and calmly cross into the jurisdiction of the administration."

Kuznyetsov froze, for he had worked out a totally different plan — *in two and a half hours we were to be shot.*

Now, after all the prisoners had already dispersed among their barracks, I considered what I was to do. Should I give myself up, or, perhaps, go for my things which, I was certain, would be of no further use to me?

"Oh! No, boy," I said to myself thoughtfully, "go gather your things, for after all, you should be the last one to leave the zone." And — slowly I went off in the direction of my barrack.

People with bags on their backs were continually coming to meet me. They walked quickly and silently. When suddenly one of my countrymen blocked my path and asked me very emotionally:

"What have you done?"

"And what else could I do? There is no other way out."

"There is a way out — fight to our deaths!"

"But the people don't want to die, they are fleeing."

"How many of them have fled? Even if it had been one hundred fifty, okay, I'll even grant you two hundred. But how many more remained? Five thousand! Out of these five thousand, let even four thousand flee, then a thousand of the kind that could not be defeated will fight until we are all killed. We will gather together and we will show them that we know how to die!"

"No," I answered him. "I will not lead anyone to certain death. You need to live! Farewell!"

Having neared my barrack and seeing that people were still departing it, I went to the clinic to say good-bye to my good friend Vasyl Rykov. After leaving him, I went to my barrack, where I came across two prisoners who were swiftly packing their things. After gathering my things, I accompanied them to the guardhouse. The zone became quiet and empty.

As I was walking towards the guardhouse, I saw a guard climbing up the ladder of the bakery chimney. I stopped to watch as he took down the flag. To my great amazement, the guard did not drop it from above, but took it under his arm and carefully descended with it to the ground.

At the guardhouse, I met a small group of prisoners and, together with them, crossed the threshold of the gate.

Now, everything was behind me.

We were released from the zone in groups of one hundred, and by squadrons were led by *special convoy guards* to the tundra. At the guardhouse, to my great surprise, I was not separated from the other prisoners and proceeded with my squadron all the way near the "Gorstroy", since nearby the entire tundra was already occupied by people.

We were ordered to sit, but were not allowed to sit for long. Our convoy guards were told to get us on our feet and lead us back. We came out on to the road which led from the "Gorstroy" to our zone. When we were about fifty meters from the guardhouse, we were again ordered to sit. We sat and attempting to keep away pesty mosquitoes, looked around at what was happening.

The entire tundra was covered with prisoners and guards. Near the guardhouse stood Kuznyetsov with his group. Before him, *dachnyky*, who were brought here specifically for our chastisement, were showing off. We saw as they kept kicking and trampling people with their feet; we saw no one even attempt to defend himself, because behind the *dachnyky*, stood guards ready to fire . . .

It started to rain. Next to me sat a Czech, who possessed some kind of waterproof coat. Both of us covered ourselves with this coat and saw nothing further. Suddenly we heard as someone neared our squadron and asked: "Hrycyak should be here somewhere?" The Czech poked me with his elbow and whispered: "Be quiet, do not answer!"

Later the rain stopped and we uncovered ourselves. General Semenov approached us and recognized me.

"Well, Hrycyak," he mumbled arrogantly, "get up, get up! Your officiating has ended. Get up!"

Then to a sergeant:

"Sergeant, allot a guard!"

I got up and stepped to the side; two convoy guards approached.

"Place him under guard!" self-assuredly ordered Semenov.

The convoy guards stood silently and with open astonishment gazed at me.

"Lead him to the tables!" further ordered Semenov.

The guards remained mute.

"Lead him, I am telling you!" Semenov repeated his order.

The guards continued to stand silent.

"All right, good," stormed Semenov, "follow me!"

Behind the tables, which were arranged in the middle of the road, sat seven *free* women.

"Do you need his service book?" he asked the women.

"Oh!" cried out the surprised women. "That's Hrycyak, he's Hrycyak!"

"So," Semenov barked unhappily, "seems that you know him?"

The service book is the prisoner's published record, something of a dossier. Whenever the prisoner is moved, his service book constantly accompanies him.

"If my service book is unnecessary", I was thinking, "then most likely I will be shot right here in the tundra, before the eyes of all the prisoners."

When my service book was removed from the files and placed aside, Semenov ordered the convoy guards to lead me into the tundra. The convoy guards did

not display the slightest initiative. The angered General again had to lead us himself.

"Sit here," he told me.

I chose a dry heap and sat thereon, constantly attempting to defend my face against the insufferable mosquitoes.

"Guards, do not allow him to defend himself against the mosquitoes, let them gnaw him!" ordered the General and left.

A truck, outfitted for transporting prisoners, stopped on the road. An officer called out to the convoy guards to lead me towards the truck. Alongside the truck, the guards searched me and confiscated a stainless steel spoon. No other dangerous objects were discovered upon my person.

I sat down on the floor of the truck, leaning with my shoulders upon the side-shield. Shortly thereafter three more prisoners were brought to the truck, Ivan Strygin, Ivan Khodnewych and Volodymyr Rusinov.

The officer approached the guards and said with undisguised irony:

"Now, take them over to the zone, so that they can bid farewell to the people!" By *people*, he meant the *dachnyky*, since there was no one in the zone except for them.

The truck drove through the back gate and stopped before the guardhouse.

"Here is a present for you!" the guards called to us with undisguised gloating, dragging towards the truck the unconscious Volodymyr Nedorostkov.

I placed Nedorostkov between my knees and gently enfolded him in my arms. He was so severely beaten that he could not sit by himself . . . Some one cried out:

"Give us those as well, let them also bid farewell!"

But the doors closed and the truck moved forward.

"Where are we going?" Strygin whispered to me.

I looked over my shoulder, the guard hadn't taken any notice of us.

"I see only *Schmidtykha*", I answered him.

We travelled on. I again looked around, and again — *Schmidtykha*, only now larger, sterner and closer to us. Then the truck turned once, then again. I looked around — and again *Schmidtykha*.

Norilsk is situated near three mountains, Vedmezha Mountain or "Vedmezhka", Schmidt Mountain or "Schmidtykha", and the third — Zub Mountain.

Schmidt Mountain became the most infamous because near the foot of the mountain is situated an enormous cemetery, or more accurately, a place where the bodies of Norilsk prisoners were buried. The word *Schmidtykha* became synonymous with death. Therefore, going to *Schmidtykha* meant dying; I will drive you to *Schmidtykha* meant I will kill you, etc.

The burial of the bodies near the foot of the *Schmidtykha* is accomplished in the following manner: When a prisoner dies, he is undressed completely, cut open and placed in a wooden crate, in which he is taken to the guardhouse. There, a guard examines the body and to make absolutely certain the prisoner is dead, pierces the brain with a long sharp instrument. Only after such thorough examination, is the body taken directly to the foot of the *Schmidtykha*.

In 1948, when prisoners of zone 4 were constructing the Norilsk copper-smelting works at a furious pace, they were cynically promised that shock-workers, in the event of death, will be buried not naked, as in the case of all others, but in their underwear. It is not known whether there existed even one instance of adherence to such a solemn promise.

It is only known that people died and died without end, and, in order for all of them to be buried in the eternal frost, it was necessary to keep near the foot of *Schmidtykha* a large, completely unproductive, force. That is why, during one summer, twenty large twenty-meter holes were dug with the help of excavators and bulldozers at the foot of the *Schmidtykha*, so that there would be enough room to dump the bodies for many years to come. However, this calculation proved to be inaccurate, *holes of four hundred meters capacity were filled by bodies within two years!*

That is *Schmidtykha!* It is too bad that the Ukrainian Soviet Encyclopedia does not contain any reference to this mountain.

We were being driven nearer and nearer to this threatening mountain and finally arrived at the courtyard of a prison, which, in Norilsk is called *the hole.* For the time being, we sat on the ground and looked around at our future residence. This was a smallish, very gloomy, barrack type prison. Its reputation, from way back was quite infamous. Thousands of people ended their lifespan inside its walls. Now, it was to become the place of retribution for the participants of the uprising. It was not by chance that First Lieutenant Shiryayev was assigned as its warden and Officer Beyner as his assistant! We were told that both of them were in this prison and in truth, they both were here and only waiting for us!

"Well, one of you enter!" a guard called from afar.

The first one to go was Volodymyr Rusinov. We listened. Silence. Then suddenly — thump, thump! Shouts from the guards and Rusinov's moans. Finally everything quieted down.

"Go, another one!"

Ivan Khodnewych entered. He was kept there for a long time and struck not even once. Seemed suspicious!

"Next one!"

Strygin and I carried Nedorostkov in and returned to our places. Nedorostkov also was not beaten, since in his condition, there was nothing left to beat up.

The fourth to enter was I.

In the reception area, which was a large rectangular room with many doors and one table, behind which sat the prison duty officer, furious guards fell upon me.

"Disrobe and stand in the corner! Quick!"

I took off my clothes and stood in a corner between two walls. On either side — a guard. The third stepped close to me and asked:

"Date of birth?"

"Twenty-six."

"Oh, you, scoundrel! Young, but already bald! Did you, skunk, lose your hair from politics, ha?" he asked and with all his might struck me in the face with his fist.

"Open your mouth!"

In prison during searches the mouth was always examined, but now my guard was completely disinterested in what was in my mouth; he only raised his fist to strike my weakened jaw. In this manner, it is very easy to break ones teeth and bend the jaw out of shape. I was familiar with this favorite method of the prison guards and therefore, immediately realizing his intention, tightly pressed my teeth together. The guard's blow did not cause the desired effect.

"Wait, let me draw up the documents," the prison duty officer stopped the guards.

The guard who was jumping at me withdrew somewhat. The officer sat behind the table and filled out some forms. Unexpectedly, the guard who was standing on my left, silently, but with all his strength, struck me with the edge of his hand on my throat; the walls on either side of me did not allow me to fall.

Having completed the form, the officer told me to come to the table and sign, but before I had a chance to comply, five guards jumped upon me. A hail of fists and kicks followed, finalizing in the guards trying to push me down on to the floor. I grabbed the side of the table and pulled it after me. The telephone fell noisily from the table to the floor.

"Stop!" called out the officer. "You will upset everything! Let me finish filling out all his forms!"

The guards withdrew and the officer ordered me to gather my clothes off the floor. I bent for my clothes and heard one guard, upon opening the door to the *molotoboyka* cell or, as it was also called here, *vykonavska* cell, call out to the officer that he should deliver me there.

"That can wait!" said the officer, calmingly motioning with his hand and quickly opening the door to the corridor, led me to the cell assigned to me.

In the cell I found only Volodymyr Nedorostkov, still unconscious, lying on his back on the lower berth. Finally Ivan Strygin was led in. He got off worse than I did, appearing in the cell with a deep cut on his hand.

Next of all, Strygin and I inspected the cell. Why was it so wet? Where did the water come from?

The water was everywhere. It gathered in large blobs on the ceiling and being unable to hold its own weight, fell upon the berths, upon the concrete floor and upon our heads. It flowed in thin streams down the walls all the way to the floor and filled all the uneven spaces in the concrete. I touched the upper berth support — and a stream of water flowed from my hand all the way to my elbow. All the berths were wet. A large thick blob of mildew hung from the bottom of the upper berth.

The construction of the cell was strong and secure. Most of the space was taken up by wide, solid berths, enforced with thick iron strips. Across from the door, a narrow passage led to the opposite wall where, high underneath the ceiling, there was a small window, with double bars and a tightly fitting muzzle covered by dense steel mesh. The opening of the window looked out upon the overhang bottom of a tiled roof, so neither daylight nor air was able to penetrate inside the cell. There were double doors; the outer ones constructed from heavy planks, covered on both sides with zinc-plating; the inner ones consisting of heavy steel bars. The floor was solid, uneven concrete.

We took off our shoes, placed them underneath our heads, and lay down to sleep. We hadn't had any sleep for many days and nights but, regardless of our extreme exhaustion, sleep would not come. I got up and walked around on the wet concrete. Strygin remained on his berth. Finally, Nedorostkov showed the first signs of life. He moved his arms, which were crossed on his chest not unlike a corpse and started to mumble something intelligible.

"What do you want to say, Volodya?"

"Please put on some tea for me," he said somewhat more clearly, in a tone of voice as if he were talking to one of his family.

"What are you saying, Volodya? Do you know where you are?"

"I know."

"Where?"

"Home," he answered and fell silent.

Suddenly, the barred judas window in the door opened and there appeared a young, gentle and surprisingly friendly female face:

"Do you need medical help?" the face asked kindly.

"No," we answered. "To tell the truth, one of us is unconscious, but how can you help him? He has been severely beaten."

The face looked perplexed.

"A minute ago, he asked for tea," we added.

The face looked around and whispered:

"Today, I won't be able to help you with anything, but tomorrow I will bring some sugar from home, boil some water here and bring it to your cell. I won't be able to make real tea, or I'll be discovered through its aroma."

The judas window closed.

"Who is it?" we wondered. "A prison doctor or an angel from heaven? How did she wind up here? Surely, it was some kind of misunderstanding!"

"Y-e-s," said Strygin, "she will not last here long."

The next day, we gave Nedorostkov some sweet boiled water. He began to talk coherently . . .

About a week and a half later our wonderful doctor disappeared. Her place was taken by a female doctor from zone 4, who, because of her shortness and somewhat square shape, was named by the prisoners "Tumbochka" — (night stand). This doctor conducted herself correctly and completely justified the administration's trust.

Prisoners here were led out for walks for only fifteen minutes a day and only in handcuffs. At first, Strygin and I did not leave our cell at all, since we could not abandon the sick Nedorostkov alone and on the other hand, were not very desirous of meeting up with our guards. However we looked at it, we felt much more secure in our cell.

After about a week, we were supplied with mattresses filled with saw dust, which sucked up the water and in a short time began to smell rotten. A week later, we were visited by the Director of Gulag's Sanitary Section Lieutenant-Colonel of Medical Forces Bezpalova and asked what were we complaining about.

"We are well, only the one who is lying down, is very ill and complains of extreme pain in the vicinity of his kidneys; most likely he is suffering from

internal bleeding," Strygin and I answered and raising Nedorostkov, took off his shirt and showed her his contused body.

"Does it hurt — here?" she asked, striking him with all her strength with the edge of her hand on the black-and-blue swelling over his right kidney.

Nedorostkov doubled up with pain and screamed.

We threw Bezpalova out of the cell, assuring her that we did not need her help.

Having crossed the threshold of the cell, Bezpalova nodded to Shiryayev and said:

"Now! . . . Now you can take them out of there."

We were transferred to another cell which, contrary to the former one, was completely dry. Nobody looked in on us. We could sleep day and night; no one showed the slightest interest in us.

During one evening, we heard all the judas windows in the cell doors being opened and the hushed voice of the guard:

"Go to sleep! Go to sleep!"

We lay down, fell silent, but did not sleep — listening — what had they thought of now?

Finally, we heard — they were coming! We listened to their quick steps and rustling of clothes and judged that five persons were coming, all of them in a very aroused state. Suddenly, they stopped before one of the opposite cells. With clanking and squeaking, the door opened; someone was taken from the cell and led to the exit . . . Then we heard them outside. We were listening with such fear and tension that all sounds were instantly transformed into visible pictures.

Here, we "saw", as he was led behind the guardhouse, turned left and followed the line of the forbidden zone. At the edge of the forbidden zone, they again turned left, another turn on the second level and then they appeared on our side. Now he was led down a path, used by the guards when they are changing their stations. This path leads over the summit of the embarkment, upon which the prison is built. Further — a large hole. Probably, the name of the prison was derived from this hole.

Then the guards stopped, pushed the doomed one down the embarkment, and shouted:

"Go and run!"

The prisoner resisted, did not want to run. A dog was set upon him. The prisoner screamed from pain and ran . . . Three carbine shots were heard from the corner watch-tower . . . Shortly thereafter, a truck backed towards the site of the occurrence. A dead body was thrown into it. The truck drove away.

Following this event, we slept only during the day, using the nights for watching and listening; whose turn is it going to be now? This time, the turn was mine!

In the meantime, we were transferred to yet another cell, in which we found one of the activists of the resistance in zone 1, a native of Ryazan, by the name of Izmaylov. He loved Yesenin and simply overwhelmed us with his poetry. I will always remember Yesenin's words, which he addressed to Demyan Byedny:

"You raised your hand at the Heavenly King.

But, you crawl on your belly before earthly kings." Or this,

". . . An old man asks and furrows his forehead:

'Are you not a communist?' — 'No'.

'But my sisters became Komsomol members.

What rot! You can choke on it!

Yesterday we threw away all the holy pictures from the shelves.'"

Sometimes, after finishing reading a poem, Izmaylov noted:

"This is not Yesenin's. It's — mine."

One day our literary education was interrupted by a shrill female scream. We jumped up.

"What is this? Did they bring women here?"

We saw a lot, lived through a lot and have gotten used to almost everything, but it is impossible to get used to female screams and cries. In prison, the sobbing of a woman breaks your heart unendurably, awakening in your soul sorrow and indignation. Immediately we became electrified and started a row in the cell.

Shiryayev arrived.

"Why are you beating up the women?" we asked. "Did your fists itch? Then lead us out and beat us up as much as you want to, but do not touch the women! We won't allow it!"

"Nobody is beating them," answered Shiryayev quietly. "One woman screamed, because she did not want to be undressed."

"Oh, you filth! Who gave you the right to undress them? Are they going to smuggle an atomic bomb in their clothing, or what? However, if you are that afraid, bring your ugly wives here to search them, but do not touch them with your dirty hands!"

Shiryayev silently closed the judas window in the cell door and left. There were no more screams. The eight women were quietly housed in two cells.

They were: Maria Nich, who was the "soul" of zone 6 during the strike, Maria Chorna, Stefa Koval, Nusya Mazepa, Lesya Zelinska and Lina Petrashchuk — all of them, our young Ukrainians. With them was one older Latvian, Iryna Dauge and an Estonian called Esta (last name unknown to me).

After crushing the resistance in men's zones 4 and 5, Kuznyetsov gave all his attention to the female zone 6. Since the women did not wish to voluntarily submit, brute strength was used against them. It is lucky that they were not shot at, only rushing hot water was poured over them from fire-engine hoses. Even though the women finally gave up, they defended their activists leaders so that the administration was unable to arrest them. Only later, the administration managed to somehow get their hands on them and brought them here, to the *hole*.

Then there remained only one zone, zone 3.

Early morning, August 4th, a truck drove into the prison courtyard. Turmoil, running. *Molotoboyka* started its process. Sounds of mute tramping, screams and moanings carried to the cell.

The convicts have arrived!

Lithuanian Yozas Kozlauskas, whose fourth rib had been broken, was thrown into our cell. We bound his chest with towels, and that constituted the entire medical attention he received.

The *molotoboyka* was working at full capacity for two days and two nights, for two days and two nights the convicts were being "processed" there.

Just before the reception of the next group, a number of prisoners were walking by underneath our window. One of them expressed the following compliment about one of the guards:

"Well, I didn't realize that this sergeant was such a wonderful butcher!"

Our cell was replenished by five additional prisoners.

They recounted to us that, after zone 6 was defeated, Kuznyetsov began intensive preparations for the takeover of their zone. Suddenly, before the eyes of all the prisoners, a courier ran up to Kuznyetsov and handed him an envelope. Kuznyetsov, after reading the message, got into his car and drove away . . . He hasn't been seen in Norilsk since.

For a time, the convicts were left in peace. They gathered at their club, where the strike committee, whose heart were Stepan Semeniuk, Danylo Shumuk and Roman Zahoruyko, was continually active; they were sending kites with leaflets and were preparing to battle the soldiers, in the event of an attempt to drive the prisoners out of the zone by force. They believed so strongly in the justice of their demands, that they did not even think about weapons being used against them.

Even when, on the morning of August 4th, some unknown person hung a white flag on a nearby factory smoke-stack, the said flag meaning to serve as a signal to "surrender", they thought that the flag was hung by someone trying to encourage them.

Suddenly the gates opened and trucks, filled with drunk soldiers armed with automatic weapons, drove into the zone. The prisoners tried to stop them, but were answered by sub-machine gun fire. The first to die, near the guardhouse, was the prisoner Khudoba. When the trucks drove in further, the soldiers opened fire at the whole mass of people. All of the prisoners fell to the ground; the dead, the wounded and the living ones. When, in such manner, the prisoners' resistance was broken, soldiers jumped off the trucks and spread throughout the entire zone, thus preventing anybody from getting up off the ground. Officers then entered the zone, shooting critically wounded prisoners and searching for prisoners whom they wished to execute.

However crushed and paralized the people were, one prisoner found the courage to jump at a soldier. He took the soldier's sub-machine gun, removed the ammunition, threw it to one side and the gun to another — in this manner manifesting his contempt for unrestrained violence.

The camp medic, Yozas Kozlauskas, completely ignored the deadly danger. He constantly ran among the wounded prisoners administering first aid. For this action, he paid with his broken ribs.

We do not know and are unable to accurately guess how many were killed and wounded. Approximately, there were one hundred killed and about four hundred wounded. In this battle, fell the famous Rumanian captain, who refused his release. All prisoners told stories with awe about this noble Rumanian, but, to everyone's sorrow, nobody could recall his name.

After the administration gained full control of the zone, a *selection* of the resistance activists began. The selected were first thrown into a hole near the guardhouse, where they were jumped upon, kicked, beaten and trampled, as

cruelly as was possible. Particular savagery was shown by guards and overseers, when blood was noted on a prisoner; the cruelty of their treatment of wounded prisoners was especially brutal. When the wounded asked Bezpalova, who was standing over the hole, watching, how she was reacting as a doctor to all that, she answered:

"Firstly, I am a *chekist*[22] and then a doctor".

After such processing, the prisoners were loaded into trucks and taken to a prison, where they again had to suffer the prison *molotoboyka.*

Since, already at that time, Kuznyetsov was not at Norilsk, the entire operation was under the leadership of the Chief of the Norilsk Guard Garrison Lieutenant-Colonel Artiushyn.

Nevertheless, nobody fell into depression. People told stories of how they were shot at, how they were beaten and trampled, not with sadness, not with sorrow, not even with anger, only with gay humor. In the cells, accompanied by the cracking of broken bones and moaning of the wounded, cheerful spirits prevailed. No one cried and no one grieved.

One time I was called out of the cell and together with prisoner Kovalenko (from zone 5), driven to the administration building. There, I was interrogated by Lieutenant-Colonel Zavolskyj.

"Who was your bodyguard?" he asked.

"All five thousand prisoners."

"But, specifically?"

"That is specifically."

"It's too bad, damn too bad, that no one removed you from this world — then we wouldn't have had all the trouble in Norilsk."

Later, in our prison itself, some captain called out Yozas Kozlauskas and began to attack him:

"Oh, you, fascist pig! So, you wanted to overthrow the Soviet government?"

"We are fighting for the liquidation of all prisons and camps, and you — for their conservation. Now, think for yourself, who are the fascists — we or you?"

"Do you know what you are saying?" the captain became angry. "Do you know what it would mean to dissolve all prisons and camps? It would mean the end of the Soviet rule!"

It is impossible to better express the meaning of the Soviet power!

We were taken out for walks in pairs, handcuffed together. Since there were nine of us (Nedorostkov had already started to walk), the last one was handcuffed alone. Although I was not the last one, the guard must have felt sorry for me and said:

"Hrycyak, you probably would rather prefer to walk alone, instead of paired off? Yes? Come on, I will handcuff you singly."

As soon as we started to walk in the excursion court, which was separated from the main prison courtyard by a few strands of barbed wire, there appeared on our path, prison warden Shiryayev and his assistant Beyner. We became tense and stopped walking.

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[22] Cheka — A composite term that covers all Soviet internal security agencies, from the earliest, the Cheka, to the present day KGB. Chekist — a member of the Cheka.

Short in stature, but heavily built, Shiryayev came first, followed by the tall, bony and somewhat stooped Beyner. Both of them were very pale and as they walked, kept looking at the ground. Some inexplicable fear emanated from them. We did not take our eyes from them. When they passed us, we noticed that both of them were armed with "TT" pistols. So, that's the way it was! Time for a fresh sacrifice . . .!

"Go back!" shouted the guard, after Shiryayev and Beyner entered the prison.

We went back. Everybody in pairs, but I, alone and the last. When everyone walking in front of me proceeded from the reception area to the corridor, Beyner stopped me with a light touch of his hand and quietly whispered:

"You, Hrycyak, remain!"

In that instant, eight perspiring faces turned towards me. In their widely staring eyes — fear and a silent "farewell"! I too was looking at them, wanting to remember all of them. The most distinct in my memory remained the face of the Terek Cossack Vasyl Cyhankov. We stood there, as if paralized. Finally, Beyner said:

"Okay, enough, go back to your cells!"

One more silent "farewell" and the corridor doors closed.

"Why here?" I was thinking to myself, "and not in the *molotoboyka*, where such things usually take place? Maybe they want to leave traces of their dirty work right here, for everyone to see, as a warning to others? . . ."

Shiryayev and Beyner walked towards the table. I did not take my eyes off them. Shiryayev pointed with his right hand index finger at a paper that lay on the table and looked at Beyner questioningly.

"Just don't be afraid!" I tried to encourage myself. "You knew what you were getting into. Face your death like a man, as one of the invariable phases of existence. The main thing now — not to shudder."

Finally Shiryayev turned half-heartedly, took a few steps, sat on one of the three stairs that led to his office, placed his elbows on his knees and lowered his head. Beyner sat down heavily in a chair near the table and also lowered his head. Both of them sat silently, tensely.

In the meantime, I took a trip into my past and during the few minutes met with my family and friends, reliving the most memorable scenes from my life.

Here I am at thirteen. I walk very slowly, just placing one foot in front of the other, near the home of O.V. For some reason, I have a great desire to see her. She climbed the fence and cheerfully smiled at me. I came alongside her, my face red with embarrassment and continued walking very quickly. As if it were only a coincidence . . .

Now, the unforgettable April 13, 1944. I was being arrested in the neighboring village of Pidvysoka by Stecev militia, accompanied by representatives of Horodenka KGB. They lead me toward the home of Vasyl Nyavchuk, stand me by the wall and, pointing a carbine and a pistol at my chest, demand:

"Where were you? Talk! . . ."

And then, I am a soldier in the Red Army and take part in the most senseless war in the history of mankind, where on both sides millions of people are killed, not for freedom, but for strengthening of their own oppression, not for life, but for their own kind of self-destruction, not for democracy, but for their own

type of prisons and concentration camps, not for the people, but for their great tyrannical leaders and their bloody dictatorships!...

My cycle of remembrances closes with a dream, which I dreamt the day before my second arrest. I am crossing a bridge from the right side of the river to the left. Suddenly I see — Death chasing me. I run, she runs after me. Now I am running by the river bank, I have already crossed the river and then again I am running on the bridge. Death is still chasing me. However, finding myself on the bridge for the third time, I realize that nothing will come from my trying to escape. I will finally exhaust myself and then death will catch up and easily overpower me. It is better to fight her while I still have some strength left. In the middle of the bridge, I turn, face her and take up a fighting stand. Death comes close to me and I keep hitting her with my fists. Death turns around and runs away . . .

Finally Beyner moved. He sighed deeply, like a blacksmith's bellows and raising his head, looked with his cold, steely eyes at Shiryayev. Shiryayev, also raising his head, sighed deeply and moving his head somewhat to the side, shrugged his shoulders and spread his arms, as if saying:

"I don't know, do whatever you want to."

Beyner rose from his chair and stood erect. His tall, slim posture, with high cheekbones and thin face, reminded me a little of my death.

Finally, Death-Beyner stepped toward me. I stood quietly, calmly. Prison reception room, Shiryayev, Beyner and I — for me, all were only shadows, not live reality. I imagined that all of this happened a long time ago and now I was only remembering it. This whole scene was only a continuation of my previous reminiscences. The world of reality did not exist for me anymore, everything was only an illusion.

Beyner did not lift his pistol from the holster, but took out a key from his pocket and opening the corridor doors, told me to precede him. I exited and he behind me.

More than once I heard that some executioners of death sentences were unable to perform their assigned deeds when their victims looked them straight in the eye. Were they afraid that those horrible eyes would awaken in them some pangs of conscience, or maybe they were irritated by the hysteria to which some victims submitted during their last moments — I couldn't say, but I heard a lot of talk that in prisons very frequently executions were carried out by a shot in the back, when a prisoner was walking down a corridor and could not see what was happening behind him. Among the prisoners of Norilsk, the idea prevailed that in this particular manner, in this specific corridor, many people ended their lifespans.

However, I had a different fate in store for me. When I came opposite the doors to the 12th cell, Beyner stopped me, opened the doors and took off my handcuffs. Entering the cell, I stopped near the threshold.

I wanted to lie down as soon as possible and forget about everything, but did not wish to near the berths upon which people were resting. That's why I went towards the right side of the cell, where the large toilet drum was located, sat down upon its massive cover and circling my knees with my arms, gave myself up to forgetfulness. I did not want to either see or hear any people. I would

rather have buried myself deeply underground, where no noise, no movement, not even daylight could penetrate. I passionately desired complete loneliness. silence and darkness; whising to forget myself and penetrate the infinity of nothingness . . .

My cellmates probably understood my condition and did not bother me with any questions.

The hesitation of the executioners of my verdict we later explained to outselves as *indecisiveness* on the part of the hierarchy.

The Transport

September 6th, we were unexpectedly told to prepare for transport and our regrouping began. I was transferred to a large cell, where many of the prisoners designated for transport were housed. Having in this manner collected thirty-four men, the guards led us out into the courtyard and checked us off in accordance with their list. At the conclusion of the check-off, the officer announced:

"All of you will ride in the third coach. Hrycyak is appointed as the coach foreman."

Coach foremen were usually assigned those prisoners who were serving minimal sentences and at least in some measure merited the administration's trust. The coach foreman's obligations belittled the prisoner fulfilling them in the eyes of the other prisoners, even though he did not play any practical role in the protection of the prisoners during the transport.

I was serving the maximum sentence — twenty-five years. In addition, by my actions in the camp, I, in no way, merited any sort of trust from the administration. Nevertheless, contrary to all common sense and established procedure, I was appointed coach foreman.

"Most likely, they wish to lower my esteem in the eyes of the other prisoners and evoke their suspicions toward me," I thought and did not give this matter any further consideration.

There were seven groups prepared for transport. Each group was escorted to the coach by a separate guard. We took up places in the coach wherever room could be found and began to guess where we were being taken. In the meantime, the guards were filling up other coaches. We all were most anxious to leave Norilsk as soon as possible.

An older prisoner approached me and said:

"You, foreman, did you count how many of us are in this coach?"

"Why should I do the counting?" I answered him impudently. "I did not apply as an aid to the transport chief. Let them do the counting themselves, if they want."

"Don't get your rile up," the elder continued, "but better think, how all of this can end for you. The fact is that we were supposed to be thirty-four and there are only thirty-three of us. I heard that Didukh was checked-off to our coach, then why is he not with us? Where could he have gone to? Let's use our brains. We all realize that he did not run away or separate himself of his own accord. Simply, he was taken to another coach, but, when the train stops in the

tundra and the guards will be verifying the count, then it will reveal that one is missing from among us and you did not report that fact. Then you will be taken out of the coach and either shot or beaten up so severely, that you won't even make Dudinka."

So, that's the way it was. Norilsk had no desire to release me alive and I, was so naive to think that it only wanted to humble me!

I got up and made a thorough check. Indeed one was missing. I asked the guard to summon the transport chief. The chief did not come. I again summoned him — he didn't come. After the fourth summons, he finally appeared and asked angrily:

"What happened?"

"We are missing one man. Verify for yourself!"

"Okay," he mumbled casually and walked away.

I continued to persistently call to him and demand a check.

Finally, he returned and savagely biting his smallish mustache, conducted a check-off. Didukh was not among us. The chief slammed the coach doors and after a short while brought Didukh to us, who was originally taken to another coach by the chief himself.

My danger passed.

At Dudinka, we were kept on the train for another thirty-six hours, trying to figure out what will happen to us. If we would wind up in some broken down, rotted barge, then our chances of staying alive were very slim.

On September 8, 1953, exactly a year after we arrived, we were placed in the hold of the passenger ship "Maria Ulyanova".

A large stone was lifted from our chests. Well, since we were not shot at Norilsk and will not be drowned in the Yenisei, — then, we will live!

The Volodymyr prison was awaiting us.

What then?

The relaxation of the regime, which Moscow was forced to grant, did not spread throughout the entire Gulag, but was only a temporary privilege of the prisoners of Norilsk and Vorkuta (the prisoners of Vorkuta also rebelled). Throughout the other Gulag special camps, the regime remained unchanged. Far from all of our demands were satisfied; no attempts were even made to conduct reviews of our individual sentences and no promises were even given to cease the practice of closed trials.

After the bloody retribution upon prisoners of Norilsk and Vorkuta and incarceration of the most dangerous ones at the Volodymyr prison, Moscow lost all apprehension and did not grant any further concessions.

Only after the events which took place the very next year, 1954, when the prisoners of Kingir staged a peaceful resistance and prisoners of one Kolyma camp disarmed their guards and having obtained weapons, took to the hills, did Moscow finally understand that to hold in one place such a vast multitude of dissatisfied political prisoners is very, very dangerous and came to the intelligent decision — to expand the relaxation of regime throughout all Gulag special camps and take up reviews of individual sentences of all political prisoners.

What next?

In 1958, a representative of Ivano-Frankivsk KGB, chekist Pyastolov suggested to me:

"Let's talk about Norilsk."

In answer to my observation that those are the "deeds of days long past", Pyastolov said:

"Yes, it was long ago and we could have shrugged Norilsk off, if only it did not cause the infectiousness of *freedom.*"

Coming into contact with changes in social consciousness of people, which precede inevitable social relations, communists always descend from positions of their historical materialism and perceive in everything only infectiousness, treason, crime.

However, Norilsk did not cause only the infectiousness of *freedom;* it was also the herald of great changes to come in the social consciousness and psychology of peoples everywhere enslaved by communist imperialism!

THE END

APPENDICES

APPENDIX "A"

Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme
Soviet of the U.S.S.R.
Mykola Viktorovych Podhorny

Hrycyak, Yevhen Stepanovych
resident of the village of Ustya
Snyatyn County
Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast[23]
Ukrainian S.S.R.

DECLARATION

Please supply me with a permit for my family and myself to emigrate from the U.S.S.R. My declaration is elucidated by the following motives:

In 1949, I was sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment. In 1956, I was released by the Commission of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. In 1959, I was arrested on the basis of a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. In 1964, I was released by the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R.

However, I was released from prison only, not from persecution and harassment. Below is a synopsis of my life in the Soviet Union after two releases:

For some inexplicable reason, in August 1958, in the newspaper "Prykarpatska Pravda" (Trans-Carpathian Truth), the organ of the Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and the Oblast Soviet of Working People's Deputies, appeared an article about the progress of construction of the Palace of Culture in the village of Stecev. Because I was directing the construction, the article mentioned me also. But, in what manner did it mention me! There I was an engineer and a master, and it was not my first construction. Heretofore, I have built a lot in the village of Rakhny, Vinnytska Oblast, for which I was being rewarded with an unending stream of letters of appreciation from the workers...

I was ashamed to read such concocted praise. What sort of an engineer am I? I never even attended an institute, I did not even complete secondary education. Nevertheless, the newspaper was proclaiming me an engineer, and, what did I build in the village of Rakhny? Absolutely nothing. There, I worked as a loader, brick-layer and painter. I did not work at the construction, with the exception of having painted one building roof, but, to believe the newspaper, I was building and building there . . .

I cannot imagine what forced the publishers of such a responsible newspaper to print such an irresponsible article. In addition, I do not know why, after the said article appeared, I was notified that my "propyska" (local registration certificate) had been annulled, because I was unemployed . . .

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[23] Oblast — the term "oblast" or in some cases "province" refers to a large territorial unit of Ukraine and of other countries within the U.S.S.R.

I was forced to leave my hometown. I found work and registered in the city of Karaganda, where, on January 28, 1959, I was arrested on the basis of a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. The decree stated that the decision of the Commission of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., dated August 7, 1956, based upon which I was released, is being annulled in view of my grave crime.

In this manner, my sentence of December 12, 1949, was re-established — 25 years of imprisonment. During the long years of my repeated imprisonment, I unsuccessfully demanded an explanation of what exactly constituted the gravity of my crime. Instead of an explanation, I consistently received the same answer: Sentenced properly. Everything became clear only on October 6, 1964, when I was released on the basis of the decision of the Military Tribunal of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R. The minutes of the Tribunal meeting state (I am quoting from memory the words of the Prosecutor): "He (namely I) was accused that, after release, he did not work anywhere, did not cease his anti-Soviet activities and established in the Vinnytska Oblast the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists . . . After careful examination, it came to light that in fact he was working very hard, was not involved in any anti-Soviet activities, did not establish any organization, neither was it found that he spoke out against the Soviet government. The only thing that could be found was the fact that he was unhappy due to having been refused permission to live in his native village."

Any commentaries are obviously superfluous, and what next?

In the beginning the newspaper "Prykarpatska Pravda" of May 30, 1976, published an article by I. Kolodyazhnyj, entitled "A rotten contact", where the author writes against me and my close friend from the time of imprisonment — Avraham Shifrin. In this article, I am no longer an engineer, nor a master, but a son of a peasant capitalist, a deserter and bourgeois nationalist. Quoting from the said article — "He had a chance to make up for his transgression through work. He was allowed to continue his education. There, at the corrective labor colony, he completed his secondary education. How did he reciprocate? By constantly violating the established order, by disseminating slander against the Soviet order."

Although I can see that Kolodyazhnyj is well informed in my dossier, he is, for some reason, unable to separate, according to his own writing, where is Rome, where is Crimea and where the parson's pear tree grows. In order to clarify things, I will attempt to enumerate some coordinates:

In the characterization, which I was supplied with upon my release, the following lines appear:

". . . through 1956 systematically violated the established order, which caused him to be disciplined more than once.

From 1956, Hrycyak changed his behavior in a positive manner. Worked in different jobs, was conscientious in his work."

Another document is my certificate of completion of my secondary education, received in 1961.

When comparing these documents with Kolodyazhnyj's article, then the following may be derived there from: In 1961 I completed my secondary education, but prior and through 1956 I was reciprocating for the said education

by systematically violating the established regime and viciously slandering Soviet order. It seems, the reciprocation preceded the receipt! As a matter of fact, I never violated the regime, only instigated resistance against it; I never disseminated slanderous materials, only protested. To illustrate the latter, I am quoting below a portion of my letter of protest addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R., dated December 1, 1961:

"In connection with the fact that as of July, 1953, I am being continuously persecuted for my participation in the uprising of the Norilsk prisoners, and in connection with the fact that the security organs, until the present, still continue to show the Norilsk occurrence in a false light, classifying it as an anti-Soviet activity, — I decided to write a letter of protest against the actions of the KGB to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R.

Below is a concise account of the true causes and character of occurrences taking place in Norilsk in 1953.

Now it is unnecessary to prove that the mass arrests, which took place in our country during Stalin's lifetime, were completely unjustified and groundless, that the methods of conducting interrogations were unlawful and inhuman, all that was denoted by plenums and congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. However, this still needs to be mentioned specifically, because these criminal methods of arrests and interrogations were the principal links in the endless chain of transgressions against social law and morality. Next links in this chain of arbitrariness were the military tribunals and the so-called Special Consultation Commission or OSO of the NKVD of the U.S.S.R., which 'convicted' certain persons in secret, behind closed doors, and even by default, namely without the presence of the defendant.

The people had no knowledge of the persons convicted for their political beliefs, nor did the 'peoples representatives' — the Soviets of Working People's Deputies — know anything about this category of individuals. Even the families of such convicted individuals were never informed of the reasons for the arrest of such an individual or about the fate of such an individual. The property of such a family was confiscated and such a family was told that your husband, son or brother was an enemy of the people. If you do not denounce him — you will be dismissed from employment and sent to Siberia.

So, humiliated, offended in his human dignity, deprived of freedom, property, family, friends, enveloped in a feeling of depression and doom, such a convicted individual was sent to the so-called distant regions of the U.S.S.R., where, with renewed force, he was crushed by a diabolic machine oppressing his individuality and where the constant and unchangeable companions of the prisoner were rigid isolation from his people, humiliation of his human dignity, insults, beatings, hunger, the cold, unendurable work, executions, etc. It has to be noted that this phenomenon of violation of socialist laws and norms of human relations was not only not prosecuted, but in some instances encouraged. Every attempt at protest was viewed as an anti-Soviet act and provoked new repressions.

In such a lawless situation found themselves all prisoners of all special concentration camps, which were situated throughout the enormous territory of the U.S.S.R., from Mordovia to Kamchatka.

One of these concentration camps was the Gorlag of MVS, in the city of Norilsk located on the Taymyr Peninsula, far beyond the polar cap.

The condition of the prisoners in this camp was just as terrible and desperate as in all the other concentration camps of similar category. The only thing that kept up the spirit of the prisoners — was their faith in the victory of truth and justice. The arbitrariness which reigned in our land during Stalin's cult and which most severely affected the fate of the prisoners, constituted only a temporary distortion of socialist order and could not continue. The people considered the principal culprit of such a situation to be Stalin. Many people were convicted and imprisoned for expressing themselves against Stalin and for wishing his swift demise.

In March, 1953, Stalin died, but the situation of the prisoners did not improve, on the contrary, it deteriorated.

Here are some examples:

In the spring of 1953, in zone[24] 5, there was organized, in a most urgent manner, a penal sector and already in May, prisoners were being transferred there from various zones of the Gorlag.

So, on May 23, a group of prisoners from zone 1 was being transferred to the above mentioned penal sector. Among them was one very religious prisoner who, under no circumstances, wanted to be separated from his friend (also a very deeply religious prisoner), who was to be left behind in zone 1. The friend pleaded with First Lieutenant Shiryayev that he also be transferred to the penal sector so as not to be separated from his comrade. The First Lieutenant allowed him to accompany his friend to the penal sector and ordered him to enter the truck. The prisoner rejoiced and started walking toward the truck, at which time he was shot by First Lieutenant Shiryayev. His friend, the first prisoner, who at that time was already sitting in the truck, jumped from the truck and approached his killed buddy, he was also shot by First Lieutenant Shiryayev.

The next day, a group of thirteen prisoners was being sent from zone 4 to the penal sector. This group was supposed to walk through the tundra. At that time snow was melting and in some places the tundra was covered by water. Upon leaving the road and turning into the tundra, the convoy guard directed the prisoners straight into the water. Before the water's edge, the prisoners halted and asked the convoy guard for permission to proceed through dry land. The convoy guard, in accordance with his traditional behavior, abused the prisoners with curses and threats, forcing them to go into the water. The prisoners refused and so as not to give the convoy guard any excuse to use his weapon, sat down in the snow and declared that they will sit there until an officer appears. The officer came, listened to the complaints of the prisoners, took a carbine from one of the soldiers and shot the prisoner Safroniuk who sat in front, in the head, killing him instantaneously.

At the same time, information was received that in zone 3, in the presence of General Semenov, fifteen prisoners were wounded and six killed.

This sort of willfulness provoked unrest among the prisoners of Gorlag. No

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[24] Zone — Although in his Declaration the author uses the descriptive term "camp section" in lieu of zone, for purposes of consistency, the term "zone" is used throughout (Translator's note).

one knew when, where and at whom the next shot will be fired, but, the wait was not long. In zone 5, submachine gun fire was opened upon a group of prisoners, who found themselves near the living barracks. Of them, six men were wounded and one killed . . ."

This was the sort of regime against which the prisoners of Norilsk rebelled. For my humble participation in this uprising, Kolodyazhnyj accuses me of violating the established order.

In this manner, Kolodyazhnyj is allowed to shuffle the facts in my personal dossier. So, what is he going to do when there are no facts? Fabricate them!

For example, he is annoyed by my friendship with Avraham Shifrin, which he portrays thus: "Tell me who is your friend and I will tell you who you are." A question asserts itself that, if a zionist and spy Shifrin maintains contact with Hrycyak, who then is Hrycyak?

I think, additional comments are unnecessary.

This lie is so brazen and irresponsible, that I will not even attempt to deny it. I am not used to such fabricated accusations. In 1959, I was secretly and groundlessly accused of establishing in the Vinnytska Oblast the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and in this way the road to my arrest was paved. Now, although openly, but also groundlessly, I am being accused of spying . . . Tactics have changed, but the ruling hand remains the same. It is not hard to guess why this is being done.

However, harder to guess is the fact why my relationship with Shifrin so annoys Kolodyazhnyj. Why the fact that a prisoner is friends with another prisoner, that a Ukrainian is friends with a Jew, is not to his liking? Would he prefer that we fought like dogs. This did not and will not happen, his hopes are futile!

When reading Kolodyazhnyj's article from beginning to end, it may be supposed that the cause for such an article was my entry visa for immigrating to Israel, which I received way back in 1973. If this is the case, then why did Kolodyazhnyj keep silent for so long? What does he know now that he did not know before, which he currently so resents?

I asked for a permit to emigrate to Israel, utilizing my rights as a citizen, in accordance with the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, signed by representatives of all democratic governments of the world, inclusive of the government of the Soviet Union. If any violation existed, then such a violation was made by those ruling organs, which denied my right to emigrate.

In addition, I am forbidden another one of my rights granted me by the Resolution of the Fifteenth Conference of UNESCO, namely my right to maintain free contact with Avroville. As explanation, attached please find the text of my appeal in this matter to the rulers of the Soviet Union and India.

"Secretary General of the
Central Committee of the
Communist Party of U.S.S.R.
Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev

and

Mrs. Indira Gandhi
Prime-Minister of India

At the Fifteenth Conference of UNESCO, which was held in October and November, 1968 in Paris, a Resolution, proposed by the government of India, was unanimously adopted; the said Resolution provided for worldwide co-operation in the assistance of the development of the city of Avroville.

At this Conference, O. O. Fomin, chief of the Soviet delegation, stated: 'The Soviet delegation supports in its entirety the project of the Resolution proposed by India'.

The above mentioned Resolution specifically envisioned that in Avroville 'peoples of different countries will live in close cooperation and work in the fields of culture, education, etc.' and that 'the countries-members, that attach great meaning to true information and free exchange of ideas and knowledge, declare their agreement and resolve to disseminate and strengthen the means of inter-relationships among its peoples'.

From the time of the adoption of the said Resolution seven years have passed, but the free exchange of ideas and knowledge never materialized. For example, the first brief announcement about Avroville came to us through the magazine 'India' (No. 2, 1972). Then I wrote to Avroville, requesting detailed information about the construction of this unique city. My letter was kindly answered by secretary Navadzhata. He wrote: '... We are sending you a copy of 'Avroville Newspaper', which will supply you with some information about the latest achievements, as well as some additional literature about Avroville'.

I have not received the promised information from Navadzhata and wrote to him about it. No answer was received and in this manner our contact ended. To take a private trip to Avroville from the U.S.S.R. is impossible. Obviously, the unanimously adopted Resolution about cooperation with reference to Avroville to this date remains only a good intention of the governments of different countries, but does not constitute a part of their policy.

Therefore, I am appealing to the leaders of two friendly countries with the request that they direct their attention to the above mentioned UNESCO Resolution and instruct their respective governments to adapt and publish an agreement about facilitation and unrestricted contact for interested citizens of the U.S.S.R. with Avroville.

By such facilitation and unrestricted contact I understand:

1. unlimited postal service (letters, printed materials, packages, money);
2. free and unrestricted private travel of U.S.S.R. citizens to Avroville and back to the U.S.S.R.;
3. departure of interested citizens to Avroville for permanent residence.

Please do not consider this letter as a reproach or criticism. It is only a reminder about the forgotten UNESCO Resolution and an expression of hope that the governments of your two nations, with concrete resolve and good faith, will strive towards and reach a decisive agreement about the development and achievement of this one absolutely peaceful city on earth — Avroville.

January 3, 1976 (Signature)

To date, I have not received a reply to my letter.

My situation, as evidenced by my long experience, is such:

1. If I were to work and not maintain contact with anyone, as was the fact in 1958—1959, I will be accused of not working and establishing the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists — result — awaiting arrest.

2. If I were to maintain contact with my friends, I will be accused of espionage — result — awaiting arrest.

Having signed the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the government of the Soviet Union has recognized my right to emigrate. I am appealing to you with reference to only one thing — to provide me with this right.

July 5, 1976 *Y. Hrycyak*

APPENDIX "B"

The Committee for the Implementation
of the Helsinki Accords

I, former political prisoner, Yevhen Hrycyak, Ukrainian, am hereby appealing for your attention to the following instance of violation of the Helsinki Accords:

At the end of 1973, I received an entry visa for immigration to Israel. In 1974, I petitioned for an exit visa. In 1975, I was denied the said exit visa.

In the middle of May, 1976, in a conversation with Captain Veloboyenko, Chief of Snyatyn County KGB, I reasserted my intention to emigrate from the U.S.S.R. Approximately two weeks after my conversation with Veloboyenko, in the newspaper "Prykarpatska Pravda" (Trans-Carpathian Truth), appeared an article which defamed my relationship with Avraham Shifrin, whom I owe my entry visa for immigration to Israel. Then on January 1, 1977, I was dismissed from work and on February 10, 1977, at a meeting of the Communist Party Committee of the collective farm "Pershe Travnya" (First of May) of Snyatyn County, a new rumor, compromising Shifrin and me, was spread among the participants.

The Secretary of the Communist Party Committee V. Maleykey stated at the said meeting that my friendship with Shifrin is based upon the killing of one convoy guard, who led us to work, whom we jointly were supposed to murder during our imprisonment.

This absurd statement by the Secretary of the Communist Party Committee aroused my suspicion and I see in it an attempt to prepare public opinion, paving the way for my arrest.

February 18, 1977 *Y. Hrycyak*

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