

Camp Doctor
16 Years in the Soviet Union
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Chapter 1A

On the 8th of May 1945 Germany surrendered. On the 26th July the United States and Britain sent through the Soviet Union an ultimatum to Japan to surrender unconditionally, Japan rejected that ultimatum and continued to fight. Although the Japanese military circles were of the opinion that the Soviet Union will not enter the war, as a non-aggression pact existed between the two countries. Nevertheless the Red Army crossed the border into Japanese held territory. On the 9th of August the Japanese authorities in Harbin began to arrest Russian citizens. On the next morning Jewish women, whose husbands were arrested, came to me one after the other, asking me to intervene on their behalf with the authorities. "The arrests are being carried out by the Police". "The police break into houses, arrest people without showing arrest warrants of any kind". Jews, holders of Soviet passports, arrive at the hospital where I was working as a doctor, asking me to hospitalize them and in this way to save them from arrest. I hospitalize them and enter in the hospital entry form and in the illness progress form yesterdays or the day before date. My office in the hospital turned into a "bureau of tears". Many come to me, as the Head of the Jewish community and request help and protection. I phoned the head of the Japanese Military Authority and asked him to receive me for an urgent interview. During the passed ten years I met him on many occasions for discussions on matters concerning the Jewish community, Jewish public institutions and on matters concerning hundreds of individual Jews, mainly regarding refugees from Germany. In our meeting I expressed my amazement and indignation on the illegal arrests of so many Jews and demanded their immediate release. The head of the delegation was surprised at my words of the scope of the arrests, but said, that during times of war the rule is in the hands of the commander of the garrison and the arrests are carried out solely on his orders. I answered that although the commander of the Japanese forces gave this order to isolate or even arrest some suspects, we must assume that it was not he who compiled the list of the tens of Jews that were arrested but the police did, and their considerations were not at all based on security matters, but on the advice of Russian organizations such as the "White Guards" and the "Black Hundred". The police arrested mainly Jews, especially the affluent individuals in order to extort from them ransom money. I therefore asked him as the head of the Military Authority to turn the attention of the Commander of the Japanese forces to this matter and help us defend the lives and rights of the Jewish residents. The head of the Authority phoned on the spot the Commander of the Japanese forces. They talked with each other and my name was mentioned several times. After their conversation, the Head of the Authority informed me that the Commander of the Forces did order the police to isolate the suspects but was surprised at the scope of the arrests and promised to check this matter as soon as possible, and indeed all the arrested Jews were set free the next day.

While I was sitting in the Head of the Authority's office presenting my case, a senior police officer arrived at my residence, which was then situated in a resort area outside the city, in order to arrest me, finding me absent, he waited, assuming that I shall soon arrive home from the hospital. I however, returned to the hospital from the Head of the Authority's office in order to complete the hospital inmates check up while it was still daylight, as a general black out was declared in the city, and the hospital's lighting arrangements, during the blackout, were still not adequate. One of my sons slipped out of the house, came to the hospital and informed me of the "guest" that was waiting for me. The situation was odd: While I just returned from the Head of the Military Authority who promised to release the arrested Jews, I myself was to be arrested. I tried to contact by telephone several people but the telephone service was not operating. I managed; however, to inform the Secretary of the Jewish Community of what is expected to occur to me. He arrived at the hospital after some time, accompanied by Professor Kutsudzi – One of the "Righteous of the World", in one of the conventions of the Jewish Communities of the Far East he made a welcoming speech in Hebrew. He studied in the faculty of Eastern Languages in the United States and was then a professor of Semitic Sciences in the University of Tokyo. He wrote a book on the History of the Jews in Ancient Times and a book of Grammar of the Hebrew Language. Upon hearing

the details of the current events Professor Kotsodzi went immediately to various government representatives in order to try to reverse this edict.

At midnight two Russian police sergeants came to the hospital, I knew these sergeants for some time as they, in the line of duty, used to be present at various Jewish assemblies.

"An unpleasant assignment was given to us, we come here to arrest you. What can we do? They are already rebuking us that we still did not bring you to the police station", one of them said.

I asked them, unofficially, who was it that issued this arrest order, and whether it is in their possession.

"You know very well", smiled one of the sergeants "that arrest orders are not issued. It is not our fault. We just received orders to bring you to the police station. Would we otherwise bother you if we would not have received this order? Please, Doctor, come with us".

To my question of what, in their opinion, is the reason I am being arrested? He smiled and replied: "Don't you understand? So that you shouldn't hinder the police... you always hinder them".

I told the sergeants that I would not go with them. They became confused and even alarmed. What to do? They must bring me. That's an order, it cannot be disobeyed.

"I will not go with you", I repeated. "Go and tell your commandant that I will not go. If you cannot tell this to your commandant because you are afraid, tell him that I am sick, or that I am on duty at the hospital and as there is no other doctor available I cannot leave the hospital, as I am treating a very sick patient...tell him what you will...I will not go!".

The sergeants tried to contact their commandant by telephone, but the telephone did not work. Approximately at two o'clock at night a car arrived at the hospital - from it emerged six people, five Japanese and one Russian, all were armed from head to toe even with steel helmets on their heads. At the head of this group was Japanese, the commander of the department for foreigners of the police. We were acquainted as I met him several times concerning Jewish matters, and as a doctor, treated his family members more than once. He took me aside and tried to coax me to go with him to the police station so that this matter could be clarified with his superiors. He had orders to bring me with him, be what may. He would prefer not to use force and requests that I accompany him. I had no choice at this point and accompanied by the armed group I went.

We arrived at the police station at three o'clock AM. The commander of the Department for Foreigners who brought me here is doing all he can to clarify with his superiors that a misunderstanding might have occurred about my arrest. However at this late hour he cannot reach anyone. Consequently he requests me to descend to the basement of the house - in other words - to the detention room. We went down, and one of the policemen, a Korean "receives" the prisoner. He enters my name and the personal belongings that he receives from me - watch, money, fountain pen - he takes my belt and shoes. But in this moment the Japanese who in the meanwhile continued with the clarification of this matter returned, he orders the Korean to return to me all my belongings and said: "You are a very important person Mr. Doctor... you are free to go".

We ascended upstairs and a police officer, who has meanwhile been summoned to the police station, also informs me that I am free to go. The time is now five o'clock in the morning. As there is no public transportation at this early hour, I cannot return home, so I set my direction to the hospital. On the way I stop at the hotel Modern where the secretary of the Jewish Community is residing, I found my son at his apartment and together with him we returned to the hospital. We did not shut an eye; we sipped some coffee and in the morning returned home. The report of my arrest and release spread very quickly among my neighbors and many of them come over to congratulate me. This was on the 11 of August and on this day the rest of the arrested Jews were also released.

Chapter 1B

The war continues to wage. On the 10th of August after the atomic bomb was cast on Hiroshima the Japanese Emperor proclaimed over the radio, that due to the heavy loss of lives of his people he is ordering the cessation of fighting. However, the commander of the Conton army that was stationed in Manchuria refused to put down his arms and the fighting continued for another 8-9 days. On the 17 of August the Red Army entered Harbin. Either genuinely or with no other alternative the Red army was received with joy by the Russian and the Chinese population. Many Russians went out of their way with emotions and threw

cigarettes, apples and candies on the Red Army soldiers, hugging them, the “desirables”, the “expected ones”... many of them, it seems, with the simple desire to save their skins, cheering the soldiers “long live the Red Army!” “long live Stalin!”...

On Sunday, 19 of August, at 11.00 o'clock in the morning, we were summoned, by order of the Soviet Command to a gathering of representatives of the Russian public in order to choose a public committee whose function will be something like a City Council. The former City Council and other organizations were not active anymore. The Public Committee was to be responsible for the supply of bread and other supplies to the citizens and to the army and also to organize a citywide guard

(The Japanese continued to shoot at Russians and were sniping from ambush at lone individuals). As I, at that time, was busy performing urgent surgery, I could not be present at the gathering, I asked the secretary of the Jewish Community to participate in my place. Although I was not present at this gathering I, nevertheless, was chosen to be the deputy Chairman of the Public Committee, and not withstanding that I was overloaded with work, as a doctor and with the affairs of the Jewish community, I was compelled to take on this additional function. The Public Committee went immediately into action. Although ostensibly this committee was representing the local citizenry, behind it and actually at its head were two Red army officers.

On Tuesday, the 21st of August, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, I was to start receiving the public at the offices of the Public Committee. It was a fine and hot August day. I returned home from the hospital, had my lunch with my family and departed for the offices of the Public Committee. I went ... never to return. I was to be separated from my family for a period of 16 years, to meet them again in 1961 in our homeland, the State of Israel.

On my arrival at the Committee offices I began with receiving the public. The first to be received was a man, German, by origin, his son was killed during the night by the Japanese. He was standing at his post near some army warehouse. The miserable father was sobbing, this was his only son. The father has no possibility to bring his son to a proper burial. I instructed the secretary that was placed at my disposal, to take care of the burial arrangements. A woman entered next. Her mother died this morning. She is a poor woman and is asking for monetary aid. Someone is asking to hospitalize his sick daughter. A bakery owner requests flour for the bakery. An elderly man who wants to issue a special newspaper in honor of the victorious Red Army and “the great Stalin” requests a permit, technical assistance and a money allotment for this purpose. He hurries me, as in one week's time a Red Army parade will take place and he wants to issue his paper in time for this parade. I direct him to the Army Command, as his request is not in the jurisdiction of the Committee. The man is not satisfied, requests helplessly for assistance and tries to prove to me how great this act will be. I refuse to assist him in this matter and he leaves my room in anger. Who knows, perhaps in this way he wants to save his skin? About 15 years ago he escaped from the Soviet Union and found refuge in Manchuria. And now again the tables have turned and he thinks that the only way to safety is to cheer “honor to Stalin!” “honor to the Red Army!”.

In the other rooms of the offices of the Committee the commotion increases, in one room people are writing, drawing and pasting placards and slogans: “Honor the victorious Red Army”, “Glory to the leader of international proletariat the great Stalin”... “glory”... “honor”... “long live”... and who is the one that is dealing with all this? The editor of an anti-Soviet newspaper, the mouthpiece of the rightists, the Russian Emigres, A White Emigre who only just a short while ago gave a lecture against the Soviet Union and Communism. All the active enemies of the Soviet Union, people of the “White Guards” and the “Black Hundreds” are now all singing songs of praise to the new order. They want to save their skins and think that this is the way to do it. None of them were saved. Also arrested were those who while being members of the anti-Soviet organizations were at the same time Soviet agents. All of them sooner or later were brought to the Soviet Union and found “refuge” in the Soviet jails and the exile camps.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon I completed the reception of the visitors and went to the hospital in order to carry out the evening rounds of the patients. At the completion of the rounds while I was preparing to go home, the telephone rang. I was being invited to come this evening between the hours 5 – 7 to the hotel “Yamato” and present myself to the Soviet High Command. Representatives of all the public organizations and institutions, national and cultural are invited “and it is preferable that the participation be as full as possible”.

Upon receiving this invitation I informed immediately, through the secretary of the Jewish Community, one of the members of the presidential committee and the Rabbi of the city, of this invitation. We agreed to meet at the secretary's home in the hotel "Modern". Upon ending all my hospital rounds I went to the hotel "Modern", in the lobby the rabbi was already waiting. The member of the presidential committee of the community did not arrive yet. He was also not at home and his family members were looking for him all over the city and did not find him for a long while. Suddenly he too appears, out of breath, but happy that he did not come late... The four of us went to the hotel "Yamato", my friends speaking among themselves, the member of the presidential committee telling how his family found him. The Rabbi turns to me: "Why are you sad at heart?"

I replied that I am tired and have a headache, but in reality, I was feeling gloomy and anxious over things to come. I am sure that the Rabbi felt this anxiety and sat silent in his gloom.

Chapter 1C

At the entrance to the "Yamato" hotel stood a Major and two armed soldiers. Upon nearing the entrance the Major saluted and asked politely:

"Did you come in response to the invitation to present, yourselves? Please!" And immediately just like someone coming from out of nowhere a young captain appeared and led us to one of the halls of the hotel then disappeared the way he came. We are sitting, waiting, the conversation between us has no connection to the present situation, ten minutes have gone by, silence, no one moves. Some one else comes in, dressed in civilian clothes, and sits on the sofa that stood in the middle of the room. Silence ... Its getting darker. No one switches on the light. Not a human sound is heard, every one of us is asking himself: what is the meaning of this situation? Another 15 – 20 minutes have passed, an officer enters the lounge, approaches us then addresses me: "please" and with a gesture of his hand requests me to follow him. We leave the hotel and enter the house that stands opposite the hotel – the house of the Japanese consulate that was commandeered by the Soviet high command. In front of the wide entrance of this house stood an armed soldier. We ascend to the second floor, the house is completely empty, not a human soul in it. The officer leads me into a large hall, which had three doors leading from it, The officer exits and leaves me alone in the hall. Where am I? I open the door to the right, – bath-room and toilet - I open the door opposite me - a small room empty of furniture but has a window overlooking the street – I open the third door and peek inside the room, sitting on a stool near a bare table was the chairman of the Georgian community. Upon seeing me he was astounded but it was also evident on his face that more than being surprised he was relieved to see a living person. Where are we? In the kitchen.

"What are you doing here? How did you come to be here? Are you here a long time?" I shower questions at my neighbor. He too came here as I did – from the "Yamato" hotel where he was invited to be "presented" as the representative of the Georgian community. He is sitting in this small kitchenette for over an hour and no one has come to him, no one called him nor has anyone asked him any questions. We sit, discussing the situation bringing up various explanations. What is the reason for this? What will befall us? Sad ruminations.

What's that? Sounds of footsteps are heard, we strained our ears to hear the sound more clearly, Someone is striding there and back, there and back. I decided to peek. I opened the door and whom do my eye's perceive? - My good friend N. When he saw me he was astounded and frightened. I invite him into the kitchen. We are already three. He is most alarmed and cannot calm himself. He too was invited to "Present" himself. In the past he was the mayor of one of the cities on the shores of the Amur River. In Harbin he was the director of the Mutual Trust bank. He was invited to "present" himself as the representative of the directorate of a Horse-Breeding Company. Also for him a place will be found in the prison, or an exile camp. Why not? It is said in the Soviet Union "First find the man, the sentence will come by itself"

It's nine o'clock in the evening, We switched on the light, the lamp is dim, the room is in semi darkness. The three of us are gloomy, our conversation is minimal, what is there to talk about? Just one subject is being repeated continuously: "What is the meaning of this matter? What's going on? How long will we be kept here?"

Deathly silence, not a motion or movement from any direction. The house is empty and bleak. Not a living soul anywhere, the emptiness is threatening. The hour is ten... eleven, our latest neighbor asks or states doubtfully "are we under arrest?" I answer: "Are you still in doubt about this?" The Georgian murmurs to himself "they will liquidate us eventually"

Midnight, we suddenly hear the treading of feet, sounds of commotion, we peeked into the hall. Familiar faces! The hall is brightly lit and crowded into it are about fifty – sixty people. Among them members of the presidency of the Jewish Community, members of the Ukrainian, Armenian, Turko-Tatarian communities and representatives of the Organization of the Citizens of Lithuania headed by the Lithuanian Consul. Also present were representatives of various organizations like the "Red Cross", "The Organization of Mutual Assistance" and many others. All came to be "presented" by invitation of the Soviet High Command. On seeing these people I remembered that several days previously, the Soviet Liaison Officer requested the Chairman of the Public Committee to compile a list of about 250 people who were considered the most influential and active among the public and professional organizations, in order to invite them to a lecture to be given by a senior officer on the subject of "How we Captured Berlin". The Chairman was requested to prepare the list within one day. He hurriedly prepared the list and submitted it on the same day. No lecture was ever given nor, it seems, was ever intended to be given, all this matter of the list was to assist the Soviet Authorities in deciding on who was to be invited to "present" himself.

Upon seeing me, my colleagues of the Jewish community approached me, embraced me with happiness and asked: "Did you present yourself already?" and when I replied and told them that we are sitting here since six O'clock and isn't it clear to them by now that we all are under arrest, they were startled at my words.

"What got into your head? Very soon a reception will surely be held and after that we shall all go home!"

Also the others were of the same opinion and could not conceive in their minds that we are under arrest. The Head of the Ukrainian community condemned bitterly my "black pessimism". The Lithuanian Consul also complained and protested at my words about the arrest. The others were silent but confused.

After some time an officer with the rank of major appeared. In the complete hush of all present he addressed the crowd and said: "You are all requested to follow me!"

Many of the faces showed smiles of "victory" – here we are going to present ourselves – then home! We all are marching along the long corridor - the major in front and an armed soldier behind us. Descending the inner stairs to the first floor, we are now standing in front of the wide door, which leads outside, but the door does not open for us. The major continues on downstairs to the cellar with us marching after him. We reach a big low ceilinged room; the ceiling is just above our heads. Filth, piles of rubbish and dirt are scattered all over the floor. In front of all the doors of the cellar a young soldier is stationed with a rifle in his hands. The officer enters one of the rooms, while we remain in the company of the soldiers. We cannot sit down; no stool, chair or any other furniture is available.

Many realized now that we really are under arrest. The Lithuanian Consul, is still sticking to his original opinion, accordingly they will check our papers and then – home. The others, however, are not deluded any more, dirty cellar, armed guards. Suddenly a severe voice of one of the guards is heard: "No talking!"

A door opens, a senior lieutenant announces: "enter here, two by two, in a queue!" Someone hurries and enters. Ten minutes later they call the next couple. The first couple did not return. My turn has arrived too. We enter – myself and one of my neighbors of the kitchen – into a dark and narrow room. A senior lieutenant invites me to approach his table and asks: Family name, first name, fathers name, date of birth, nationality (this last question is always asked of a person in the Soviet Union, either in some inquiry or in filling out some questionnaire). After that I was told to put all the items that I had on me on the table. I did as requested. I was also ordered to take off my tie and the belt from my trousers. The officer listed and numbered everything one by one – counting the money – calling out aloud all the items he received from me for "safe keeping". I sign, he signs, everything according to the correct procedure, I bid goodbye to my belongings and money never to see them again.

The officer turns to the Sergeant near him and remarks: "to the third!" Both to the sergeant and to me the meaning of this remark is clear – we leave the room

A narrow corridor dimly lit. The wall on the left side is grated with iron bars rising upto the ceiling. Behind the bars are cells, stretching along the length of the corridor, a thin wall is separating each cell from the other. We stop at cell number 3, the sergeant opens a small iron

door through which a person can enter only by stooping. I enter the cage. The light is dim. Sleeping bunks attached to the wall. On one of the bunks someone is sleeping curled up and covered with a coat. I sit on the lower bunk, wooden thorns as sharp as needles prick my skin, its only because the wooden planks are new and have not been planed, I spring up and sit on the floor close to the iron bars till morning comes. The silence that dominates the "death house" is broken only when another person is brought to one of the cells. No one was brought to my cell till the morning.

My cellmate awakens, looks at me and exclaims: "Doctor how did you come to be here?" "It seems that all the roads lead this place".

My colleague from the Jewish community is imprisoned in the adjacent cell – Number 4. In cell number 5 sits a newspaper editor, an acquaintance, and in cell number 1, a doctor, and acquaintance too. As morning sets in additional people are being brought to my cell. By noon ten people are shoved into the cell. The cell is too small to hold all of us. Overcrowding, stifling. In the dim light I started to observe our new home; The cell was windowless, sealed walls on three sides and an iron barred wall to the side of the corridor, on the outer wall of the corridor a small hatch was hacked out leading outside.

I'm sitting on the floor. Lucky is the one who has a coat, which he can spread on the bunk and lie on it; the wooden thorns do not pierce his skin then.

Day follows day. Days and nights in this narrow cage, stifling and filthy. We suffocate due to lack of air, we ask the guard on duty to open the hatch in the corridor. "It is forbidden" he answers decisively. A sergeant passes through the corridor I turn to him and ask him to open the hatch, at least just for the nights, his compassion is aroused and he complies and opens the hatch. My heart is heavy. My cellmates, most of whom are unknown to me, lacked any culture and I had no interest in any of them. I am the only Jew in the cell. Twice a day we are taken out of the cell to the toilet. Cell after cell, each cell separately. As I pass the adjacent cells my acquaintances greet me, among them Dr. T. He volunteers several times to sweep the corridor. And probably to show that his spirits have not fallen and he has not lost hope, he plays the fool a little and dances with the broom in his hands. It is forbidden to talk with the inmates of the other cells, but as Dr. T sweeps the floor near my cell he greets me, inquires how I am and adds: "Don't worry we will soon be free". He was absolutely sure that in a few days he would be freed from this prison. In the beginning of 1946 he was sent to one of the labor camps in the Urals and worked there as a doctor in the camp hospital. In spite of his praise and glorification of the government and the regime, he was sentenced to ten years in camp. However, even before he completed his sixth year he was again sentenced to an additional ten years and was also dismissed from his position as a doctor. He sank into a deep depression and died without ever regaining his freedom.

New prisoners are arriving daily, mainly young people. My heart is anxious that the "CHEKA" will not touch my two sons. One morning the inmates of cell number 1 were taken out of the cell to the toilet, upon returning they related that a big group of new prisoners have been brought to the cellar, mostly young people. My blood froze in my veins, "dear God in Heaven! Have pity on my children!" I waited impatiently

Till our cell was taken out. The Cellar is full of prisoners. I turn directly towards them and with anxiety in my eyes look at each of their faces. Someone of the young people

Calls me: "Doctor!" I turn to him and ask: where were they arrested, when, for what crime – and whether he saw my boys! My sons are not among them. I calmed somewhat. They tell me that day by day people are arrested on the streets, kidnapped, shoved into cars and brought to the prison, and day by day I am in agony with anxiety for the fate of my children.

On the sixteenth day of our imprisonment they finally led us to a bath. They installed three – four cold water faucets in the courtyard, brought in some buckets of hot water – go and bathe! And bathe we did, we washed as much grime as we could from our bodies and we even received a pair of underwear.

Among the prisoners are some ill people. We notified the prison commander and also the sergeant. They promised to bring a doctor. Many signed up, even myself, mainly with the hope that the doctor might be known to me and through him to establish some contact with the outside world. Around noon the "doctor" arrived – a paramedic from one of the prisons in the city, accompanied by an officer the paramedic approaches the entrance to each cell and calls out "who is sick? What ails you?" – then gives the sick some Aspirin powder or Piramidon. Finally he comes to our cell. He immediately recognizes me. I ask him to enter to examine me, as I do not feel too well in my stomach. The officer opens the little door to our cell so that the paramedic could enter. The paramedic, however, paled, shuddered and it was

clear that he was fearful to enter the cell. Perhaps he imagined that he will not be let out again, finally he gathered his courage and entered. Someone turns to the officer and asks "I would like to take this opportunity and ask the paramedic to convey my greetings to my family", upon hearing this request the paramedic became alarmed and quickly exited the cell. Just three months ago this paramedic was sick with typhus. I visited his home and even hospitalized him in the Jewish hospital, nursing him to recovery. He thanked me very much then. But here the fear overcame him, fear for his life. He even avoided looking at me.

After several days they started calling the prisoners for interrogations. Approximately 20 people are crowded into the corridor among them my colleagues from the community directorate. They pass my cell, faces radiant with joy, they think that they are being released... Those remaining in the "animal cages" envy them. Someone passes my cell, waves his hand goodbye to me, smiles and whispers to me: "Soon you too will be freed!"

I don't know where they got this confidence. Perhaps the prison authorities are misleading them: "Prepare yourselves to be freed!" This type of ruse was necessary more than once. In the future it was to be used on me many times. A person believes to what his heart wants to believe.

On the next day, someone who returned from the interrogation told us that all those who were "freed" yesterday were actually transferred to the City Prison in order to make room for other prisoners.

Chapter 1D

It is over two and a half weeks that I am imprisoned in this cellar and upto now I still was not called for the interrogation. The Rosh-Hashanah holiday arrived. In the early morning, when the rest of the prisoners are asleep, the need for praying overpowers me and I am trying to remember the words of a prayer, my lips murmur: "Who will live and who will die..." and on this same day, the first day of the holiday, we were all loaded onto trucks. We rode along the main street of the City. Due to the holidays the businesses owned by Jews are closed, and the public on the streets is not too numerous. Two soldiers are stationed on the truck to overlook our activities; the public on the streets is looking at us with astonishment. When the truck stopped for a moment on an intersection the people around started greeting us with best wishes and threw cigarettes, candies and apples at us. The truck is passing the hotel "Modern" and at the entrance is standing one of the employees who is familiar to me. With signs of my hand I explain to him, that we are being transported to the City Jail. That same day he informed my family of this (He told me about this months later when he too was jailed and we both were in the same prison wagon of the train that carried us to Sverdlovsk).

We arrived at the prison compound. After muster we were squeezed, about 60 people, into one of the buildings. Among the arrivals were many acquaintances – lawyers, correspondents, authors. They brought us food, a sort of lunch – a bland gruel and bread, we were hungry and we ate everything without leaving a crumb. By evening they started quartering us into cells. I was assigned cell number 43. I was "in luck" my cell had two windows facing the street. In one of the corners of the cell was a chamber pot for urinating. We were 46 people in the cell, among them were 8 Chinese and Japanese, business people and senior administrators, they settled in a corner by themselves.

In the evening the Deputy-Commander of the prison, an officer and a sergeant with a folder in his hands entered our cell. Each one of us had to give his name, family name, father's name, date of birth and nationality. The sergeant enters this in his folder. Dr. S. says loudly: "Jewish". The word "Jewish" from his mouth rings in my ears, indeed Jewish. In the Soviet prison he turned Jewish, for tens of years he lived in Harbin, known to all as a Pravoslav, respected in the church circles and once even Served as a sort "GABAI" in their church – suddenly he's "Jewish!" He is an old convert to the Pravoslav religion. However, in his talks with me in the past he did not deny his Jewish origin and even used to phone me on Rosh Hashanah to wish me a happy holiday, and say in Hebrew "Shana Tova", but always claimed that he was a true Pravoslav.

When the turn of an editor of a Russian Newspaper arrived – a converted Jew, even the son of a converted Jew, the same thing repeated itself. He too claimed to be Jewish. His mother and father were converted and his sister and uncle too. He, however, was born a Christian Pravoslav, but in prison he turned Jewish.

One of the prisoners proclaimed that he is a Ukrainian, the officer clarifies: "So... Russian?"

"Not Russian, Ukrainian!"

"Why Ukrainian? Russian!"

"I am not Russian. I am Ukrainian".

"Write Russian!" the officer orders the sergeant, who writes: Nationality... Russian. The registration ends. The Deputy-Commander of the prison tells us how good it will be in the Soviet Union where they respect the dignity of the worker and the salary too is high. Our "crimes" and "sins" against the Soviet Union will be forgiven and we will work for the good of our dear "Motherland"... And there are those who believe his words, and that soon we will all be released. The Deputy-Commander demonstrates his words and points to the sergeant: "For five years he was a prisoner in a prison and an exile camp, he admitted his crimes and now he is serving in the army and he even is considered a good soldier. Later, we learned that the sergeant has, in fact, served a prison term of five years but his crime was... Breaking and entry and robbery. The officer, on referring to him called him "A true Soviet"

I laid myself to sleep. On bare wooden planks. I folded my jacket and put it under my head. But could we sleep? No. Thousands of fleas are stinging and sucking ones blood. They are simply hungry. Everyone springs from his bed trying to fight the fleas, trampling them with their feet and with anything they can get their hands on.

Everyone is swearing, in Russian, Ukrainian, Polish. Even the Japanese and Chinese are swearing too on everyone and everything in their languages.

In the corridor near the entrance to the cell a young Ukrainian sentry, about 19 years old, is standing on guard duty, from time to time he peers into the cell through the small hatch in the door. Perhaps he is doing this out of curiosity, or, perhaps for some other reason. At night this soldier accompanied by another soldier enter the cell creep slowly towards the Japanese and take a pair of boots, the boots are new and of good quality. The owner of the boots is not asleep, he sees how his property is being stolen, he shouts, jumps up and tries to retrieve his boots from the guards-thieves, but to no avail, they drag him and another Japanese, who also has new boots, out of the cell. They then close and latch the door behind them. All is quiet. After about 15 minutes the Japanese return, without their boots and without their trousers. We learn that they were brought to the latrine and there under threat of a pistol were undressed. After some hours they were given torn trousers and old worn out boots... One of the Japanese, who was one of the directors of the North-Manchurian Railway, is filled with wrath, he shouts and demands to see the prison commander. It is clear to us, however, that this robbery was carried out not without the knowledge of the soldier's superiors and perhaps even on their orders, as where from did the soldiers get the key to the cell? How did they plot? Where was the Sergeant of the guard?

The next morning the Japanese submitted a complaint to the prison commander against the violence of the soldier and the robbery. The stolen items, however, were never returned and the prison commander never bothered to respond to their complaint. Everyone of us were deaf and dumb to this incident, as who would dare to open his mouth?

Its stifling in the cell. Filth, dust. The food is terrible, and there is no desire to touch it. It is tasteless and on top of that, revolting.

One day I am called by the prison commander to the hatch of our cell, he extends to me a letter and says:

"Your wife was here and left you a note. If you desire, you can reply to her, but you are permitted to write only on matters concerning your state of health, you are also permitted to ask her to send you a parcel. You must write only in Russian. Do you intend to reply to her?"

"Of course I do".

"If so, here is a paper and pencil and in ten minutes I shall be back to take the letter" says the prison commander. He then hands me a package – soap, toothpaste and a towel – and adds, "there was also a package of chocolate, but the soldiers ate it..." exemplary frankness! In 10 – 15 minutes the commander came to take the letter. When I gave him the letter he said:

"Your wife is worried about you, she heard that you are ill, now, when she will receive your letter she will be relieved ...".

Several days later one of the new prisoners told me, that a rumor is circulating in the city that I was struck by paralysis. Where did this rumor come from? Where did it originate? As a matter of fact I actually was "ill". One of the fingers of my left hand developed a pustular abscess, the finger swelled and felt very painful. As a result of this pain I could not sleep and could not find a comfortable position to place my hand. I approached the prison infirmary and

asked the paramedic – the same paramedic who visited my cell – to open the abscess, he hesitates to perform this “surgery”. Instead he bandages the finger with alcohol. The pain does not subside. On the next day I again come to the infirmary and demanded decidedly that he should open the abscess. He refuses. I then tell him to prepare all the necessary instruments so that I shall open the abscess by myself. The medic held my arm tightly and without any local anaesthetic I open the abscess by myself with my healthy hand. That night I was relieved of any pain. Perhaps the wound on my finger developed into the rumor of paralysis.

Our living conditions are very harsh. The prison is full to the brim. Thousands of people are imprisoned in it. Luckily for me, I see my wife and children almost daily through the windows of my cell, and this is the only ray of light in my present existence. On the first day of my imprisonment in this jail, one of the prisoners informed me that my wife is standing at the entrance to the house opposite the jail. I darted to the window of the cell. Indeed, my wife is standing opposite. I look at her and tears are flowing from my eyes. She too is looking at me, but she does not recognize me. No wonder – for almost three weeks I have not shaved and my beard has sprouted all over my face. Eventually she recognized me, as on the next day she came with my two sons. Since then, for two weeks we are seeing each other in this manner almost every day, exchanging glances, crying and feeling each others tears.

Life in the prison continues without any changes. Someone is taken from the cell and is transferred, according to rumor, to Chabarovsk. In various ways, through the grim prison walls all kinds of rumors are seeping in: One new prisinor arrived, another one is transferred to the Soviet Union. A rumor is circulating, that several people will be released, everyone is hoping that he too will be released... without doubt its he... of course, him...

We are all filthy, our hair is growing wild. One day we were bode of the arrival of three barbers, all are pleased. Hair cuts, shaves. My turn arrives too, my hair was trimmed, my beard was shaved, but my moustache which was thick and overgrown too, the barber refused, for some reason, to trim. Why? No need...and that's all!

Next morning another surprise, even more pleasant, we are all going to a bath-house! We sloshed a little in hot water, washed off the filth that clung to our bodies. We even received underpants – not necessarily new and even slightly torn, but clean.

Day follows day, night follows night. There are those who manage to sleep the whole day and even at night, good for them, they are listless most of the time. There are others, however, who cannot shut an eye and writhe in agony, the heart is anxious and the thoughts are torturous, days and nights.

Yom Hakipurim arrived, I am heavy hearted, I knew that today was Yom Hakipurim and not a morsel of food has entered my mouth. The fast helps me spiritually, purifying and calming. More light than usual illuminates the prison darkness. When sitting or reclining on my bunk I recite a prayer in my heart. Some prayers return to my memory. The holiday ends, it is already after the conclusion prayer. It is dusk. Over there at the synagogue the sound of the Shofer is heard, longingly and hopefully:

“By next year in Jerusalem!”
And I? What fate will befall me?!

Chapter 1E

The number of people in our cell is decreasing. The Chinese and the Japanese were transferred to another place, 8 other people were summoned and transferred to somewhere unknown. One of soldiers of the guards said that they were sent by ship to the Soviet Union. And us, the ones remaining, are waiting for some unknown fate. One night at midnight I am called from my cell. From the quiet of the night someone calls my name loudly. I approach the entrance to the cell.

“Come out.” I go out to the corridor. At the entrance to the door a sergeant and a soldier are standing. The sergeant takes hold of me and leads me to another room. The room is without a door, not illuminated; just a faint light enters from the corridor. I feel most uncomfortable in this dark room in the company of the two soldier- jailers. The sergeant is sitting on a small table in the middle of the room addresses me: “We have just been at your home “ (I shuddered upon hearing these words)... “We had a festive meal, vodka as much as we desired. Your young son is the salt of the earth, He fed us until full... here is a letter for you...”

Half drunk, he started searching in his pockets for the letter. Emptying his pockets of all kinds of objects and papers and placing it all on the table. Then he started looking among the papers that he took out. The room is dark and in the darkness he looks at length at each paper. Finally he found a piece of paper which he hands me.

One of the soldiers adds:

"They also sent you a coat, but it was taken from us in the prison office, you will get it tomorrow"

Suddenly the sergeant stepped close to me and whispered: "would you like to go to your home?" My breath stopped out of fear. I know that all movement is forbidden in the city during the night hours, the soldier is drunk, who knows what scheme he is plotting? "Its too late and also forbidden", but he is adamant: "that's all right, lets go... to night all the sentries are under my command, here, downstairs and even at the gate". I knew that the night before soldiers who were driving without permits were shot at. I refuse, who knows, they could be setting a trap for me, and he persists to coax me: "You will see your family and come back"

I did not go. The coat, however, I needed very much, it's the end of September and getting cold, it also can be used to pad the bare planks of the bunk or to cover myself. The next day, I ask the camp director about the coat.

"What coat?" he asks with surprise. I tell him what the sergeant said to me: "A coat was sent to me from my home and it was taken from him at the prison office"

"I did not see any coat and nobody took it ". I ask him to inquire with sergeant Medviedev; this was the name he called himself. The prison director gave a lengthy whistle: "Medviedev? Just this morning he returned home with his regiment".

"Who knows" I pondered to myself "who is flaunting with my coat now, the sergeant in his village, or one of the prison administrators."

After several days, whispers started circulating that we are to be transferred to another place, one of the "informed" knows that it is a camp in olden Harbin, while others "know": it is to the Soviet Union. Most are astonished and grouching, is it possible? We were not even interrogated yet! In fact, during all the time of our stay here only one person, the Journalist M, was called for interrogation. On his return, at midnight, he did not say one word. Perhaps out of fear or perhaps it was not worth his while. I was never called for interrogation, but it does not mean that they are not showing any interest in my personage

On the 25th of September we were told by one of the jailers on duty that on this same day we will be transferred, and as no superior person is present in the corridor he is happy to relate all he knows about us and about all he heard.

This same morning I "met" my wife again and we gazed at each other, I from my cell window and she through binoculars on a balcony of one of the houses across the street. A teardrop escapes my eye. At 4 in the afternoon we received orders to prepare to move. I looked out the window and saw my younger soon standing opposite. I wave to him and try to hint by signs, that we are being moved from here. I sense

that he does not understand my signals. I take a hat from somewhere, put it on and take it off, on and off several times with the hope the he will understand that him and me are being separated... but I have to go...we were ordered to make a row and stand two by two. We were transferred to another cell, which had a window to the back yard. The new cell is full to the brim, more than a hundred people, all the bunks are occupied. There is no space to place a foot. People are sitting on the filthy floor. The door between the cell and the corridor is open and only an iron grille is separating us from the corridor.

Close to the grille - a jailer. Opposite our cell - another cell. I neared the door and gazed at the unfortunates across us. One of them is calling me; I look across and recognize a German doctor standing near the grille. An acquaintance, the deputy chairman of the Nazi Party in Harbin. During the later years all Jewish doctors avoided meeting him. They even avoided taking part in any medical consultations with him. Suddenly here he is greeting me. It seems that he is happy that I am among the prisoners too. This Nazi, however, was in luck, after several months he was released by the Soviet authorities.

One evening they start to take us out of the cell. Every individual approaches a table that is standing in the corridor. At the table sits an officer and asks for the name and family name of each one. One of the prisoners tries to ask a question, the officer does not answer, he waves his hand and the "impertinent" one who plucked up his courage to ask a question is whisked away. We return to the cell.

At 11 o'clock at night we are taken out to the yard in groups of 30 people. Those that are taken out do not return, finally I'm taken out too. Near the entrance - a truck.

The watch over us is exemplary – officers and soldiers, armed with sub-machineguns, rifles and pistols. The night is dark. Rain is drizzling. We are ascending onto the truck. One of the officers orders us to sit stooped, no one should dare to stand up, and anyone doing so is risking his life.

We are about 30 people on the truck, with 4 soldiers armed to the teeth. The officer repeats his order: “ Anyone who dares to get up on his feet – will be shot!” The truck starts to move. It is dark; the streetlights are very dim. However, through a crack on the side of the truck I make out streets, houses, over here in the vicinity - my house. My family is not aware of anything and is anxious about me and itself. Tears roll down my face.

My God! Everyone is sitting stooped down, strength waning, afraid to lift his head.

Somewhere the truck stops. Where are we? Far behind the train cargo depot. Below, close to the truck a strong guard detachment. The rain is incessant. An order is heard –“ alight and line up in pairs”. Under heavy guard we are lead through some back yard and arrive at a lonely and distant train depot where a long train was waiting. By the lights of candle torches we are herded onto one of the wagons: “ 40 people or 8 horses”. The wagon is not big. Dark, half of its space has three large bunks, one on top of the other, each bunk has place for ten people but only if the people lie on their side in such a way that the knees of one fits into the back of the knees of the other who fits his knees into the back of the one lying in front of him and so forth. No lying on ones back as the whole “arrangement” will be hindered. If one wants to turn to the other side the whole group has to do the same. About 30 people lay on the bunks in this manner with me among them. The remaining ten, (we were 40) lay on the filthy floor.

In the wagon were also two young soldiers armed with sub-machine guns. There were no latrines in the wagon, not even a pail for urinating. Someone asks the soldiers “what should we do?” The soldiers respond by opening the wagon gate and say: “Very simple – for the small need you stand by the opened gate, for the bigger need you sit with your arse outside...”

The train stood at the station for approximately one hour then it moved. Where to – no one knows. One thing is clear however – to the Soviet Union. This was the dawn of the 26th of September 1945.

Chapter 1F

It is night, the wagon is shrouded in semi darkness, a small lamp is shining. We are lying on the bunks. One of the guards lays down to sleep too, he put his sub-machine gun next to him then fell immediately into a deep sleep. The second guard is sitting at the entrance to the wagon; someone enters into a conversation with him. The soldier is barely keeping his head up which droops sometimes to his chest. His eyelids are heavy and his eye lids close by themselves. He wants to sleep, his strength is waning. He turns to two of the prisoners: “ Sit here comrades, and see that nothing happens, while I sleep for a while”. The guards are asleep, a heavy sleep. The whole day they were bothered by the prisoners and now their strength waned.

We spent two and a half days on this wagon. The food is meager – 400 grams of black bread and soured cabbage. Some of the prisoners, escorted by guards, would bring a barrel of the soured cabbage and hot water from the stations on the way. This is all the food we received. While our guards received in addition, sugar and preserves. They used to treat the prisoners, who guarded under them during the night, with their food and also insisted that I take part too. I, however, did not want to be different from the rest of the prisoners and did not take anything.

One of the guards got into a conversation with me. He feels a pain and requests medical advice. He cannot understand how it is possible to imprison a doctor. Later he told me that he was ordered to accompany us upto Grodиковo and from there to return to Harbin. Upon learning that I am a resident of Harbin with a family living there, he offered to take a note to them. I balked from his offer – being apprehensive lest this may negatively effect my family. The soldier whispers in my ear coaxing me, “write down your address, and I will go to your wife and convey to her your greetings

He offers me a paper and pencil. I wrote some words of greetings, that I am feeling well, and that I am hoping to see them soon (at that time, in my innocence I still believed this!). On another piece of paper I wrote the address. I gave the pieces of paper to the soldier, not

without apprehension and worry. Much later, after 16 years have passed, when I met with my family in Israel, I learned that the soldier did actually forward this letter.

On the 26 of September in the evening a disturbance occurred. The train stopped somewhere in the wilderness and did not move from its place. People running, hustle, calls and shouts. Our guards left the wagon and closed the door latching it from the outside under lock and bolt. The train remained standing for about an hour. What happened?. It finally transpired that one of Japanese pushed aside a guard, who opened the wagon, door for him so that he could tend to his needs, and jumped out. This, while the train was traveling at full speed. The vicinity around is covered with forests, the night is dark. Upto the time the emergency signal was given and the train halted, the escaped prisoner was nowhere to be found. They searched for him in the whole area but with no success. After several hours of fruitless searching the train continued on its way. Our soldiers returned to the wagon and from then on watched us in earnest. The Japanese who escaped shattered the guards trust in us, and after that when someone wanted to tend to his needs they opened the door halfway while holding the hand of the prisoner.

On the 28th of September we arrived at Grodikovo Station on the Chinese border.

My feet trod on the soil of the Soviet Union – a prisoner in the hands of oppressors, that perhaps the likes of whom in cruelty and evil was never yet surpassed.

Chapter 2A.

It is early morning. We were several hundred people, after we were lined up in fours, we were marched, under heavy guard through the dirty streets of the village. The traffic is very sparse. Here and there an American made truck is to be seen. Loaded to the brim. In various places placards and slogans are flying above the houses: "Honor to the illustrious Red Army, liberator of the world from fascism", "Honor to the great leader of world proletariat", " Honor to Teacher", "To the leader of all nations", "To the military genius", " To the great Stalin". On many houses red flags were flying.

Afar, numerous white and gray tents are seen. This is a military camp. We are still trudging forward through the mud. We arrived at the entrance to a big plot enclosed with a barbed wire fence. Inside the plot is a long one storied building, old and dilapidated plus another five or six small houses also on the verge of falling apart. The windows are barred with iron bars. This is the prison, which was prepared especially for us. There are many prisoners overall, and the authorities are scattering them in cities and villages all over the Far East. About 1500 prisoners were brought to Grodikovo. However, where can one find a prison that is big enough to hold 1500 prisoners in a small village like Grodikovo? In the time of the Tzar there was no need for this. Grodikovo, which is situated on the border, was then was used as a base for Kozaks, a large garrison was stationed there. For the needs of the officers, they built at that time, a club and barracks. This was 25 years ago. Since then the barracks stood forlorn, in decay and gradually falling apart. The Soviet authorities established this building to be used as a prison. What does it matter if it is in ruins? They fenced the area with a barbed wire fence, built several watchtowers around, manned them with guards, installed iron bars on the doors and windows and here you have a perfect prison. The filth in the building was beyond imagination. For tens of years it was not cleaned nor were the floors ever swept. Into this long barrack we were pushed in and then pushed into cells. Each person was pushed into a cell where he stood. I got cell number 2, a small room for two with a small window. Near the door a high stove reaching to the ceiling with the aperture on the outside, in the corridor. On the other side of the door a large pot for urinating, the famous "pot" of Russian prisons. That's all the "furniture". Into this room 32 people were squeezed in. The floor is filthy nearly causing nausea. We began to settle down. Some wanted to lie next to one wall while others next to the wall opposite, stepping on each other, but it does not help. As much as we tried to squeeze in, only eight could lie next to one wall and nine next to the other. What about the remaining fifteen? We decided to sleep in turns, everyone six hours during the day and six hours during the night. Having no other alternative, we lay on the filthy and bare floor with no bedding of any kind. However, what will the fifteen who are awake do while the seventeen are sleeping? Two, Sitting on the window ledge, one, on the rim of the pot. One, standing or leaning with his back on the door. While the others, some standing in the middle of the room and some sitting at the feet of the ones sleeping. There is no lamp in the room and at night the room is completely dark. Whoever needs to go to the pot steps on the ones sleeping. Shouts...protests...

Chapter 2B

One evening, several days following our arrival at Grodikovo, the prison director, a senior lieutenant, summoned me and asked:

"Are you a doctor?"

"Yes"

"We have many sick people here, but our doctor has gone to the town to bring drugs and has not returned yet, he actually is not really a doctor, just an army medic...examine the patients, doctor". I agreed. From the neighboring shack where the so-called "clinic" was situated I took some "powders", pills and a stethoscope, and accompanied by the director and a soldier visited some of the cells. I examined the patients and gave them medications. In one of the cells I examined on an old

Peasant and diagnosed his ailment as acute appendicitis. I told the director that he must urgently be transferred to a hospital, as he must be operated on immediately. The director looked at me in astonishment: "Give him meanwhile some powder ... tomorrow we'll see".

"No powder will help him" I said and repeated again "He must be operated on urgently, without losing even a minute".

My words did not make any impact on the director.

"And where should I find a hospital?"

I replied that most of the residents in this village are civilians, no military garrison is stationed in the vicinity, and it is therefore not plausible that no hospital of any kind exists in the neighborhood. The director shrugged his shoulders and we continued with the rounds. I distributed the remainder of the medications and was returned to my cell. Only a day or two later was the sick old peasant transferred to a hospital where, it was reported to me that he died of pustular inflammation of the peritoneum.

After another several days I was again summoned by the prison director and advised to receive patients at the clinic, together with the "doctor"- the army medic. I was happy at this suggestion as this meant that for at least some hours every day I would exist in more humane conditions. I began treating the many ill patients among the 1500 prisoners. When it became known to my city compatriots in the prison that I was employed as a doctor in the clinic, every one of them signed up for an examination. In the clinic they all greeted and wished me well, approaching me directly while bypassing the medic, who was the clinic manager. This aroused his resentment and everything I did to allay this situation did not help, the patients continued approaching me directly. After several days the medic assigned me to do insignificant tasks like weighing powders, making pills and so forth. The next day I did not go to the clinic.

I told the prison director that I was ready to work in the clinic as a doctor but the medic does not leave me be, he assigns me to jobs that any orderly or simple soldier can do. The director responded: "This medic is 'good for nothing' within a week a real doctor shall arrive..."

The doctor did arrive within the week, a young senior lieutenant of Jewish descent who has just completed his studies. He commenced receiving patients and used to invite me once in a while for medical consultations. After some time I started receiving patients together with him. He always asked my advice. This young and pleasant person used to bring me medical books, but requested that they be hidden when I walk through the courtyard, against "The evil eye".

We were transferred to another cell, a smaller one, In this cell we were fourteen people. There was no place to lay down and we hardly found sitting room on the floor. However during the day I could rest as the other prisoners were assigned to unload and load train wagons. Everyone went willingly to this assignment with the hope of receiving increased food rations. Some received a little wheat grain and others received a slice of bread. I remained in my cell alone where I rested from the sultriness, the noise, altercations, sometimes fistfights and from people in general. I even managed to sleep a little. My cellmates go to work for a period of four hours. In their absence I used to look through the window facing the empty and filthy courtyard with two latrines next to the barbed wire fence.

One day I saw a group of prisoners crossing the courtyard and passing near my window, among them an acquaintance – The chairlady of WIZO in Harbin. So! She also is one of the victims. She did not notice me. However after a few days we did meet. I was summoned to a cell where a woman did not feel well. The sick woman lay on a bunk next to the door of the cell, sighing, groaning and squirming with pain. I sat next to her and by chance happened to

look up towards the ceiling and suddenly on a bunk at a higher level I saw my acquaintance the WIZO chairlady. Our eyes met, it was evident that she became very alarmed at this, she turned to the other side and covered her head. It transpired later, that she was informed she will soon be released and was afraid that her acquaintance with me might impede this release and it would be advisable for her not to see or recognize me. She was indeed released on the next day. She returned to Harbin and "secretly" told my family of our "encounter". However, she did not enjoy her freedom very long. She soon was arrested again, sent off to an unknown destination and all trace of her was lost.

Chapter 2C

One day I was called from my cell, I presumed, as did the others in my cell, that I was summoned for an interrogation, as in this period they started interrogating the prisoners. I was led to the office of a senior lieutenant who looked to me and said:

"I called you, doctor, so that you would treat my wife, she is ailing for the last two weeks. The medic treated her so did the new doctor but her condition is deteriorating. I heard that you are a well known and experienced doctor and I ask you to examine and treat her". "Most willingly" I replied.

"So let's go then". "Where do you live?" I asked. "Not far from here, in the village".

"But, comrade senior lieutenant, I cannot go to the village in these rags, look how all my clothes are torn bedraggled".

"Never mind, let's go", I, however, am adamant in my refusal to go, my clothes are threadbare, only my shoes are still in a good condition. The lieutenant left the room and returned with an army jacket. "Here, wear this".

I put on the jacket and we proceeded to his wife. We strode through the streets of the village, passed tents and small shabby shacks. We entered one of the shacks. Two small rooms, the walls painted a dirty gray. Bleak. A young woman lying on a bed and close to her, on the floor, are three children. This is the family of the senior lieutenant.

"Well, Taniusha, I brought you a famous doctor from Harbin, he will have you on your feet in no time".

The woman, ailing for two weeks had dysentery, and a heart condition. I prescribed some medications and returned to the prison with the husband. We entered his office, He sat me near his desk: "How is your life here?" he asked.

"Very, very bad" I replied "The living conditions here are incomparably harsh, cramped, filthy and stifling. The food is bad and the lice are eating us with gusto. We are not given any changes of underwear nor any clothing as you can see".

"Your conditions will improve soon" the officer replied. "You are being transferred to a camp where the conditions are much better. The transfer will be carried out very soon".

"What is the reason for this transfer?" I asked.

However without hearing his reply a sad and gloomy thought passed my mind about camp life in Soviet Russia, words which are very true:

Whoever did not experience it – will do so in the future.

Whoever did experience it – will not forget it for ever.

Indeed so, Whoever was not "there", in a camp or a prison and whoever was – both will remember the experience till the end of their days.

Chapter 2D

At the end of September, after a stay of two months in this prison, I was called for the first time for an interrogation. It was ten in the evening. A guard of two soldiers led me. One in front of me armed with a rifle, the other behind, armed with a submachine gun. Around the fenced prison perimeter watch towers are overlooking the buildings, in each one an armed soldier is posted, once in a while a sentry's voice is heard shouting "Stop, who is there" – most fearful.

The guards led me to a two-storied house, we approached one of the doors, and one of the guards opened the door carefully and said: "Comrade senior lieutenant, I brought the prisoner".

"You fool, how many times have I told you that he is not a prisoner but a detainee"

"I'm sorry comrade senior lieutenant, I brought the detainee"

The young investigator starts the interrogation: Sir-name, name, fathers name, date of birth, nationality.

"Were you a member of any political party?"

"No".

"But you are a Zionist?"

"Yes".

"Zionism is also politics, national politics," says the senior lieutenant with authority and starts writing on the papers that were lying in front of him.

"You are a doctor?"

"Yes".

"Venereal disease has spread in our army" the senior lieutenant suddenly said, "we never experienced anything comparable to this... The German whores infected our soldiers, while on the other hand the cure is inadequate. One is being transferred, all the time, from one place to another and under these conditions how can an effective cure be carried out. Sometimes even medications are impossible to find.

He probed me about new methods of treating venereal diseases and the outcome of the disease after the treatment. It was evident that this problem bothered him very much. I sympathized with him. We carried on the conversation on this subject till midnight. He did not sign me on any protocol and as a matter of fact did not even write one. At the end of the interrogation I was led, by the same route back to my cell.

Darkness. Suddenly, "Halt, Who is going there".

I was called three times for interrogation with the same investigator. He interrogated little and wrote little. One of two reasons for this, either he did not know how to feed his colleagues at the MGB with the proper input for them to carry out their foul activities, or he did not know how to crack a "Zionist" nut. (Later I heard that the special investigator for "Jewish affairs" in the Sverdlovsk prison called these protocols "nonsense").

Some time later I was called for interrogation with another investigator, an officer with the rank of Major. He asked me many questions on the Zionist Federation in Harbin, who was its founder, he read out the names of members of its committee who have meanwhile passed away, and tried to extract from me the names of the current committee members. I replied that since the start of the war in 1942 and, as a result, the severance of any contact with Eretz Israel, no Zionist organization of any kind existed in Harbin. In response he started reading out the names of members of the city council of the Zionist Federation among whom he even mentioned G' who twenty years ago moved to France and names of others who left Harbin or died long ago. But among the names that he read out he also mentioned names of those who are still active at present.

The third investigator who interrogated me in Grodikovo was the head of the interrogation department. I was interrogated by him three times. Already in the first one he started hurling at me furious abuses. He poured his rage on me, on Zionism, on Weizman whom he called the British spy. There was no limit to the abuses that this bully and senseless boor hurled at me. Each interrogation lasted four hours; from time to time he demanded that I confess to being a Zionist spy. He banged his fist on the table and shouted: Talk you contemptible scoundrel, why are you silent you piece of carrion? you scum...you villain...whore.

That's what they called me at Grodikovo. But it was child's play compared to what I experienced in Sverdlovsk and Moscow.

Chapter 2E

From time to time we were transferred from cell to cell. From one barrack to another and every time one is being mixed with different people. This is a system that the prison authorities are using to mix the prisoners between themselves. One day a rumor was circulating that all the prisoners destined to be freed are being transferred to the far barrack situated next to the gate. The authorities too, circulated rumors from time to time that all the prisoners will be freed and returned to Harbin, as such an order was received, supposedly from Moscow. A directive from Molotov himself. All were just rumors but were believed by everyone.

I was the only Jew in our cell. Here and there I heard an anti-Semitic remark by my cell mates, for instance that all the troubles that befell them came because of the Jews, "the

power is in the hands of the Jews", because "all the Jews are Bolsheviks", etc., etc. In the coming days I also came across various types of anti-Semitism from the prison and the labor camp authorities.

It is over two months that I am imprisoned in the prison at Grodikovo in incomparable conditions. During the day the prisoners were taken to work, to which they gladly went as they were happy to be, for several hours at least, out of the stifling cell and perhaps to gain an additional morsel or two of food. Our daily food rations were very meager and every addition morsel was very valuable.

One day my cellmates returned from work and told me that a large package containing clothing arrived for me from Harbin. They were employed in unloading a wagon and saw with their own eyes the package addressed to me. I began to anticipate

This package. I waited a day, two days but no package. I approached the commander of the prison and asked him to give me the package as I am in urgent need of the clothing.

"What package? Who told you?"

I never did receive this package.

The prison population was most diverse. It consisted of people of all classes and status, the intelligentsia and the workers, laborers, peasants and people with free professions. My cellmates for instance, consisted of a young engineer, a painter, singer, secretary of the Polish Consulate, various clerks, a salesman, police employees, beekeepers and two Pravoslav clergymen. Most of the time we were recumbent on the dusty and filthy floor. Some are carrying on a conversation between themselves; very seldom a general conversation takes place. The common denominator amongst us is very small, except for the misery, hardship and deprivation.

However, when morning arrives they tell everything, while imposing into the conversations of others, they relate their dreams, talk about their sleeping space, interpreting their dreams, each person with his dream and its interpretation. There are however dream episodes that have undisputed permanent interpretations like if one dreams of a train wagon, or a tramcar this means that a long journey is ahead of him. Boots signify a journey too. A foodstuff is a good sign, but if in the dream one is eating, then it is bad. Every item has a meaning of its own- various objects, animals, dogs, cats and even lice. Every morning the wretches sit for hours on the floor interpreting their dreams to which they attach high importance sometimes drawing comfort and encouragement and sometimes despair and superstition.

I did not take part in these conversations nor did I relate any of my dreams to anyone. But these conversations had their effects on my own feelings too. One night in my dream, I am sitting by a table and writing. A table-calendar is on the table near by, the page open showed the 19th of the current month. I awoke and started to ponder about my dream. Why -19?. What day is it today? It's the 6th of November. So why - 19? I begin to persuade myself that some event will occur on the 19th. Perhaps they will free me? Am I not innocent of any wrongdoing! Something good must occur on the 19th! Two days earlier I was transferred to the building where, according to rumors, all the prisoners who are destined to be freed are grouped. I am hoping for the 19th to arrive. I did not tell anyone about my dream, my hopes and the "happiness" that is in store for me... the 19th...the 19th! My imagination is running wild with thoughts of my impending release and with hopes that the 19th will finally arrive.

Eight days later I and another five prisoners were summoned. We were led to a big hall and stood against one wall along which another ten prisoners were already standing. The prison commander made a muster of the prisoners and orders that we be dispersed between the cells. I was assigned to cell number 5. The others - everyone to a different cell. As the door to my new cell was opened I found myself in a small room filled to the brim with people, stifling and full of smoke. It was evening. The cell is in semi-darkness. As I was shoved into the cell someone shouted: "God-in-heaven, where to? There is no place even to stand on! He is already the nineteenth!" The mention of the word "19" rang in my ears and the page in the calendar showing the 19th floated past my eyes. The interpretation of my dream was solved.

The 19th came. The 19th passed and I'm still in the prison. The over crowding in my new cell is heavy; there is even no place to sit. In the corner near the door stands a large chamber pot and around it people are crowding. Someone looks at me with a piercing stare then calls: "Doctor!" I look at the person and recognize "T". Well so he too is here, I think to myself. He was an elderly person; from 1913 he lived in Harbin and held a senior position with the directorate of the railway. An interesting personality, cultured, with a wide knowledge of the Bible. In the past we used to meet and have long discussions on various subjects, even here

in prison we found topics to talk about. When my cellmates heard my name called, they huddled closer together to make room for me near to "T".

In November they began to distribute clothing. The inmates of each cell were led to the storeroom containing piles of worn-out clothing. I received a pair of filthy summer trousers, a cap and a worn-out Japanese army officers summer coat. Everyone received clothing that were taken off Japanese officers and soldiers who either died or were killed. We all were happy to receive these clothing, as most of us including myself were dressed in rags, while the cold outside was intensifying more and more. Although everything was filthy and worn-out, the coat much too big for my size and reached down to my heels but nevertheless one cold cover himself with it.

They began to take us out for daily walks lasting 20 minutes. Two cells at a time, one cell on one side of the yard the second cell on the other. At times I encountered acquaintances and we exchanged information and rumors. Two of the prisoners were in army uniforms but without epaulets, they tell furiously that they were sentenced to a term of seven years imprisonment only because that in Harbin they stole and robbed the homes of the residents, wrist watches, finger rings and anything they could lay their hands on.

"Everyone did the same, officers participated too. Where is the justice? We were in the front, fought against the fascists, now we are confined in this prison together with the fascists"

Acts of robbery and looting were on the increase in Harbin and other cities. The mob did not discriminate between the Russians, Japanese or Chinese. They looted and raped. They emptied homes of everything up to the last chair. All this was done in the open and "legally". The residents tried to complain against these acts of violence and robbery; they appealed to the high command of the army garrison – but to no avail. One officer claimed that it is not true, another promised to take measures against this and there were those who said openly: "This is robbery? Wait till Rokosovsky's* boys come, then you'll know what robbery really means!"

Day by day we see through our cell window long trains comprised of platform wagons, loaded to the brim with goods taken from Harbin and other Manchurian cities – furniture, machines, steel safes, beds, carpets, telephones, radio receivers, automobiles. Daily, endlessly passing by.

One day I was summoned by the interrogator who asked me to tell him what was taken from me when I was arrested in Harbin. I counted out everything – clothes, money, my passport.

"Do you have a receipt?"

"No. The officer in Harbin listed everything he received, I signed a paper that I gave the items for safe keeping and he signed a paper that he received these items for safe keeping".

"Did he give you a copy of the protocol?"

"No. He did not!"

The interrogator pretended that he is annoyed with his colleague in Harbin. After several days a young officer called me from my cell into the corridor gave me a pen and told me to sign a paper that he held out to me. I read what was written on it. It said that nothing was taken from me. I corrected him on this inaccuracy and told him that many thing were taken from me – money, gold ring, fountain pen – a total of seventeen items.

"But here in Grodikovo, nothing was taken from you?"

"What could they take from me here in Grodokivo? I was brought here with no possessions at all... everything was taken from me in Harbin..."

"But here, nothing was taken from you" the officer repeated.

"It is understood from this paper that not Grodikovo is in question but specifically Harbin!"

"Sign" the officer ordered

I signed, but added in clear letters "in Grodikovo". The officer gave me an angry look and made several profane remarks.

On the 13th of November a rumor began to circulate that tomorrow we are to be moved. Someone said that it will be to Chabarovsk. It was clear to everyone that nothing good is awaiting us, but we were happy to leave this dreadful prison where we were imprisoned for over two and a half months.

The next day we all were led to a barrack. Two officers distributed underwear and shoes. I received a set of underwear and a worn-out black shirt. One of the officers threw several pairs of shoes at my feet and told me to choose a pair, I told him that I prefer to remain in my shoes, as it seemed to me that he wanted my shoes.

"Remove your shoes... You'll freeze in them," the officer said.

I repeated that I am used to my shoes and wear them even in winter.

"Remove" ordered the officer, and immediately one of the soldiers started to remove them from my feet. What could I do, they are stronger than I am. Very quickly the officer hides my shoes, in case one of his friends should also want them. I had no choice but to select the "good" pair out of the shoes that were thrown to me – the "good" pair that I chose had two patches on each shoe.

On completing the distribution of the underwear and the shoes we were led to the station where a long cargo train awaited us. The temperature outside was freezing and a wind of impending snow was blowing. We stood outside for about two hours until we were loaded onto the wagons. "On board!" came an order and we were then led, one at a time, under heavy guard, to the wagons. One by one we climb onto the wagon. It was no easy task. Although the sliding doors were widely open, the wagon gate was well above the platform, there were no steps or ladder, we had to climb on as well as we could. I, however, could not climb up at all and two soldiers had to help me with this effort, while they were lifting me, one of the soldiers gave me a good blow with the butt of his rifle.

"Thank you very much soldiers, for your help".

* A marshal in the Red Army during WWII.

Chapter 3A

We were 104 people in the wagon. Three tiers of bunks on each side while the middle of the wagon contained bunks at a higher level only. There was space for 56 people only, while we were a 104. Of them, 58 were Russians, 36 Japanese, 10 Chinese. The Japanese together with the Chinese occupied about half the wagon on the right side. While the Russians took the other half on the left side plus the high bunks in the middle. It turned out later that it was the initiative of the Russians to segregate the Japanese and the Chinese. On both sides of the wagon were sliding doors. On one side, however, the door was closed and beside it stood a "chamber pot" with tubing leading downwards and outside to dispose of the human wastes into the streets, or the fields or anywhere, a most primitive toilette, but the Soviet soldier in Grodnikovo referred to it as "cultural". On the left and the right sides of the wagon stood two iron stoves and on the floor in the middle – a pile of coal. Filth and dust all around, the walls on the inside are covered with snow.

We waited for about two hours before the train moved. It was cold, both stoves were lit. We decided to use the bunks by turns, some by day some by night. On the bunks at the "Russian" half of the wagon there were 32 places, while we were 58 people, six found places on the floor near the stove, when the stove was fired it started giving off smoke, but it also became hotter and ...wet, the snow that was on the walls and on the bunks melted and we were lying literally in the seeping wet bunks. The first day and the next day we spent in these conditions, not to lite the stoves was impossible, as we would freeze from the cold, so I decided that it would be preferable to lie on the wet floor. I gave up my place on the bunk, spread my Japanese army coat on the floor and lay down.

We departed from Grodnikovo on the evening of December 14th 1945 for an unknown destination. The journey in this cargo wagon, converted to carry prisoners was most tiresome. Smoke, filth, dust, coal, our faces blackened, lack of water for washing and for drinking. Once a day we get a bland gruel and 400 grams of bread. Early in the morning and at midday we received boiling water, a mug per person and 104 pieces of sugar according to the number of people in the wagon. That's all. There were days when we did not receive a drop of water during the whole day and days when we received bread and water only.

The worst scourge of all – Lice. Every morning one of the prisoners orders : "Kill the lice!" and the battle begins. We remove all our clothes, underwear etc. then we start to squash and trample, something terrible. Some one supervises and see's that everyone participates in this activity without any exceptions. This is done daily but we cannot get rid of all the lice and no matter how many we kill they are too many to rid ourselves of them completely.

The wagon is locked from the outside on lock and bolt. Armed soldiers are stationed in the front end of the wagon and in the back end. The door is opened only when the food is brought in, nevertheless we all are counted every evening to check that no one is missing. It is not an easy task to perform a counting of the prisoners in the narrow wagon, the sergeant stations himself close to the door, two soldiers stand near him and then all of us pass by them one by one and he counts "one, two... twenty... forty". Every counting they make, the final result is

always incorrect – 102, 103, but never 104. The sergeant becomes angry, yells and shouts vile remarks. He then repeats the procedure five times one after another. One day the sergeant orders me to perform the counting. I stand beside him, all the prisoners pass us by and I count 103, the sergeant gets angry and hits me with the butt of his rifle and orders to repeat the count. I remark to him that there is no need for a repeated count as the total is correct. He gave me a furious look and blasted me with profanities, while I calmly say “103 and myself is 104, isn’t our total number 104?”. The sergeants face lit up with happiness, and for good measure he uttered another profanity (for every occasion there is a suitable profanity) then he shouted an order “all to your places!” and departed the wagon. In this manner we were counted every evening, sometimes by the sergeant and sometimes by the officer. They counted us then took this opportunity to batter us with the butts of their rifles.

I was the only Jew in the wagon. I wonder if its just by chance. There are many young people among us, Half the people in the wagon are under 30, among them a youngster of 16. He aroused our attention not only because he was a youth but also because of the scanty clothing he was wearing. He had no overcoat nor a jacket, he walked around the wagon with only a shirt on his body. The youth, who was orphaned, by the death of his father, was employed as a stoker in the Japanese military delegation building in Harbin. For this reason he was arrested by the Soviet authorities, and sentenced to ten years in jail. I saw it as my duty to take advantage of my position as the “elder” of the wagon (I was appointed to this position in the early stages of this journey) and requested the authorities to supply him with some adequate clothing in order to prevent him from freezing to death. The sergeant promised to look into this matter and after a couple of days brought the youth a long frayed overcoat, most probably from a prisoner who died during the journey.

Chapter 3B

There seems to be no end to this journey. One day elapsed, two, five, seven. Where are we being taken to? No one knows. At times the train just stops for hours on end in the wilderness in remote places, the ground is covered with snow. The wagon has no windows, however, on both its ends on the top part of the wall, above the bunks there is a narrow hatch with iron bars, the width of which is not larger than ten centimeters. No one knows the reason why this opening was made, as neither light nor fresh air can penetrate through it. But, one can look through it and see the wilderness; the emptiness with the snow covered fields. In addition to the hatches, one can also see a little through the cracks in the doors, and when the train stops at a station I peek through the cracks to see at which station we have stopped. One day, on the eighth day of our journey I peeked through a crack, partly obstructed with snow, and saw a small, shabby structure with a signboard attached to it and written on it in black letters on a white background in Hebrew and Russian: “Birobidgan”. Surrounded by emptiness. Not a living soul can be seen. I did not move from my place and continued to stare at the bleak scenery of the “Autonomous Jewish Republic”, empty of humans. Fate has decided that I too should happen to pass by this “Jewish Republic” the establishment of which proved to be a resounding failure. I’ve seen it, if only through the crack in the wall of a prisoner wagon.

We passed Chabarovsk, Birobidgan. The guessing game among the prisoners, on where we are being taken to increased momentum, someone said: “I know where to, Kolima in the far North” and someone from the top bunk answers him: “ Oh, Kolima is such a pleasant place, ten months of the year is winter and what’s left is spring”.

Many prisoners perished, or got sick and became cripples in this Kolima.

One day a mishap occurred in our wagon. In the “Japanese” part of the wagon, the floor beneath the stove caught fire. The prisoners got excited and panicked. A frightful occurrence, fire in the prisoner wagon! In addition to that, they could even suspect us of causing this fire on purpose as a first stage of a general escape plan. We started banging on the doors and on the partitions on both ends of the wagon that separate us from the guards, others were calling for help through the upper hatches. It was quite impossible for us to put the fire out, as we had no water in the wagon. The flames were gradually eating the floor under the stove. To our luck, however, the train stopped a half hour later at a station, we raised our voices to one big shout, when finally a group of soldiers headed by a sergeant arrived at our wagon. One of the Japanese started explaining how the fire started. It seems that due to the intense cold they increased the strength of the flame in the stove, but because the floor under this stove was not insulated by metal sheeting it caught fire easily. The sergeant, first of all, slapped the

Japanese on the face, then gave him a beating. While on the others he poured an endless amount of vile curses. One of the Japanese reminded him that the fire is still raging and water should be brought urgently to put it out, otherwise the entire wagon will go up in flames. The sergeant forced all of us to start urinating on the flames "piss you bastards, piss". We thus started one by one, in groups of ten to urinate. While we were doing that, the soldiers were slapping the faces of the Japanese and even hitting them with the butts of their rifles. The train stood for approximately three hours until the fire was put out and the floor repaired. As a punishment we did not get any wood to fire the stoves for two days, and we of course shivered in the intense cold.

Chapter 3C

We are traveling for over two weeks. There is no end to this journey. Many of the prisoners became ill with various ailments: Abscesses, boils. But no medical aid is available, not even bandages or any ointments. We know that a clinical carriage accompanied by a doctor is attached to this train. At every station we bang on the door and asked for the doctor to come to us. They responded by "OK, OK", a day passes, two days, three days, but no doctor is in sight. In the evening, during the counting session of the prisoners, I tell the officer that the number of sick people in the wagon is increasing, but neither the doctor nor any medic came. However, as I am a doctor, I suggested that they supply us with some medications and I will treat the sick. Two days later one of the soldiers brought me a packet which contained three bandages, a small amount of cotton wool and approximately 50 grams of Rivanol ointment, that's all. With what could I treat the two prisoners suffering from an abscess on their arms? Their arms swelled and they were in much pain, the deterioration process continued and the pain increased, it is necessary to open the abscesses immediately and to extract the puss, but what could I do? I have no surgical scalpel (who will give a prisoner such a sharp weapon?), the doctor does not come, and for what purpose does the clinical carriage exist? For what purpose are a doctor and a nurse accompanying this train? To treat the guards?

The number of sick in our wagon and other wagons is increasing. There were also cases of prisoners dying. By the end of December the prisoners began to suffer metabolic disturbances due to under-nourishment. It is now over four months that we are living under incomparable conditions, the consequences of the inadequate food, low in proteins and calories are beginning to show. Due to their shaken state of mind, some of the sick began to run wild.

Our wagon has about fifty sick, especially among the Japanese who are suffering of a general state of weakness, the swelling of most of the organs in the body, limpness of the muscles and diarrhea with blood. One of them died. We are calling for the doctor the whole day without interruption, we bang on the door of the wagon, on the walls, we are shouting for help through the hatch, whether the train is in motion or stopped at the station. The only answer we get is "we'll inform the doctor". For three days we are waiting for the doctor but no one comes. "A dead body is in the wagon, one of the sick died, remove the body" we shout at the top of our lungs. "OK the doctor will come" we are answered.

After a further three days the doctor, dressed in the uniform of a major in the medical corps, finally comes, his first question was "who is the doctor here?" all are pointing at me. I point out the sick especially two who suffer from serious abscesses. "Provide me with a scalpel and I will do what's necessary", "I am a surgeon too, can one operate in these conditions?" replies the doctor. "I will send you bandages and drugs". "In this train there is a clinical carriage, we stop in every station including big stations where hospitals must exist in the vicinity..."

I tell the doctor that for ten days there are seriously ill people in our wagon, one of them has meanwhile died the day before yesterday, his body is still not removed from the wagon. The doctor goes to the body, looks at it and promises that it shall be removed immediately.

"But what will be with the sick people" I ask "should they not receive medical attention?"

"This is not a hospital", replies the doctor "what can we do? I will send you drugs...". I also tell him that I am sick too and since yesterday I am showing symptoms of malnutrition, pains in the stomach, swelling of the legs and a general condition of weakness.

"There seems to be no end to this journey" I added "It is already 26 days since we started this journey, in this narrow and stifling wagon". The doctor calls me aside and whispers in my ear:

"In another 3 – 4 days you shall arrive at your destination. Don't reveal this to anyone... only you, as one doctor to another".

"Where are we being taken to?"

He presses the tips of his fingers to his lips and whispers: "to the Sverdlovsk region... well, I'll send you the drugs and you treat the sick".

He sighs and whispers: "What a curse, the devil tempted me into agreeing to accompany this train journey"

The major kept his promise. The body of the deceased Japanese was soon removed from the wagon, the drugs, Aspirin, Piramidon, bandages and some ointments arrived shortly.

We are traveling along the Great Siberian Railway. The train stops at nearly all the stations on the way. I, similar to the other sick prisoners, do not feel any pangs of hunger; on the other hand I tire very quickly and urinate frequently, suffer from pains in the intestines and the muscles, and have a feeling of dizziness. I am lying on the floor in anguish, as I do not want to give in to the sickness. Luckily, the doctors words proved to be correct, within four days, on the 12th of January 1946, we arrived at our destination – an out of the way station about 250 – 300 kilometers from Sverdlovsk.

We were between 1500 - 1600 people. The procedural formalities lasted for over an hour – the formal transfer of the prisoners from one authority to the other – then we were herded out of the wagons, the wagons where we lived under very harsh conditions for 33 days. My feet and legs were swollen and I could hardly stand.

The train stopped near a small structure that was used as a railway station, all around was emptiness and desolate, the snow covered everything. On the platform, "those with the power", started arranging the prisoners in line pair by pair. A woman dressed in a sheepskin coat, a belt around her hips, wearing felt boots and a cap with ear muffs, addresses me:

"You are the doctor?"

"Yes I am a doctor"

"Sick?"

"I can hardly stand on my feet. I am very weak, Pains in my intestines, diarrhea, blood..."

"Take this person immediately to the hospital" the woman orders "In this sled..."

A wide sled was standing near me and on it standing upright a young man holding the reins. As soon as I laid myself on the sled he blew a long shrill whistle, then shouted a loud yell "forward boy!" the horse began to trot forward.

We sped on our way, outside the cold is intense, and how good is my feeling in this cold after being cooped for 33 days in the prison wagon and over five months in a jail. We are speeding, the way is covered with snow, we turn right, we turn left, little houses, shacks, faint light coming out of the windows...everything is as silent, as death. We covered about 3 kilometers. The "boy" is galloping with all his strength. I fill my lungs with the frosty pure air, hurrying to breathe as much of it as I can.

Chapter 4B

The hospital where I was confined was situated in a compound called "The Hospital" while the prison camp itself was situated about one kilometer away. "The Hospital" compound contained several shacks and single floor houses, these were divided into three hospital wards: Internal ailments, Surgical ward and a ward for neurological ailments. In addition to this there was a home for children with place for 150 children, A hospital for children with 30 beds, A maternity ward, a bunk house with four tiers of bunks attached to the walls, reserved for the mothers of the children staying in the home and for the service personnel such as, medics, nurses (male and female), druggist and accountants, this building also housed the kitchen and a store room for food supplies and clothing. The pharmacy was located outside of the "area", twice a day the druggist was led under guard to the pharmacy and back.

As mentioned previously the German professor remained in the hospital, this was due to the reason that the permanent surgeon of the hospital, a Russian, was not very proficient as a surgeon and all the serious operations were performed by the German professor while the Russian acted as his assistant. In addition to the prisoners, the "free" people around, staff members of the camp and the inhabitants of the villages in the vicinity are in need of the help of the hospital facilities and also of the doctor prisoners, as a result the number of patients is increasing all the time. Approximately 90% of them are suffering from the results of malnutrition. Some are sick with pneumonia. My ailment too is continuing to deteriorate, my

entire body is swelling – the chest, the back and the limbs. My face, head and neck were puffed and I barely could lift my eyelids. The stomach cavity accumulated with fluids and I move around with heaviness.

The nourishment that we receive is very meager. In the morning, 100 grams of tasteless cereal made out of unknown ingredients. For lunch we get some foul soup out of nettle leaves! With a few peas floating about. On the fifth day of my confinement at the hospital, Anya, the hospital orderly, a prisoner herself, brought me a plate of cooked rice, some fish pie and some compote. The same thing repeated itself on the next day and the day after. Only I am receiving this extra meal, while there are two more patients confined in my room. I ask Anya: "Who is the one that's sending me this food?"

"I was ordered to bring this to you" Anya replies evasively.

"Who ordered you?"

Anya did not answer and left the room. Every evening I continue to receive this additional meal. I eat a part of it and the rest I divide between my two roommates, a Provoslav priest and a beekeeper, to their enjoyment. Several days later a nurse Claudia told me that it is the doctor who is sending this extra meal. He receives parcels from his wife in Leningrad and treats me to a part of it in order to hasten my recovery.

"Comrade you are being called to the clinic". I wrapped a blanket around myself and with bare feet went to the clinic. Someone is sitting on the table near the window wearing a leather jacket of the type worn by commissars, leather riding trousers and boots polished to a bright shine. Is he a commissar? I was not too happy with this summons. The "guest" offers me a seat near him then addresses me in Yiddish:

"How are you doctor?" and offers me his hand. I was stunned. There is no one but us in the room. I answered that my state of health is very bad.

"Tell me what are you in need of, which food?" the "guest" inquires.

"Due to lack of appetite I do not eat anything, I have no energy to eat nor craving for food" I reply.

"Are you given any milk?" He asks.

"No, just once I received half a glass"

"Very well, doctor, as of tomorrow onwards you shall receive a litre of milk daily, drink it in good health. I know a lot about you, doctor" and added in Yiddish "Be well". He shook my hand with warmth and left the room. Who is this person? From where does he know of me? For what purpose did he call me?

I started receiving milk every day. A full month. It emerged that this anonymous officer was Jewish from Belorussia who was evacuated from there in the year 1942 to the Ural. He eventually arrived here, and as he was a party member, he was appointed as one of the commanders of the prison Camp. What suddenly caused him to help a sick Jewish prisoner, and a Zionist at that, I will never know. I never saw him again.

One day I was called out to the corridor of the hospital. I went out, and saw a woman standing in front of me approximately 35 years old. She was the one who asked to see me, she shook my hand warmly, hugged me emotionally, her eyes running with tears. In 1936 she responded to a call by the Soviet Union for all the Russian nationals to come back to the "Motherland", and moved from Harbin to the Soviet Union. Upon arrival she was immediately arrested and was imprisoned in one of the camps for ten years. When finally released from the prison she remained to live in Ural and since then is employed as an accountant in the village. She heard that I was among the prisoners who recently arrived here and asked to see me. On the next day she sent me gifts, a slice of fish and some baked items. I did not remember this Jewish woman from Harbin, possibly I never did know her.

Several days later a person of about 65 years of age, entered the room where I lay and standing by the door asked loudly: "And where are my city compatriots, the Harbiners?" someone answers that all of us are Harbiners. The man asked about me. When I answered – he came to me, extended his hand, introduced himself and related to me the following story: Since 1903 he lived in Harbin and was employed with the directorate of the Railway. After the Soviet Union sold the Railway to the Japanese there came a call for all the Russians to return to the Motherland. "The Motherland is calling!" "The Motherland is expecting you!...". Who will refuse to come back shall be declared a deserter and a traitor. They promised us all the best. We will be permitted to bring with us all the goods we want. The journey and cargo haulage - free of charge. At the railway stations in the Soviet Union the returnees were met with music - The "Motherland" is embracing her straying children! However, immediately upon arrival at the home of his relatives he was arrested, and all his belongings confiscated. He was charged

according to the famous clause 58* – “Living abroad”, “Cooperation with Imperialist Powers”, “Assistance to world bourgeoisie”- and with the crimes stemming from these phrases. He was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment.

All this he told me while sitting by my bed. With a heart-breaking sigh he completed his tale “Oh mother Russia” he sighed.

- One of the clauses in the Soviet penalty code dealing with espionage.

Chapter 4C

The state of my health is continuing to deteriorate. Due to my weakening condition I cannot stand on my feet, as soon as I stand up my head starts to spin and when I lay down I can hardly turn from side to side. Every movement causes my heart to beat intensely. Could it be that my heart muscles have become so slack? Neither x-ray photos nor cardiograms can be performed here, even blood pressure measurements are not carried out. My face is unrecognizable.

At the end of February the director of the sanitary department came to the hospital accompanied by a doctor. She paid me visits quite often, this time she wanted to know when could I begin to work. She asked the doctor about my health condition. By the doctor’s facial gestures I saw that my state of health is not good, he then pointed at his heart - I recognized by this gesture that my heart is not running, as it should be. She nodded her head. On the next day the director of the sanitary division, a doctor with the rank of major, came to me, he asked about the state of my health, then said:

“You are an old and experienced doctor, tell me how would you treat a patient in your condition? What drugs do you need? Tell me and I will do my utmost to get them”. I mentioned by name two drugs that are produced abroad. “If I manage to get them, I will send them to you with the nurse”.

The drugs, I never did receive, probably because he could not find them. There is still no improvement in my condition. It is already over two months that I am confined to my bed and with every day that passes I feel worse. One evening I felt very bad. Our room was dark and quiet, only a weak ray of light from the lamp in the corridor was filtering in. I am lying in bed and contemplating my bitter fate, everyone else is asleep, I hear the rustling sound of rats. I cannot recline on my back or on my side. I have to sit and doze in this position moaning heavily. Suddenly my neighbor turns to me and asks:

“What is wrong doctor, do you feel bad?”

I feel my pulse, lay my hand on my heart.

“Please call the nurse” I request my neighbor.

The duty nurse Clavdia comes.

“Nurse Clavdia, please give me an injection of Caffeine...”

“It is best that I call the doctor...”

“No it’s not necessary to wake him, just give me an injection of coffeine and I’ll feel better”.

The nurse consents to my request, but remains by my bed holding my hand and feeling the pulse. After five minutes I tell her:

“You can go, nurse, I feel better”.

The nurse left, but returned to visit me several times during the night. Gently holding my hand so as no to wake me and felt the pulse”.

I dozed off. When I awoke I was completely exhausted, and covered with sweat from head to toe. I had a nightmare, in this dream I am wandering in the streets of a city dressed in rags, bare footed and hatless. Behind an iron gate I see a well-lit house. Through the wide door of the house I see many people. I open the door and enter inside, I find myself in a synagogue. Shining light and men covered prayer shawls. The “Ezrat Nashim” is crowded to the brim. The chazan was standing on the “Teiva”. The “Aron Hakodesh was open and in it the “Sefrei Torah”. I walk along the aisle, raised myself upon the “Teiva” and shouted:

“Dear God, Dear God why did you abandon me?”

Pandemonium erupted, I heard shouts: “Dear God, isn’t it our doctor?”. I walk back to the door, and amidst calls and shouts, I leave the synagogue and awake.

My entire body is wet with perspiration. According to my request the nurse injects me with a second injection of Caffeine. My mind is still under the influence of my dream. I am lying and pondering for quite some time, suddenly my mind is struck by a thought: I dreamt of a synagogue, isn’t this a good omen? My heart is throbbing with excitement and I repeat to myself: I was in a synagogue and this is a good omen, I shall recover from my illness. My

spirits are high. I began to think of the drugs I shall need and the way to treat this illness. I am looking forward for the morning to come. Snow is falling around our hut and dawn is slowly creeping up. I wrap myself in my blanket and go to the doctor who lives in a small room in the hospital.

"Doctor, I know that my health condition is bad" I say, "But I have reason to believe and hope that I will recover soon and return to normal health". The doctor interrupts me in mid sentence and hugs me:

"You are a brave person, doctor! May God help you!" he says emotionally.

"I want to begin with serious treatments" I continue, "I have determined a program for these treatments and I want to seek your advice and would also like you to treat me accordingly...please help me!"

"You are an old and experienced doctor" he responds "You are more experienced than I. Just tell me how and I will treat you according to your guidelines".

I explained my treatment program: Infusion of Glucose and acid of nicotine. And injections of Caffeine, Cordiamine and acid of salt with Pepsin.

"All the drugs are available except for the Cordiamine" said the doctor and leads me by the hand to the treatment room where he instructs the para-medic to begin with the treatments immediately. The food I receive, thanks to the doctor, is not bad. I also receive milk rations daily. Very soon I began to feel better and more encouraged just by the thought and my will power to be cured. The paramedic and the nurse strictly carrying out the correct treatment, daily I am being injected both into the vein and beneath the skin, and I am overseeing the treatment that I am receiving. By the beginning of the month of March my health improved substantially. Gradually the swellings decreased then disappeared, the breathing became easier and my shortness of breath abated my ability to lay on my right side and on my back returned. My indifference to my surroundings disappeared and I am aware of all that's going on around me. My body tissues are being drained of liquids, and I am becoming "leaner" by the day and everything is returning to normal. The recovery process, however, is very slow but sure and I am gradually regaining my strength.

One day, around the beginning of March an additional bed was brought into our ward and placed adjacent to my bed, the medical attendant said that the bed is for one of the doctors who is sick. Two hours later the patient was brought in. It is dark and we don't see the new patient's face and cannot discern who the "doctor" is. It is now night in the hospital, we cannot tell what time it is. At five thirty the evening meal is served and after that nighttime begins. Everyone is asleep. Silence. Even I am lying immersed in my thoughts, perhaps even asleep. All of a sudden I hear:

"Comrade doctor, do you speak Hebrew?"

What is this? Who is speaking to me? From where does this voice come from? Could it be that this is my imagination? A delusion?. Then I hear again:

"Do you speak Hebrew?"

"Who is speaking? Who are you?"

The person approached me and extended his hand: "Shalom". We conversed for a long time that night, he told me his life story. He is a former student of medicine who was sentenced for a second period of imprisonment for Zionist activities. After serving a term of five years he was arrested again and sentenced to another term of ten years for the same "crime"- Zionist activities. In another five months this second period of imprisonment is coming to an end. At present he is being employed as a paramedic in one of the wards for internal ailments in this hospital. Every evening, or, to be exact, every night when all are asleep, we carry on long conversations. He related that while sitting in prison or in various concentration camps he had no knowledge at all of what was going on in the Jewish world, Zionism or in Eretz-Israel. He is devouring hungrily every word I say and is listening attentively to all I say to him. He asked questions, digests the answers then asks more questions. We often walked for hours in the little backyard of the hospital discussing things dear to us. From our conversations he learned that in past times I lived in Perm where I studied in the local high school, He then told me about his friend, who also was born in Perm – Tioma Virshov, he was a delegate to the illegal Zionist Congress held in Moscow in the year 1920 where all the delegates were arrested, I was well acquainted with the Virshov family who were my close friends, this family were all Zionists. Tioma was a classmate of my roommate. He was arrested with the other delegates to this congress and expelled to Eretz-Israel, where he died of tuberculosis.

After serving the remaining five months, my friend the paramedic was not released, he was summoned to the "Special Department"* where he was told that in the meanwhile until further instructions arrive, he will remain in the camp. I later learned that after several months he was sent to a region of exile.

Our mutual beliefs, aspirations, dreams and hopes brought us close together.

A long time later, during one of my interrogations in the prison in Sverdlovsk the investigator hurled at me:

"You found a friend at the camp, tell me of his anti-revolutionary activities..." and in a rage he added "you English mercenaries".

*the representation of the Ministry of State Security in a work camp.

Chapter 4D

By the end of March 1946, after an illness that lasted three months I left the hospital. The superintendent of the sanitary division appointed me temporary director of the second ward for internal illnesses and doctor for children's illnesses. I moved to live in the children's house where a special room was assigned to me. The number of children living in the house was about 150 and they were divided into three groups: "Sucklers", "creepers" and "walkers". According to the regulations children are kept in the children's houses in this camp up to the age of two only, but due to the war there was no possibility to transfer the older ones to other homes so they too remained in our children's house. The nurses serving in the children's houses were "free" (not Prisoners). The children too were "free" while their mothers were of the status of "prisoners". We were reminded many times, by the authorities that the children are "free" and are therefore entitled to special treatment, food, and living conditions.

However, the children are growing up and learning amidst the most terrible conditions prevailing in the Soviet detention camps, they see and hear many obscene and ugly events that are engraved in their sensitive young brains. The household supervisor and the cook are "free" too. Children up to the age of one year are treated by nurses who are prisoners, while the older ones are in the hands of the "free" nurses. The reasoning behind this is that children older than one year can already be influenced by the "criminals" and may be infected with anti-Soviet thoughts and ideas. For the group of above the age of two a nursemaid, in addition to the regular nurses, participates in their upbringing and spends several hours a day with the children, they are taught Soviet songs especially songs about "the great Stalin". This nursemaid, a young girl, is a complete moron; she cannot even read or write properly. The sanitary division supervisor complained more than once about the girl, who, she said, does not know anything, but she is the best that could be found. She ignored the fact that the upbringing the children are receiving matches the accepted line. Since the age of two the children are memorizing the phrase: "I am a little girl, I play and I sing songs, I have never seen Stalin but I love him..."

The hospital is out of bounds to outsiders, except for the mothers. However nearby there is a playground where the children play games, just adjacent to the playground is the prison compound, a very respectable neighbor... Among the children were three who were born to one mother and three separate fathers, the eldest is a girl six years old. The mother is a habitual thief and is serving a third term in jail. One day the girl asks the nursemaid, who is "free": "Why are you in this camp? Are you also a thief?"

The mother lives in the mother's barracks. Every night she steals from the vegetable garden of the children's ward, cucumbers and tomatoes. Once she was caught and punished by spending three days in solitary confinement. On her release she came to me to ask about the welfare of her children. I asked her: "very soon you will be released from prison?"

"Yes, I was slammed with a 13 years jail term... In two months I will be released".

"And what will you do alone with three children?"

"I will continue to steal" She answered loud and clear.

Most of the mothers were imprisoned for stealing, one of them for murder and many for "political crimes" that were charged under the notorious paragraph 58 of the criminal code being "a dangerous element to the society". One of the women was

Sentenced to a term of ten years, this, because after spending several hours in a queue for bread, the stock of bread ran out when her turn came. She then said loudly, "and what are my

children supposed to eat? What kind of arrangements are these"? Just like out of nowhere someone appeared in front of her saying: "Are Soviet arrangements not to your liking"?

She answered " I didn't sleep the whole night, I stood and waited in the queue all that time, in the end I did not receive even a slice of bread. And my children are hungry."

"Please come with me" was his answer. She was arrested and sentenced to a term of ten years in prison.

Another woman here is imprisoned for over five years. Her husband was conscripted into the army during the war and she remained with two children and an old mother. One day the mother went to the city and saw various colored papers scattered on the street. The old woman picked up some papers and put them in her coat pocket, as paper is expensive these days and is unavailable. She did not read what was written on them, as she did not know how to read nor write. She returned home and hung up her coat on a hook. On the next day the daughter went to the city wearing the same coat, as this is the only coat in the family. As luck would have it, on this day the authorities were conducting a search of the population, they were looking for leaflets that were dropped the day before from German aircraft. The leaflets instructed the population to help the advancing German army. The authorities forbade the population to pick up the leaflets, anyone found violating this order was subject to punishment. The woman was stopped and searched, the anti-Soviet leaflets were found in her pockets. All her pleadings that she did not know anything about these leaflets and where they came from or how they came to be in her pockets were to no avail. No one bothered to listen to her words. She was charged under paragraph 58 and sentenced to seven years confinement in this camp. Now she has already served five years. Through the camp authorities she petitioned the chairman of the supreme council, and the chief prosecutor to review her trial. At the close of five years imprisonment she was informed that her sentence was illegal and she will be freed. Well, this is called a "just trial". I heard many similar stories in camp. And many people that are imprisoned in these camps are completely innocent.

I live in the children's house and have my meals with the children. The food they receive is better, while the prisoners live a life of semi starvation. The children receive daily meat, milk and cereals with the milk. The Director of the Sanitary Division instructed the Supervisor of Economy to provide me with an additional portion of food daily and 500 grams of sugar monthly.

One of the rooms in the children's house has a radio receiver and in the evenings, while the children are being prepared for bed I take the radio to my room and listen to news and music. Newspapers are delivered to the camp too; sometimes I manage to get a copy. My work is not light at all; there are many sick among the children. A permanent supervision is maintained on the sucklers. They are weighed twice a day, before and after each feeding session. Due to a shortage of paper, the weight and the time of feeding are recorded on wooden boards, another board is used for writing the names and date of birth of the children, a third board is for recording the temperature measurements and the diagnosis etc. A total of about fifteen, thick and heavy, boards are used for various recordings. I requested to be supplied with lighter boards, but these were not available.

A special table stands in my room with stacks of these boards laying on it, every morning, for my first visit of the wards the nurses and the nursemaids bring the heavy boards to me.

Among the holders of the various duties in the children's wards are many criminals who were imprisoned for stealing, robbery and even murder and here too they continue with their "normal" activities, stealing from their comrades and bullying. These criminals enjoy the full confidence of the prison authorities and are considered by them to be "one of ours", "Soviet people". In contrast to the political prisoners who are the "criminals". In the hospital compound, holding a dominating position, is a criminal, he used to beat up badly his fellow prisoners and while they were senseless stole their belongings. Among the staff of the children's ward many former thieves and embezzlers were employed, they supplied the children with spoiled food while the good quality items were given to the dominating convicts of the camp. I, who was responsible for the health of the children, rejected many times the food supplied to the children's ward. This of course caused many a dispute between the economy supervisors and myself.

In the beginning of May all the Japanese prisoners in the camp, numbering about 70 people, were instructed to pack their belongings and be ready to leave the camp. Where to? Home. The Japanese began to rejoice. The same day, all of them boarded a train and it departed. In addition to the escorting soldiers two nurses accompanied them too, one of them from my department. On her return the nurse (who was "free") told me about their journey.

They boarded the train with elation as they actually expected to be on their way home – this is what they were told by the authorities. All through the journey they sang and danced, there was no limit to their joy, until they noticed that at a certain point the train changed direction and began to travel in the opposite direction (in the direction of the camp), they began eyeing each other with worried expressions: “Where are we being taken to? Why are we returning?”. At the next station they started banging on the doors and going wild. The escorts kept reassuring them that they are going home, but the Japanese did not believe them. Some of them attempted to escape but were quickly apprehended. They were taken to a camp named “Karaganda” one of the detention camps in Kazakhstan. Some time later, I too found myself in this camp and met them there. This is the way the Soviet Authorities “freed” the Japanese and “sent them home”.

Chapter 4E

Life in the camp is hard. The atmosphere is stifling. One day the doctor for nervous disorders paid me a visit. All his life he lived in Germany. In 1925 he heard of the miracle taking place in the Soviet Union, on the “freedom” that is prevailing there, so he and his wife, who is a doctor too, decided to move from Berlin to Moscow. Both worked at their professions, but in a short while they were arrested and charged according to paragraph 58. They were sentenced and each one was sent to a different hard-labor camp. The doctor told me that in his ward a Yeshiva student from Poland is hospitalized. The student heard of me and wants to see me. This Yeshiva student is causing the doctor a lot of problems. He eats nothing, only on the Sabbath evenings, in honor of “Shabbat Kodesh” he eats something. Due to the lack of food he is losing weight daily and his health is declining both physically and mentally. The doctor asked for my assistance to persuade him to stop his hunger strike. The same evening I met the young man, when he saw me, he sprang up and started to hug and kiss my hand. We talked for a long time and also on the following days we met and had long talks. He was pale in the face and had a worried look with an expression of sadness on his face no trace of a smile ever showed on his lips. My heart wept whenever I saw him. He escaped from Poland, from Hitler, from the holocaust and death. At the border Soviet soldiers caught him. He alone? There are hundreds of thousands of refugees imprisoned in Soviet prisons, and this *Yeshiva* student too was charged with espionage. And why does he refuse to eat? As a practicing Jew how can he eat their *treife* food! I great regret I had to part with this *yeshiva* student when I was transferred to the prison of Sverdlovsk. He remained in the camp, his strength continued to wane by the day. A year later, in a Moscow prison, I met a prisoner who was confined in the same “nervous disorders” ward with this *yeshiva* student, he told me that the student sank into a deep depression and a short time later passed away – Another victim of the regime of oppression and evil.

The hardest suffering group are the smokers, they can hardly find a pinch of tobacco, and impossible to get tobacco paper. The best alternative for this purpose, say the smokers, is newsprint. Even this type of paper is not easy to find and it is very expensive. For a 4 page edition of “Pravda” which costs 20 *kopecks* one is required to pay 8 *rubels*. Old newspapers can be obtained from peasants who get them in exchange for bread. Trading in old newspapers can yield good profits. The Prisoner buys a newspaper for 8 *rubels* then cuts it into small sheets, about 100 sheets which are sold at 5 sheets per *rubel*.

At the end of July the inspector of the Sanitary division arrived at the camp, among other departments she also visited the children’s house and the children’s ward nearby, she inspected the house and the ward then came to my room. During our conversation she wanted to know who I am and how did I come to be a prisoner in this camp. She then held a general meeting with all the doctors and the administration people of the camp where she pointed out some of the shortcomings that she came across in the hospital, while citing especially the favorable conditions prevailing in the children’s department. Her criticism of the hospital irritated the surgeon who claimed, that the pharmacy does not supply the surgery with the required amount of alcohol and on top of that the pharmacy is not functioning as it should be. In his outburst of words He said: “The devil knows what’s going on there. It’s not a pharmacy but a ‘Jewish market!’” (The manager of the pharmacy was a prisoner of Jewish origin) and left the room. The director of the sanitary department called after him “come back doctor!” but the inspector interjected “let him be, this impertinent person”. I was sitting by the side of the inspector and said loudly “This doctor always claims that he is a ‘real Soviet person!’”.

The inspector stayed at the camp for several days. One day she called me and asked me to explain to her how a child develops during the first year of his life, about natural and artificial nourishment. I answered all her questions. She then asked me again about the reason for my imprisonment, according to what paragraph was I charged and for how long was I sentenced. I told her. "Do you receive a salary for your work as a doctor? How much?"

"I am working as a doctor for five months, up to now I haven't received anything"

"Why is that? Are the German doctors receiving anything"

"I do not know but I presume that yes"

The next day before her departure, she summoned me to her office and informed me that from now onwards I will receive a salary. And indeed before the week passed I received 50 *rubels* as salary for a months work. However what is the real value of 50 *rubels* if an old newspaper costs 8 *rubels*, a glass of milk 2 *rubels* and an aluminum spoon cost 25 *rubels*. As of 1948 Stalin cancelled all salaries paid to prisoners...Does anyone pay salaries to slaves?

One day I was summoned to the treatment room. I came and found a well-built man in civilian clothes waiting.

"Doctor, I came here to be treated by you, I feel pain in the back and my breathing is difficult. Please check me out, perhaps I need some cupping glasses (banki)"?

I examined him and wrote him a prescription. We went out of the treatment room together. As we were walking he asked:

"Why are you dressed so scantily?"

"Where can I take clothing from?. We are not given any"

"Why did you not come directly to me...I am the manager of supplies".

We entered into a conversation. He was Jewish, from Vitebsk who was evacuated from his city during the war days. A member of the party he was. When he arrived at the Urals he was appointed the manager of the supply department.

"What do you need? Come with me..."

We entered his office; He called the chief accountant:

Supply the doctor with trousers, shirt, pullover and a coat. Understood? Write it down and I shall sign".

I noticed the dissatisfaction on the accountant's face on hearing the command, and by the momentary look of animosity in his eyes towards the Jewish supply manager and the Jewish doctor, I knew he was an anti-semitic. On the next morning I received the new clothing. I was pleased with them. But I was more pleased on the awakening of the Jewish awareness of this influential person.

I am often invited, with the agreement of the camp authorities, to visit sick people in the village. I walk to the village escorted by an armed guard, who "signs" that he received me. Upon our return it is noted in the guard-post logbook that I was "returned" by the escort. During my visits at their homes and huts of the villagers I have a chance to see in person their living conditions. The sight that unfolds before my eyes is quite dismal, dinginess, poverty and degeneration.

Every day sick children from the village are brought to me to the "area". These visits are quite a burden on me, as my regular duties take many hours of my time. However no sick child is ever turned back. I work most of the day and by the evening fatigue overpowers me. Nevertheless I spend much time with the Zionist medic; we talk about times long past...dreaming.

Life is hard in the camp with many events happening in it. According to the new regulations a mother who is to be released from the camp has to take her children from the children's home, with her. Most of the children in the home are illegitimate, born in the camp, as a result of a casual and temporary relationship. In the past the mother was exempt from the responsibility of taking care of her offspring. On leaving the camp the child remained there and on reaching the age of two he was transferred to some children's institution. But now the rules have changed, the mother, on her release, must take the child with her. In these cases it often happens that the mother abandons her child somewhere on the way at the first opportunity. The police then search for the mother and if she is found she is sentenced to another term in prison. This happens often and camp life is accustomed to cases of this sort and takes them in its stride.

The prison camp is situated 1 km from the hospital compound. Approximately two thousand people were imprisoned there. Every day the prisoners are led to the nearby forests to chop trees. It is a back breaking work and they are required to fulfill a permanent daily quota of chopped trees. The prisoners, especially those among them who were not accustomed to physical work, collapse under the burden of this back breaking work, while the armed guards standing around, force them to get up to resume the work. Very often the prisoners would injure themselves intentionally, like chopping off one of their fingers or hacking their leg with a hatchet, so that he is exempt from this work. All cases of such injuries on the body that are reported by a prisoner are investigated thoroughly to ascertain that the injury is not self inflicted, no one, of course, would admit it and claimed that it was an accident that happened at work. Woe is he if it were found that his injury is self inflicted. In most cases a few years would be added to his prison term. I very often get to speak with these inmates, wretched souls; most of them are young people 20-30 years old. What could I say to console them? the harsh reality in which they are living and lack of any chance of deliverance have drained them of any interest in life....

A very tight guard was positioned around our camp. High watch towers with armed soldiers in them. The towers are spaced 25 steps from each other and are built around the perimeter of the camp; a watch-dog is shackled to each tower with a long chain. Nevertheless the prisoners still try to escape, some even succeed. One day, two prisoners, both coming from my home city, escaped. On what did they base their hopes of success while wearing prison clothes? without knowing the surrounding area?! I cannot tell. The only possible reason for this escape attempt must surely be that they lost all hope of salvation and acted in desperation. They were chopping trees in the forest the whole day at the end of the day their strength was completely sapped. On their way back to the camp, they succeeded in hiding themselves in the thick of the forest and escaped. Their escape was discovered when the whole group reached the gate of the camp and the guard performed a head count. Two heads were missing! He repeated the head count, still - two were missing! The guard phoned the duty officer. Sirens sounded! All the camp commanders appeared immediately at the gate, again a head count – two missing. Where are they? The only conclusion - they escaped! They found out the identities of the missing prisoners. Soldiers armed with rifles and sub-machine guns with trained blood hounds commenced with the pursuit. The escapees were young men; one was 19 years old and the other 21. In the forest they lost sight of each other and each one went in a different direction, they spent the night in the forest. The next morning, one of them, completely exhausted, reached a hut. The residents of the hut knew immediately, by his appearance, that he was an escaped prisoner. They did not offer him a glass of water nor even a piece of bread, most probably in fear for their own safety and quickly notified the police. The man was apprehended and returned to the prison. The second man came out of the forest at dawn ran across the open area, unfamiliar to him, breathing the fresh air of freedom, but hungry and his strength waning gradually. He saw a pile of hay on the way into which he dug himself in and sat there holding his breath. One of the hounds found his tracks which led to the pile of hay, he sniffed then started barking and digging into the hay, found the escapee bared his fangs at him then commenced tearing his clothes to shreds. So, the second man was caught too. He was returned to the camp and hospitalized in my ward. He was bitten all over, hands, legs, and other parts of his body and in a state of deep depression.

Escape attempts were not few. This is the harsh reality, harming ones own body.....running away.....nervous depression..... The nervous disorders ward is full of patients. One day the prisoners of one of the barracks were led to the prison bath house. While undressing the accompanying guards noticed that some of the prisoners were wearing a cross around their necks, in a rage the guards tore the crosses off them, flung the crosses on the floor then stamped on them forcefully accompanying these actions by vile obscenities. On seeing this the stunned prisoners started clamoring with protests. Nothing helped; the trampled crosses were tossed outside. Several of the victims of this hooliganism were so agitated that they had to be hospitalized in the ward for nervous disorders, their treatment lasted many months.

In the beginning of September they started to summon people for interrogation and then sending them to Sverdlovsk. By the end of the month I too was summoned. The interrogator was a senior lieutenant, he requested my personal details then read to me

from some paper he held in his hand, where it was noted that I was charged under article 58 paragraph 11, and as a preventive measure they are sentencing me to a term in prison. It therefore means that only now, after I had already served a period of 13 months, I am being arrested. I ask the interrogating officer:

"Was I not serving a prison term up to now?"

"Perhaps it will be taken into account" replied the interrogator "although I am not sure about this, besides it is not my business..."

"And what is the meaning of these articles against which I am charged?"

"Stop asking questions, you will yet be informed... you can go... are you working?"

"Yes I'm a doctor..."

"Very well, carry on with this work," the interrogator concludes the session.

My friend the Zionist, who is imprisoned for 15 years, explained to me the meaning of the various paragraphs according to which I was charged. Article 58 deals with the imprisonment of "counter revolutionaries", while paragraph 11 deal with cases where the perpetrator of the crime did not commit the crime alone but with the cooperation of other persons – in other words I am charged with belonging to an organization, to a band of "counter revolutionaries".

Within 15 minutes the whole camp new that I too am destined to be moved. And indeed, several days later the commander of the Sanitary Division informed me that on the next day I am to be transferred to Sverdlovsk for an inquiry. I began preparing myself for the new direction my life will take. Actually there was no need for any preparations as "Omnia mea – mecum porto"* a pair of underwear, trousers, a sweater, coat – these are my only belongings. And the shoes on my feet. In addition to all that an aluminum spoon that I bought with the money I earned, it cost me 20 rubles and is the only item that is my exclusive "property"

"all my belongings are on my back"

When it was learned for certain that my transfer was set for the next day a stream of visitors came to see me to bid farewell, mothers, come, bid fare-well, cried and kissed me, each one with a small present in her hand: eggs, cucumbers, tomatoes, groats, flour (During the first four months of breast feeding, the mothers receive an additional food ration). I beseech them to take back the gifts that they showered on me as I do not need so much victuals, the trip to Sverdlovsk is not long, only a day or two and when I'll arrive all my needs will be provided... by the prison authorities. The mothers, however, do not take heed to my appeals and the heap of food is growing. How will I pack all that food? In the evening the mothers brought me a suitcase of laminated wood. "Here you are, doctor, a suitcase, give us the food and we'll pack it in for you". And pack it they did, everything, then closed it and handed it to me.

The next morning I was instructed to go to the Sanitary Department with my belongings. When I arrived the interrogating officer was there, he performed an inspection of everything I had. He checked everything in the suitcase, rummaged between the tomatoes and the baked items:

"What do you need all those things for?" he asked me "are you planning a long journey?"

"I do not know where I am being sent to" I replied "but I know this, the journey here lasted for thirty three days..."

"Tall stories" and continued with his rummaging, he found the aluminum spoon and placed it on the table. "Close the suitcase" he ordered.

I stretched out my hand for the spoon but the officer took it and placed it in his coat pocket.

"This is my private spoon, comrade senior lieutenant; I bought it with my own money for twenty rubles".

"You don't need it...you will get another one" answers the officer and clamps the suitcase shut. I receive 800 grams of gray bread, a spoonful of sugar and two dried fishes - provisions for the journey. I am standing by the gate of the camp and next to me stand some other prisoners who are being transferred too. All the mothers gathered near the gate to see me off. Again they bid me farewell, kiss me. The guards chase them off but to no avail, they do not go and call to me "goodbye doctor!" "Be well, doctor!" "Have a

safe journey!", "May you be free soon!" I leave the camp's gate, my eyes filling with tears. May God have pity on all of you and on me too...

We were lead to the railway station under heavy guard where we were grouped on one of the platforms. Within 15 minutes the train arrived, one of the attached wagons was a prison wagon nicknamed "Stolipin" (named after the minister for internal affairs and later chairman of the committee of ministers in the government of the Tsar who introduced special railway wagons for transporting prisoners), the Soviet regime inherited these wagons from the Tsar and continued to use them for the same purpose. All the cells in this wagon were already filled with many prisoners coming from other camps who were also on their way to Sverdlovsk. The windows along the passageway which runs lengthwise through the wagon were grilled densely with iron bars while the cells had no windows at all. Fresh air or light did not penetrate this Soviet "Stolipin" wagon. As usual each cell is intended for seven people but when we were pushed into one of the cells it already contained twenty people, and with us in it, the cell held 26 people! We were all suffocating due to lack of fresh air packed closely, sitting on top each other. When I entered the cell two of the inmates tried to make room for me and calling happily "Hello doctor!"

These two people were an editor of a newspaper and the other a hotel manager in Harbin. They hugged and kissed me. Our cell also held criminal prisoners – thieves and robbers. They are the "privileged" ones. They fearlessly rob other prisoners by undressing them of their clothes and boots and leave them with their own rags. The ones being robbed can scream and holler – with no response from anyone. The duty guard comes and looks into the cell then wordlessly returns to where he came from. The robbers warn you to shut up and if not "you'll have a bitter ending". Only in 1949 they began transporting political prisoners separately from the criminals, however, due to lack of space, they did not adhere very strictly to this ruling.

My suitcase was taken from me immediately on boarding the wagon, as suitcases are not permitted to be taken into the cells. The wagon commander asked me whether I have any money with me.

"Yes I have"

"Hand it over for safe-keeping"

I handed them the suitcase and the money and asked for a receipt.

"That's not necessary"

I insisted on my request to which he finally assented and gave me a receipt. On arrival at Sverdlovsk the suitcase and the money were returned to me. However, as time went by, it became clear to me that receipts were valueless nor any signatures, be they stamped with the most official looking seal.

The stuffiness in the cell continues to increase. We are hoping for the morning to come and to arrive finally at Sverdlovsk. The prisoners are being abused by the guards. Permission to visit the toilet is hardly ever granted. Either the wagon commander is not available or the guard just does not heed the prisoner's request, sometimes the guard opens the aperture, looks at you sneers mockingly and closes the aperture. When finally one is lead to the toilet, he is pushed and jabbed in the back with the butt of the rifle. The guards are also very impatient when one is in the toilet they hurry him irritably, shouting: "come on hurry up... that's enough, finish!".

Chapter 5A

We arrive at Sverdlovsk. The train stopped at one of the side platforms, the prisoners were then lead out of the wagon. We numbered about a hundred people. We were marched in columns of four along the alleys of the city until we arrived to some remote place, where a "Black Raven" (This is what they call in Russia a black security vehicle for the transportation of prisoners in the city) awaited us. It was my "privilege" to travel many times in this "Black Raven" during my camp life here in Sverdlovsk. 35 of us were squashed into the car. Each of the two stools on both sides of the car could accommodate 5-6 people only. It is very stuffy, no air, we are choking. Somebody feels bad. I was afraid that we will not leave this "Raven" alive. We traveled for about a half hour until we reached the iron gate of the prison house No 1 of Sverdlovsk. We waited by the gate until the various prison authorities checked the prisoner lists that they received. The acceptance formalities in the prison lasted a long time after which we were led into a somewhat large cell, filled to the brim with people, these were

all criminals, mostly thieves. I was astounded to see among them children aged 11 – 14, Russians and Tatars, who also were charged for stealing. They were being transferred to a juvenile delinquent prison in the vicinity of Sverdlovsk. Meanwhile they were interred, while in transit, in this prison No.1 of Sverdlovsk.

We receive a portion of bread each, then line up in the corridor for lunch. At the far end of the corridor there's a door with a window to the kitchen. Everyone receives a soup plate with cabbage soup and a filthy wooden spoon bitten at the edges. But when one is hungry, who notices minor things like these? I look at the spoon; I received, and then remember my aluminum spoon that the brave representative of the KGB, the senior lieutenant confiscated from me. We lapped up the cabbage soup then lined up again for the gruel, the gruel was something revolting but we ate this too. After the lunch we returned to the cell, then the criminal prisoners, mentioned previously, started going berserk. They took away the bread, the tobacco and the cigarettes from the other prisoners. We, the three of us, the former newspaper editor, the school inspector and I set ourselves on the floor and chatted, then the leader of the gang of criminals approached us and said to me:

"Invite me to a cigarette!"

"I have none, I don't smoke..."

"I've seen you smoke, give!"

"You're mistaken, I do not smoke!"

"Give, I'm telling you, or else I'll break all the bones in your body"

"You heard him, friend" the editor intervened "He does not smoke, he's our doctor, everybody knows him, here have some of mine..."

The crook grabbed the packet of cigarettes and left. These were our cellmates – our "colleagues". Many a time did they harass us in this prison shoving their muscular hands at us and calling us "fascists", but themselves they described as Soviets, "genuine Soviets". This definition of one's self is heard very often in the prison by the interrogators, wardens, crooks and murderers "a genuine Soviet". Now who can really argue with this definition?

In groups of 15 to 19 people, we are lead to the bath house. Under each shower stand 7 – 8 people. We get no soap. From the bath house we are herded to a long corridor where we seat ourselves on the floor. In the middle of the corridor stands a long table on the other side of which are two guards in army uniforms. They order us to hand over our clothes and money. We are not permitted to take anything with us to our cell. After that we were put into a large cell. We were over a hundred people in the cell and among us about 20 criminals. Here I met some of my city compatriots among them the Lithuanian Consul. However, after spending time in various soviet prisons for over a year, he does not claim anymore that "we shall soon be released".

We are lying on the floor. Lying next to me is a Japanese, sleeping. I witness a boy of 13 creeping up to him then begin to frisk his pockets. "What are you doing?" I asked loudly. The boy fled. At six in the morning the wake up bells sounded. One of the criminals, a young man, came up to me and gave me a warning: "Do not interfere with matters not concerning you and if you continue with this – watch out!" Some one of the "political" prisoners warned me too: "May God help you, keep quiet and don't utter a word, if you will you'll get a knife..."

At noon we were taken out of the cell in groups of six. My turn finally came too. We were put into the "Black Raven" and driven through the streets of Sverdlovsk till we arrived at a prison that was termed "Internal". We waited for at least an hour until the gates to the compound where opened, inside the compound we waited for another hour until the gate to the prison was opened. Eventually we were led into a big and empty room, without a table or any chairs. An officer orders us to undress. We undressed. Prison guards sift through our clothing that piled up on the floor. Finally we were ordered to dress up, and then each one was put into a separate cell. I was put into a small cell with two tiered bunks. The cell had one tightly grated window, and was shrouded in darkness. After becoming accustomed to the darkness I could make out two people lying on the bunks. Who were my cell mates? One of them introduced himself as being one of the "leaders" of the Russian fascist party in the Far-East, and for a certain time he was the Chairman of the supreme council of this party which was based in Harbin in 1945. In the past he was sentenced to death, in absentia, by the leader of the party Rodzinski. The story behind this death sentence runs as follows: At a certain time in the past the fascist party used to dispatch into the Soviet Union saboteurs. In

order to get to the Soviet Union they had to cross the Amur River by boats, however, none of them returned or were ever heard of again, my cellmate assuming that they were all caught and executed, demanded that the dispatch of these saboteurs be stopped. The "leader" did not agree with him and continued to dispatch them. My cellmate then resigned his post and left the party. As a result the "leader" convened the party "high court" which sentenced him to death. It so happened, however, that at this exact time the Red Army was in the process of occupying Harbin and among the many that were arrested by the new governing authorities was my cellmate. I met him again some time later in another cell of the same prison "Internal." But this time he was already in the service of the Soviet authorities and was put into our cell for a purpose. This is the method the Soviet authorities used in prisons by planting in the cells their people or collaborators so that they should encourage the prisoners to talk. In prison jargon they were called "brooders". Prisoners with experience can immediately detect these implants and warn the other prisoners "watch out for so and so, he is a "brooder"..."

Several weeks later I was transferred to another cell big enough for two people only. The fascist from Harbin was transferred to my cell too. Usually the prison authorities never put two people in the same cell who have already been together once before and this fact aroused my suspicion and I avoided getting into conversations with him, while he on the other hand did his utmost to be very civil toward me. In the mornings he does not let me scrub the floor (Usually the prisoners do this chore in turns) he also takes the urine pot out every morning. In the "Internal" prison in Sverdlovsk the inmates are not permitted neither to sleep during the day nor to recline on the bed, only if the prisoner is sick and it is confirmed by the prison doctor such a permission given. On the next day the prison warden gave my cellmate permission to lie on the cot between the hours of 2 – 4. He was a little embarrassed and said to me:

"Go to the doctor and he too will give you permission to lie down during the day"
"But you did not approach the doctor and still received such a permission. Meaning that some people get permission and others do not".

This incident increased my suspicions against him. Two days later he was summoned for an interrogation but returned to the cell within 25 minutes.

"So quick?" I asked astonished.

"Yes, I only had to sign a protocol and that's all" he answered, perplexed. I'm not naïve to believe this, I thought to myself. Already days before his "interrogation" he tried to draw me into a conversation on political matters. He asked questions on Zionism, on the Jewish community, on the Jewish Far East committee and various other questions. I answered straight away that I do not care to converse on these matters but as he is well versed, as he claimed, on subjects of ancient times, I prefer to speak to him on these subjects. He never the less, still tried to direct the conversation to Jewish political matters. An even now after returning from the "interrogation" he suddenly turned to me and asks:

"What is 'Mishmeret Cholim'?"

"Why suddenly these two unknown Hebrew words entered your mind?"

"I myself don't know why these two words entered my mind" my cellmate answers "but what is their meaning? Aren't they the name of a Jewish nationalist organization?"

"I explained to him that "Mishmeret Cholim" is an organization that provides medical help to the sick. It was obvious that he was disappointed by my answer. On the next day my cellmate was called again for "interrogation" that lasted a half an hour only.

At two o'clock at night I too was called for an interrogation. One of the first questions I was asked was on "Mishmeret Cholim", an unintended smile came to my face and I explained to the interrogator the meaning of the words.

"But this is a political organization" pressed the interrogator.

"Mr. Officer, Sir, if Typhus or Pneumonia is political" I answered "then to cure these ailments is politics".

The interrogator jumped up and shouted: "You just wait; you will yet open your mouth! You scum. You will yet confess to everything, everything!"

Two hours later when I signed, according to paragraph 206* the completion of the interrogation, I was given to read the protocols of my interrogation and the evidences of the various witnesses including the reports of the fascist "brooder" on the Jewish community and the various Jewish organizations in Harbin.

* A paragraph of the penal law which stipulates that at the completion of the interrogation all the documents concerning his case must be shown to the accused and signed by him confirming that he read all the documents, protocols and evidence, and that he has no further remarks.

Very soon I was transferred to another cell, where I met three men who were unfamiliar to me. One was a clerk in the offices of the railway administration, he was charged that twenty years earlier he took part in a convention of the farmers party in Prague, Czechoslovakia, "Anti revolutionary activity"- Paragraph 58. The second one did not know on what charge he was detained, he was an agricultural worker and did not take part in any public activities nor was he a member of any party. But he lived abroad in an imperialist country, therefore: "he cooperated and abetted World Capitalism" and so forth. The third, a young man, the son of a Kozak commander. He was living and studying, since childhood, in Paris with his mother, who was separated from her husband. He came to Harbin in 1945 in order to bring the parents of his mother to Paris. At the time of his arrival, Harbin was occupied by the Red Army and he was arrested. He never held the same political opinions as his father and never met him during his present stay in Harbin. Nevertheless he is harassed daily by the interrogators demanding that he reveal his missions that his father supposedly assigned him with. The young man is on the verge of total collapse from the daily torturous interrogations while they steadfastly demand: "Confess, scum, you dog-sperm...!"

Chapter 5B

After several days they started calling me in for interrogations. My interrogator was an officer with the rank of a senior lieutenant; he was a most evil person, just like most of the interrogators of the "MG" B". He was not overly educated, just learned by heart some of Lenin's quotations and especially parts from Stalin's doctrines. He quotes Stalin's words at every opportunity. "So said Yosef Visarionovitch" Or "our teacher", "our leader", "the great Stalin"...

At the first inquiry he leafed continuously through a thick file full of various papers and documents that lay in front of him.

"What did you discuss during the secret meeting that took place in 1941 in the *"Talmud Tora"* at the start of the Soviet – German war?" he asked.

"I have no idea, I never heard of such a meeting"

"How can it be that you have no idea, you yourself spoke in this meeting about the role of the Jews in this war..."

"A meeting like this never took place and could not have taken place".

The interrogator beats the file with his hand and yells:

"Tell the truth, confess! Do not hide anything! Everything is known to us. If you confess, it will be to your advantage!"

"No such meeting took place, nor was the war discussed, neither openly nor in secret. This is a false story that came to you from Fascist and anti Soviet circles".

"At this meeting you discussed the benefits to the Jews from this war and that the Jews will profit from it". He declared.

"This is a blood-libel; it's a lie and a deception".

On hearing my words the interrogator said in a threatening voice:

"The Jews plan to conquer the whole world... This is a known fact..."

"This is an ancient accusation" I said quietly "fabricated by all the anti-Semites in the world through out the ages and the members of the "Black Hundreds" of all times".

"My words awaken a storm. He began to yell profanities at me and waves of obscene and vulgar words spewed from his mouth, he bangs on the table:

"So the "Black Hundreds" are on your mind? You'll yet see... you'll rot in Jail here!"

Meanwhile another officer, who was sitting at an adjacent table all that time – the same officer who relieved me of my aluminum spoon – intervened and said:

"Why are you wasting your time with him, send him to the solitary confinement. Let him spend three days with the rats".

The interrogator phoned and summoned the guards who returned me to my cell.

I went through many such interrogations in the Sverdlovsk prison, by day and by night. But normally the interrogations took place from ten in the morning up to six in the evening. The main subjects that interested them were: Zionism, the Jewish community, and the "anti-

revolutionary” activities of the Jewish Organizations. My interrogator is not a very big authority on Jewish affairs. He has very sparse knowledge on Zionism. He becomes confused when asking questions and very often has to study the file and some booklet that lie in front of him. It is easily apparent that he is most confused and can make neither head nor tail from the file and notes in front of him. After 5-6 interrogations he has still not signed me on any final protocol. This is obviously due to the reason that he still has not managed to compile a report on these interrogations.

Chapter 5C

Once the interrogation took place at 2 o'clock at night. When I entered the investigators room, he got up and said: “come with me!”

We walk along a long corridor then down the stairs to the first floor then enter the office of the head investigator. Sitting by a big table covered with a red fabric, on a chair with a high back rest, like a throne, sat a big lieutenant colonel, well fed with a crude face. On the floor covered by a carpet stood some armchairs, opposite these armchairs along the wall stood a row of armchairs. I was ordered to sit on one of them.

“Why don't you want to speak?” The lieutenant colonel shouted at me.

“I answer to all the questions that I am asked and tell all I know” I answered.

“You are lying you son of a bitch! Here, you will talk! We broke stronger ones than you! Start talking immediately! If you won't you'll regret it... you will crawl on your knees begging us to hear you... understand? you filth! I will make you yield no matter what... you will be a rag in my hands...you'll tell me everything...you whore!” the lieutenant colonel raved. I listen to his ravings in silence, the most senior “MG'B” officer in the prison showing his cursing proficiency.

After the above preliminaries the interrogation commenced. The first question was about the “Zionist espionage organization *Hias*”.

“Tell me with whom did your organization carry on a correspondence abroad? To whom in France, Belgium and America did you reveal information on the Soviet Union?”

“Hias” I answered “is a federation, or to be more exact, an office that helps people in their search for relatives and offers aid to immigrants in various countries. Personally I had no part in the workings of this office, but I know its functions well”.

“The lieutenant colonel was furious; he stamped his feet on the floor and banged his fists on the table.

“You are lying, you villain, this is a Zionist espionage organization” He then turned in the direction of my regular interrogator who was sitting on one of the armchairs near by remarking “what a scoundrel he is, lying openly without batting an eyelid” then turned again to me.

“With which Zionist espionage organization abroad was Hias connected?” I managed to answer: “Hias is not an espionage organization” He turned quickly to my investigator telling him, “take him away from here, take him! Maybe he'll come to his senses”.

“My investigator led me to his office on the third floor, called the guards and at four o'clock in the morning I was returned to my cell.

On one of the later interrogations – This one too during the night hours – I was interrogated by the lieutenant colonel on the subject of “*Brith-Trumpeldor*”:

“What kind of an organization is *Brith-Trumpeldor*?”

“This is sport and cultural organization of Jewish youth”.

“An English organization”, the lieutenant colonel declares.

“It is not English but an organization of Jewish youth”, I correct him.

“Just look at this villain!” hollers the lieutenant colonel “what a liar...Brith, Brith... means British or English organization, I'm telling you!”

“Brith is a Hebrew word meaning ‘organization’ and ‘Brith-Trumpeldor’ is an organization named after Trumpeldor” I answered quietly.

“Trumpeldor is a Jewish national hero”, the lieutenant colonel cuts in. “Jews have no heroes... come on, tell the truth: Who is Trumpeldor? Is he a spy?”

“Joseph Trumpeldor is a Jewish national hero”, I answered quietly. “He excelled in the Russo-Japanese war; he was promoted to an officer's rank and was awarded the Giorgi medal for bravery”.

"All that you are saying are lies! You are a liar and your Trumpeldor is a piece of filth!" raves the lieutenant-colonel. "Talk! your mother! You son of a bitch! Why are you silent?"

"I told you everything" I answered angrily.

The lieutenant colonel turns to the senior lieutenant and says:

"Look at him...he does not look at all like a prisoner... why does he wear eye glasses? take them from him!"

"As you say comrade lieutenant colonel!"

"Also the buttons tear them out... from the coat, from the sweater and the trousers, all of them. Let him hold up his trousers with his hands" shouts the lieutenant colonel with obscene pleasure.

"As you say comrade lieutenant colonel!"

"Take him away from here! Does he want to try the taste of the solitary confinement?" The lieutenant colonel ends the interrogation.

The time was three at night. My investigator led me to his office, removed my eye glasses and put them in the drawer of his table. Took his pocket knife and began to remove the buttons from my coat and sweater. At this moment two other investigators entered the room. When one of them saw that my investigator was cutting off the buttons of my trousers he asked:

"What are you doing?"

"This is by order of the lieutenant colonel".

"So if he ordered, must you do it? Stop this nonsense..."

"They all hate the lieutenant colonel. My investigator leaves me be. He managed only to cut one button off my trousers. The guards return me "home" - to the cell

Chapter 5D

I am being interrogated daily by the Lieut. Colonel, many times even at night. One of the night "performances" was dedicated to "Maccabee" and surprisingly it took place during the Chanukah holiday. I found out about the Chanukah holiday by chance. One day a new prisoner was put into my cell, I suspected that he was a "brooder" and avoided entering into any conversations with him. He tried to gain my confidence by asking me:

"Are you a Jew?"

"Yes!"

"I am a Jew too."

Even this revelation on his part did not put me into any mood to speak to him. On the next day he again tried to draw me into a conversation, he asked:

"Do you know that it is Chanukah today?"

"No"

"Yes, today is the second candle..."

"Thanks" I said "I will celebrate the holiday in my heart..."

At midday he was called, ostensibly, for interrogation but he never returned. I was in the cell with him for nearly a whole day and did not divulge anything to him. I on my part I learned that this day is Chanukah. Darkness started to set in, somewhere far away people are lighting Chanukah candles. "In the quiet of the night eight wicks are flickering humbly"* I climbed up the wall by standing on the central heating unit and looked through the grated hatch. Starlit sky! How many stars can be seen, but where is my star? I am looking for it in the small patch of sky that can be seen through the small hatch, over there, yonder, are the Chanukah lights, the lights of the Maccabees...

"In memory of the days of sorrow and edicts and for those who performed victoriously and heroically".*

Through the hatch of the door I hear the rebuking voice of the guard:

"Where did you climb to? What are you looking for? Get down immediately!"

I climb down. But the lights of rejuvenation of the struggle for freedom and honor are still flickering in my brain. I see them clearly.

"Shine my humble but sacred candles, remind us of the wonderful days of the past".*

Very quickly the command of "lights out" was heard, which meant – get into the bunks. I did so. Thoughts of Chanukah do not leave me. The memories and dreams torture my soul. During the night I was awakened. I was led through the dark courtyard to the "MG'B" building. I was already accustomed to these nighttime interrogations. My investigator brings me to the

Lieut. Colonels office where he is sitting on his "throne" and browsing through the papers lying in front of him.

"Sit" orders the Lieut. Colonel. Without lifting his head from the papers he asks me:

"What is Maccabee?"

I explain: "This is a national sports organization of Jewish youth"

"And why is it called Maccabee?"

I explain: "The Lieut. Colonel does not believe what I say; he does not have any faith in history".

"Tell me everything and do not hide anything".

I tell him about the heroic war that *Judah Hamaccabee* waged. On the history of

* Quotations from the poem of S. Frug (translated from the Hebrew)

That period. My interrogators did not like what they heard. Nor did the Lieut. Colonel.

"Everything you say is a deceitful lie... There were never any Jewish heroes nor did the Maccabees ever exist. Maccabee is a political anti Soviet organization which was headed by you. We know everything about the Maccabee" said the Lieut. Colonel lifting the folder he held in his hand, adding: "You listen to me, for the last time, I tell you, tell me the whole truth... confess to everything... we know everything about you. We know who you are and about your counter revolutionary Zionist activities. If you will lie, it will be to your detriment!"

He turns to my interrogator and says:

"Take him away from here".

With this unpleasant talk with my interrogator in the Sverdlovsk prison I celebrated the 1946 "Feast of Lights".

I am again in my cell. I cannot fall sleep. My brain is full of thoughts torturing my soul. It is already 15 months that I am in prison, out of these, three months in the filthy and somber prison of Sverdlovsk. Most of the time I am in complete solitude, in a cell for one. The food is terrible. There is no nourishment for the prisoners. The year is 1946. I clean the cell by myself. At 6 O'clock in the morning a bell rings to wake the prisoners. I arise. An order is given; I take out the night bucket, and bring in a bucket with water and clean the floor with a filthy rag. I then waste away the whole day either pacing the cell or sitting on a stool, it is forbidden to lie on the bunk and during the day the bunk is folded against the wall. On the wall by the hatch hangs a board with the prison regulations listing the many restrictions and the very few rights of the prisoners. Among the "rights"- appears the right to borrow books from the prison library. I read this with joy. I'll read everything, I thought, as there is nothing else to do but read. My happiness however was in vain. Once in a while the duty officer comes around and asks if there is any message I would like to pass or any other request. I ask for permission to use the prison library. The officer answers with obvious pleasure and ridicule:

"The books are still in print – when they'll be completed you can have them".

I point to the regulations on the wall.

"Nothing is left from this library; all the pages were smoked away"

"You smoked away all the books?" I blurted out.

"Where you came from, abroad, you could get everything, cigarettes, cigars, while we hardly found even *"machorka"*, and where from could we get the paper? So we tore the pages out of the books and smoked..."

For a few days I had in my cell a city compatriot, a lawyer. In the past he was employed as a secretary of the district court, and after the February upheaval he practiced law. He was addicted to alcoholism. Everyday he drank himself into a stupor. After that he embraced religion and involved himself with affairs of the church. In one of his letters to his friend he described Bolshevism as a "multi headed monster". When Harbin was captured by the Soviets he was arrested. This cultured and educated person has degenerated completely during his tenure in the Soviet prison and is suffering from the lack of vodka. Without it his life is a hell. He is tortured daily by interrogations and even threatened with execution. On his return from interrogations he sits and sobs bitterly. My heart breaks when I see him in this condition. I try to divert his thoughts to other subjects. He, for instance, is very proficient in the ancient Roman language and we spent many hours in trying to recall Roman phrases and proverbs that were adopted by other languages of the world. We recalled over 180 such ancient phrases. This occupation, which we continued for some time, made us forget our grim reality for the time being. However, this unfortunate person was my cellmate only for a little

while. One day he was punished and transferred to a solitary confinement cell and I haven't seen him since.

The Lieut. Colonel does not leave me in peace. Every night he summons me for interrogations. He demands that I tell him about the activities of Jewish community and of its espionage against the Soviet Union in the service of the British. Then, suddenly he came up with a new accusation: "For what purpose did you travel to Romania?" he asked.

"I did not travel to Romania nor have I ever been there in my life."

The Lieut. Colonel goes out of his wits, demands that I confess to the real reason of my visit to Romania, if not "he will destroy me, I shall rot in this prison."

"I was never in Romania in my life, I have nothing to confess, do with me whatever you wish."

The Romanian accusation was thus dropped. Two weeks later I was accused of being a member of the "Freemason Lodge". I replied that this is a lie, just like the lie about my trip to Romania. "No one accuses you of the trip to Romania" shouted the Lieut. Colonel.

But, I am now accused of belonging to the "Freemason" lodge. Allegedly, a secret Jewish, Zionist Freemason lodge existed in Harbin, and just like the other "Freemason" lodges around the world this lodge too was involved in espionage. Many people of the Jewish bourgeoisie of Harbin were members of this lodge; I was supposed to be one of its head. The Lieut. Colonel demanded that I reveal "all" on the workings of this lodge, about its "espionage" activities and its contacts with the United States and Britain. Upon hearing this accusation a short laugh of ridicule passed my lips, He became furious.

"What are you laughing about, you evil degenerate" and started spewing at me a torrent of vile swear words which he knew so well "Open your mouth, you scum, tell everything you whore". On hearing these words I raised my voice and shouted at him in anger: fabrications and malicious lies." I was "I will not talk nor tell anything, all these accusations are never asked again about this lodge in Harbin. Only much later, when I was interrogated in Moscow was this matter raised again, as "by the way"

Chapter 5E

One morning I was summoned for interrogation, and was led to the office of the interrogator. I noticed that he was excited, his hair was combed, he was restless, his uniform was immaculate and he was tense with anticipation. He turned to me and said: "You will presently go before the General. Take my advice, tell him everything, confess to everything, the general doesn't like wise guys. "Well, I am destined to go through another test" I ponder. Who knows how many more of these experiences I am destined to go through. We entered the office of the adjutant who immediately reported of our arrival. I was ushered to the Generals office. He pointed to a chair and told me to sit down. He was sitting on a comfortable office settee behind a writing desk by the window. In the corner sat my "old friend" - the Lieut. Colonel. I expect an extremely unpleasant meeting. The General was the commander of the MG'B in Sverdlovsk. He approached me; all adorned in a general's uniform tailored to size with a red stripe running along the sides of his trousers, and asks:

"Why did you fill your mouth with water and you do not open it to talk? You made many mistakes...you harmed the Soviet Union and you must confess to this. You can be a useful citizen of the Soviet Union, You are an educated person, intelligent and sensible... but you stubbornly refuse to tell us anything ... don't you want to help us in our work, aren't you a Russian, isn't Russia your motherland?"

The General returned to his seat. I remain silent.

"Well, are you ready to talk?"

"I don't know what to talk about, ask me questions and I'll answer, comrade-Commander," I replied.

"But up to now you did not want to talk, why?"

"Commander Sir, I gave answers to all the questions I was asked, a told everything that is known to me, but up to now they cursed me, insulted me, and abused me."

The Lieut. Colonel interrupts my words:

"He is lying" Then turning to me he uttered through his teeth: "you bastard!"

The General, with a stern movement of his hand placates the Lieut. Colonel and says:

"Don't interrupt" then turns to me: "Continue!"

"They want me to tell about the Jewish lodge of the Freemasons that does not exist nor ever existed. They want me to tell about my trip to Romania where I've never been in my life...of course I deny everything they ask and assert that all their claims are plain lies... they abuse

me and threaten me with solitary confinement... They ask me about the Jewish youth organization 'Brith-Trumpeldor' and 'Maccabee' but when I answer and tell them the truth on these organizations, their purposes and activities, the citizen Lieut. Colonel is not satisfied with my answers and accuses me of lying, and claims that these are spying organizations, that the word 'Brith' means British...they insult me, take my eye glasses, without which I cannot see, tear out all the buttons off my clothes, even now I wear clothes with no buttons..."

"Did they return your glasses?" asks the General.

"After two weeks."

It was evident that both the General and the Lieut. Colonel did not expect to hear such grievances from a prisoner. Especially not in the offices of the all-powerful MG'B. The General, seemingly, gave a gaze of rebuke in the direction of the Lieut. Colonel but the other replied:

"Comrade General, all what he is saying are falsehoods and lies."

The General came close to me and said quietly:

"If you will tell us everything, everything exactly as it was and confess to the crimes you committed against the Soviet Union, I will see to it that you will receive the

minimal punishment and you will be employed as a doctor in your work camp. But if you will hide anything from us, the criminal activities you and your henchmen committed, I will see to it that you will scrape filth!"

"I have nothing to confess and I don't know what crimes I have committed."

"You are a Zionist leader" the General replies gravely.

"Yes, I am a Zionist"

"You are the leader of the Zionists" declared the General, "and Zionism is not just any crime it's a very serious crime!"

"Zionism is not a crime, it is a national movement for independence, and it's a movement of the people."

"In the Soviet Union the Zionist movement is forbidden."

"But I was not in the Soviet Union and did not participate in any Zionist activities in it"

To this statement the General did not respond but declared in a stern tone:

"You heard what I said, and if you don't want to scrape the gutters, answer my question"

He phoned for the interrogator, who came and lead me to his office.

"Well, talk!" demanded the interrogator.

"About what?"

"About everything"

"Ask, and I'll answer"

"The General said that you'd talk about everything... Talk!"

"I don't know what about."

"You contemptible villain," the interrogator shouts at me, calls the guard who returns me to my cell.

My interrogator is most interested about Zionism; he tries to persuade me that I am one of its leaders. He turns to his colleague who sits opposite him: "Well we got into the big league, just like Moscow, we've caught a shark in our net," and nods his head at me. "Where is Weizman now?"

"I don't know, I did not hear of him for many years... I don't read any Jewish papers or any other papers as I am not permitted here."

"And when did you see Weizman?"

"In 1905..."

"Despicable devil" shouts the interrogator "Tell me about the anti-Soviet activities of the Zionists..."

"There was never anything like this, and I know nothing about it"

"And since when are you a Zionist?"

"From the school-desk in high-school"

"Look at him, he is simply abusing and teasing us..." shouts the interrogator heatedly. "Are you it, or not?"

"I am giving precise answers to all your questions."

The interrogator has no idea on what Zionism or what the Zionist movement stands for. From time to time he takes from his desk drawer a notebook studies it then asks a question.

"You Zionists are acting according to instructions from London"

"We do not receive any instructions, the people decide... the Zionist Congress..."

"What kind of Congress is it? And where is it situated?" I explain to him about the Zionist Congresses from the very first one. It seems that his notebook does not mention anything about this and because of this everything that I'm saying are fabrications to him. He answers decisively:

"There is no Zionist Movement and there is no Congress. All this is pure fabrication... There is an British Government and you are serving her, you and also Weizman...You are nothing but British spies..."

On the next day, during the interrogation, he phones to someone and asks him to come: "He's here now, with me" - in other words "He" is me. Who can it be that the interrogator is calling? The second interrogator in the room gives the first a rebuking look and quietly says: "For what? Why do you need it?"

After several minutes the door opens and a woman enters the room, her facial features signify that she is Jewish. Her face is radiant with pleasure, smiling at me. I understood that they are showing me, the "Jewish Leader", to a Jewish communist who is also working for the MG'B. I decided in my heart not to be drawn into their game. The interrogator whispers something into her ear. Both look satisfied and smiling. He presents me to her, and with a cunning smile gives her an arrogant look. The interrogator asks me again about Weizman and wants to know when did I meet him.

"I already answered you on this question..."

"Answer again." I remain silent.

"Why don't you speak?"

"I don't want to."

"You refuse to give evidence? Do you know what this means?"

I remain silent

"Do you want me to confine you to the solitary confinement? Answer this question!"

"I already answered this question and will not add another word. Read the protocol that you, yourself wrote."

It was evident that the woman was very perplexed; She whispered something into his ear, got up and left the room. The interrogator was furious, he didn't say a word and started to write in his notebook...this lasted for approximately an hour while I sat and waited all that time. Afterwards I was returned to my cell.

Chapter 5F

As mentioned previously, the interrogators in the Sverdlovsk prison are not too knowledgeable on Jewish matters and they transfer my handling to an interrogator who is "expert on Jewish matters". One day I am summoned to him.

"Comrade Lieut. Colonel, I brought the prisoner" the reports the guard. Across a big table in a specious room sat the Lieut. Colonel, he is Jewish. He pointed at a chair across the table. On the wall hung a big picture of Stalin, and on the table a statuette of Lenin. The lieut. Colonel looks in my direction and says:

You are known to me since 1937..." I look at him with amazement – his face is unfamiliar to me.

"No, we do not know each other personally. In person I met you just now. Lets have a frank talk with each other. I feel that we can finish this matter within a day or two... I know who you are, if someone else was in front of me I would have talked to him differently. I have a personal interest in a doctor who studied in Switzerland, is well known, intelligent and educated. I suggest that today, right now, here on the spot, lets try to finish this matter... I think that you are from Perm?"

"Yes I was in Perm, I studied there in high school and I also worked there as a doctor for several years".

"You see...I also live in Perm and came here especially for the matter concerning you. In Perm everything is fine, the High School where you studied is still standing...Well, start talking."

"I don't know what to tell... I don't know what they want from me, for what reason was I arrested..." The lieut. Colonel interrupts me:

"Your complete file was in front of my eyes, and your case is clear to me, here, you see, are all the draft copies of the interrogation at Grodikovo, they are all scribbles, one cannot

understand anything and this is because you refuse to tell us about your criminal Zionist activities. And if this is really so, I promise you that you will not succeed with me. You will not be able to lead me astray."

He started to ask me about the Zionist Confederation, about the Zionist Congresses, on Weizman, on the relations of the Zionist Confederation with England and America, on the Balfour Declaration, and while I was speaking he wrote down every word I said.

On the next day he asked about the alleged anti-Soviet activities of the Jewish community in Harbin.

The "expert" interrogated me for four hours each day. Then suddenly he stopped summoning me. For five days he left me alone, on the fifth day I was brought before him again. His first words were:

"Greetings to you from the secretary of the Harbin Community."

"Thank you, how is he?"

I knew that the secretary was ill and bedridden in a hospital in one of the camps. He managed to let me know about his illness through one of the members of a group of traveling entertainers who were moving from camp to camp. In his letter he wrote, among other things, that we will "soon be released and reunited with our loved ones".

His letter was full of hope and faith. Later I learned that he died in the hospital from cancer of the stomach.

On my question on the secretary's well being the Lieut. Colonel answered:

"He is very well, he asked me to tell you not to be too smart with us..."

"I don't understand what he means".

"Its very simple. He told us everything about your activities and confessed to the espionage activities of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish community. His advice to you is to stop being smart and to confess to the anti-revolutionary activities of the Zionist Organizations whose leader you were. So, start talking ...there is no use hiding anything, he told us everything..."

"He could not have confessed to things that never happened. I know that he is sick now and bedridden, and even in this state he would never think of lying or falsely accusing anyone"

"All that he said is written down and signed by him," said the Lieut. Colonel emphatically.

The "expert" on Jewish affairs summoned me several more times. On the last time he said "Its really a pity that you did not heed my advice. You will pay dearly for this. Think again before it's too late".

I never saw him again, and my handling was returned to my former interrogator.

One day, in January of 1947 I was again summoned for interrogation. In the adjacent office I overhear a conversation of two interrogators between themselves. It seems that someone arrived from Moscow; they refer to him as "the guest". Today "the guest" intends to interrogate me. Soon the phone rings in the office where I am, my interrogator picks up the phone: "As you say" he says then turns to me "come!"

We enter the office where "the guest" is. In his usual chair sits my "friend", the Lieut. Colonel. On one of the settees, partially reclining, sits the guest from Moscow, an officer, with the rank of major. The Lieut. Colonel orders "sit!" without looking at me. The Major from the Moscow MG'B, turns to me:

"You are a doctor? You studied in Switzerland? Did you meet any Englishmen while you were there?"

At first I did not comprehend the meaning of his question, what have Englishmen to do with my studies in Switzerland.

"I studied in Switzerland where the population are Swiss..."

"Were there any English there?"

"I don't know, I've seen Swiss there, I rented a room from a Swiss. There were also students of various nationalities, many Russians studied there..."

"And English?" Insists the Major.

"I never met any during the period of my studies..."

In response to my answers the major remarks:

"Zionists always join up with the English..."

On hearing his remarks I thought to myself: "Although you are a Major in the MG'B, but you are a silly fool".

"And since when are you a Zionist? Tell the truth... We know everything about you...everything."

"Yes, I am a Zionist for 45 years, since high school..."

"And when were you in the Soviet Union?"

"Since 1913 I never was in Russia."

"And in 1934, for what reason did you travel to the Soviet Union..."

"I was never in the Soviet Union in my life".

"Are you sure that you are telling the truth?"

"If, according to what you say, you know everything about me, then you must know that neither in 1934 nor at any other time did I visit the Soviet Union..."

"We received this information from your friends the Zionists. Who acted with you against the Soviet Union..."

"Be what may, who ever told you this, was lying..."

The Major whispered something into the ear of the Lieut. Colonel who then orders the guard to remove me from the room. My interrogator brings me to his office and says:

"This is a Major from Moscow...you are in big trouble"

Chapter 6A

On January 11, 1947, the door to my cell opened, the officer who opened it said: "Pack your gear!" This meant that I'm either being transferred to another cell or am going on a prisoner's journey to another prison. Actually I have no need to "pack". I'm ready, always ready. All my belongings are on me and with me. Within fifteen minutes I was shoved into an empty room. Ordered – "undress!" They searched my body and went through my things. I then dressed. They gave me bread, sugar and dried fish – food for four days. Indeed, I am being moved from here, and it seems that it's only me alone, as I don't see any other prisoners around. No one is telling me anything. Where am I being sent? An officer and two soldiers are accompanying me and we are heading for the main gate of the prison. My "documents" are checked – everything is in order. In front of the gate a vehicle is awaiting me, a "black raven"- very quickly we are hurtling through the streets of Sverdlovsk. We arrive at a railway junction, so many rails. We walk on the rails stepping from one rail to another passing one wagon after another. I am tired and hardly drag my feet. At the end of the rails I see a solitary wagon with grated windows. A Stalipin-Stalinist prison wagon. At long last we arrive to this solitary and neglected wagon standing at a side fork of the rails. The officer unlocks the door of the wagon with a key and "invites" me inside, the soldiers shove me into one of the cells, one of them remains with me in the cell. I spread my coat over the bench and lie down. It's cold. I get up and march around the small cell, sit for a while then lie down again. It could be that I am being transported to the capital city, Moscow. The food that I was given, if it can be called food, is to last me for four days – the time it takes to travel to Moscow, also the "Guest" is from Moscow, he probably came to "invite" me there. An officer enters my cell (probably the wagon commander), he asked my name then ordered me to follow him. I told him that I have some belongings and money in my suitcase, he answers: "It will arrive together with you". He puts me into a special cell, which has three tiers of bunks. They lock the cell from the outside. In the corridor stands an armed soldier. Occasionally he peeps into the aperture of my cell. The cell is filthy, the floor and the bunks are covered with remains of food and other garbage. All the cells around are full of prisoners and sometimes more are brought in. While to me, "the important criminal" a Zionist! A separate cell was allocated, and a special guard assigned just for me.

Lunchtime arrived. I sliced a piece of bread, sprinkled it with some sugar and here, I have my "lunch" or "dinner", doesn't really matter which. I want to drink I knock on the door.

"What do you want?"

"I want to drink, can I have a cup of tea?"

"I'll check". Half an hour later the soldier returns:

"There was no hot water at the station... here is some cold water." And he hands me a cup of ice cold water. I drink thirstily and am thankful for this.

This journey was very arduous. I had to make do with bread only. My sugar supply ran out on the first day, the fish was impossible to eat. I did not receive any tea during the entire journey. Twice a day the soldier gave me a cup of cold water through the small aperture of the cell. A visit to the latrine was a most complicated matter. The key to my cell was in the possession of the commander of the wagon, who is not easy to locate when needed. He is either asleep in his cabin or away somewhere, and the soldier cannot take me out of my cell.

For three full days I traveled and suffered in this prison wagon. In one of the stations our stop lasted one hour, I overheard one guard tell another that this station is Kazan. This too is proof that our journey is headed for Moscow. On the fourth day of our journey we arrive at our destination. We are taken out of the wagon. Close by a "black raven" is awaiting me. I just got off the train an officer asked me:

"And where is your gear?"

"I don't know, it was not with me in the wagon...In Sverdlovsk they told me that my suitcase is being placed in another wagon and will arrive together with me..."

He did not say a word, he knew his colleagues very well. I never saw my suitcase again.

The "black raven" is full cramped with prisoners. I have a special cell assigned to me next to the driver. The cell is very narrow, I can move neither to the left nor to the right. I am stuck to my seat facing forward.

Where are we? Where am I being driven to? I have no idea. We drive along the streets of Moscow. I see many "black ravens" passing by on the streets of the capital, in those days, thousands of prisoners were being moved from place to place and in order not to attract the attention of the passing population the blessed word "bread" was painted in white on the outer panel of the vehicle.

Chapter 6B

We arrive at someplace. The "raven" came to a halt. For over an hour we are held in a room by the entrance. Two soldiers are guarding me. Someone approaches and asks: Surname, first name, fathers name, date of arrest. Around us there is a commotion, officers and soldiers running about here and there, the telephone is ringing continuously, about a half an hour later I was brought into a big room which contained one table only, a solid wooden door without any aperture, a wide window without any grating. I do not know where am I, could it be that such are the prisons in Moscow? Very soon they bring me cabbage borscht and cereal. The soldier says:

"You are probably hungry, eat!" He then positioned himself by the door. When he saw that I consumed the food he took the plates and said:

"Satisfied? Tasty? We have good food here" Indeed, to each one his own taste. It's getting dark. I'm still in the room. I wait. Finally, they summon me. They order me to take a mattress, a blanket and other bed items that are lying near the door. We go up the steep stairs to the fourth floor. I am collapsing under the weight of the things I'm carrying. I was deposited into one of the rooms. The light is dim, by this weak light I look around me, the walls and the floor are filthy as well as the bed and the table. There is only one bed, which means that I am in a solitary confinement cell. There is a small grated opening just below the ceiling. The door is locked with a key.

The opening suddenly opens and an outstretched hand gives me a cup of tea with a cube of sugar. However, before I manage to drink the tea the door of the cell opens and a voice orders:

"Gather your belongings!"

I return exactly the same way I came with the mattress and other bed items on my back. We descend one floor after another and again I'm on the ground floor. I return all the bed items and stand and wait. The telephone is ringing continuously. From the conversations I overhear I understand that a mistake occurred, this is not the prison to which they were supposed bring me but to some other prison. Someone made a mistake. The authorities are frantic and hurriedly send me out of this prison. I say goodbye to Lefortovo prison, which housed me for a little while and even honored me with a meal. Our parting, however, would not last a long time and very soon I was to return to this prison again and this time for a period of one whole year...

Again the "black raven" carries me through the streets of the capital. We drove for one hour. In addition to myself a guard accompanied me in the vehicle. We both sit in silence as talking is forbidden. The vehicle stopped, we arrived at our destination. We step out of the "raven" into a dark courtyard. I am led down to the basement level and marched through a long semi-dark corridor. Everything around me is threatening. Suddenly a lightning thought passes through my brain, who knows, maybe here they will do away with me. Maybe this is the place where people disappear. We continue marching, one soldier in front and another behind who hurries me on with the butt of his rifle. A door opens into another corridor, with

doors on both of its sides, cells, one after the other. I am shoved into one of them and the door is locked behind me. The cell is small with no windows, a stone seat is attached to the wall. An officer enters and writes down my personal details, then departs. Within a few minutes another officer enters accompanied by a woman in a white dressing gown holding an electric torch light. She orders me to undress then checks me from head to toe, using the torch light when necessary and without any feeling of embarrassment checks all the cavities of my body, the mouth, the nose, ears and other places... all that in silence, without uttering one word. She is referred to as "doctor". I met many such "doctors" during my stay in the various soviet prisons or work camps who worked for the Stalinist "MG'B". After the check up I was photographed from the front and from the side, then they imprinted my fingerprints, first the whole palm of the hand then each finger separately. Lastly I was put into a small cell where I stayed for three days. Why only three days, I cannot say. Perhaps it was a sort of three days quarantine, or perhaps there were no free places in the other cells. It often happens in Soviet prisons that "all rooms are occupied". On the fourth day I was transferred to another cell which already had two occupants, a soldier who was imprisoned for "treason against the motherland" and a sports instructor for "counter-Soviet activities". Thus I arrived to the Lubyanka prison, famous for its tyranny and cruel treatment of prisoners by the "CHE'KA."

I try not to form any relationship with my two cellmates. Who knows, they could be brooders. The sports instructor, is a communist, a party member, he says that he is "sitting" here because he told an anti-Soviet joke. Well, if jokes are a negative matter in a country and the teller of the joke endangers himself with arrest due to his being a "counter-revolutionary", as in "our" Soviet Russia there are no negative phenomenon, crime does not exist, murder, robbery, drunkenness and other lawlessness' are not permitted to be mentioned or written about. "Our" country is nice and clean.

The food in the Lubyanka prison is not worse than in other Soviet prisons. In general one can say that the food in all the prisons or work camps is just enough to keep you alive but too little to live on.

On the next morning I am summoned for interrogation. In the Lubyanka prison and in other Moscow prisons a prisoner is not called by his full name when he is summoned for interrogation but only by the first letter of his family name and the prisoner is expected to respond. I responded, and was ordered: "alert!" We ascended to the fifth floor. A clerk wrote down my name and the exact time of my arrival, then I was led into the interrogators room.

Chapter 6C

My first interrogation in Moscow. The interrogator – a Lieutenant Colonel of the MG'B, opposite him across the desk sits an officer with the rank of Major. I am instructed to sit on a small round table in a corner of the room.

"Name? Family name?" the Lieutenant Colonel begins, then turns to the major and says:

"He is an important Jewish leader...a Zionist". The major gives me a brief look.

"Do you know where you are?" continues the Lieut. Colonel then answers his own question "In the Ministry of State Security! Don't forget this and answer all questions with candor. Do you have relatives in the Soviet Union?"

"I had, but it's over 20 – 25 years that I have not heard from them".

"Where do they live?"

"At that time they lived in Leningrad and Moscow".

"Brothers, sisters?" It was obvious that he knew about my relatives more than I did.

"In what line of work are they?"

"I don't know".

"Didn't they write to you?"

"No we did not correspond"

"What is the address of your relatives?"

"I don't know, I don't even know if they are still living"

"You know very little about your relatives, don't you?"

"What can I do? The conditions of our lives caused this rift, like living on two different planets."

The interrogator asked me about my brother, I gave the same answer. I did not know then that my two brothers were not alive. The interrogator knows this, of course, but pretends that they are still living.

"Do you want to meet them?"

"I would very much want to meet them, but not as a prisoner."

"If so, tell us everything you know in honesty, Then you will be permitted to meet them". The interrogator promises.

On hearing his words, I smile ironically.

"You don't believe me? Pity, There's nothing easier for us to release you, if you tell us all you know ... and you know much...very much. Think about it. Be a friend to yourself and don't bear a grudge against us..." the interrogator concludes smilingly.

The interrogation is over. I was returned to my cell. It seems that this interrogator is not a rudimentary personality, all during the interrogation various people, officers, typists translators enter the room giving him papers to read and sign.

In the following interrogation he said to me:

"Let's agree between ourselves now, so that I do not have to repeat this each time: whenever someone enters my office you are obliged to stand up!"

I nodded my head in agreement, whoever entered the office I stood up. A major entered, I stood up, he gestured to me with his hand: "sit" and left the office. A few minutes the same major entered again, I stood up. He turned to me:

"You will drain all your strength if you stand up every time."

"These are my orders." The major whispered something to the interrogator, when he left the officer the Lieut. Colonel said to me:

"In the future you stand up only when I stand up."

I am tortured with interrogations daily, except on Sundays. On this day Liublianka stops all activities. On the day of rest only arrests are being performed. One Sunday a new prisoner was put into my cell. He was a student in the faculty of history at the University of Moscow. He was arrested in the morning and at noon was put into my cell. For some unknown reason he came to me. He asked me for how long am I imprisoned here, for what reason, he then whispered into my ear:

"Are you a Jew?"

"Yes"

"I'm also Jewish."

A Jewish student, he was the son of parents who were party members, old Bolsheviks. His father was a lecturer at the institute for "red" professors; in 1937 during the period when Yezhov ran amok he was arrested together with other relatives and executed. His mother was sent to one of the cities in the Urals for responsible party work where she got sick and died within two years. Only their son and his late mother's sister remained living in their spacious apartment in Moscow. One of the senior officers of the MG"B coveted this place and, illegally, took possession of one of its rooms, from where he tormented the student constantly in order to evict him from the apartment altogether. The student appealed to the central committee of the party and the senior officers' wish was not granted. The officer then resorted to a method proven to be always successful, "informing". The student was arrested and imprisoned in Liublianka. During the first interrogation the student told them of the officers' intrigues to get the apartment but to no avail. The interrogator told him that his case is not serious and he would probably be sentenced to about 3 years in prison only, under the paragraph "Dangerous social element". Nearly everyone can be stuck with this paragraph in the Soviet Union, for many reasons like: knowing people from abroad, chance meeting with foreigners and conversing with them, praising items manufactured abroad, sympathizing the West. For all these "crimes" one can be charged under this paragraph "Dangerous social element" and be sentenced to 5 – 7 years in prison.

Chapter 6D

During one of the interrogations I was questioned about Birobijan.

"Because of people like you, Birobijan, the Jewish Autonomous Republic does not exist," aspersed the Lieut. Colonel, then turning to the Major sitting across the desk, he adds: "Imagine, you give the Jews everything, you tell them go settle the land, establish a Soviet Jewish Autonomous Republic, live there as you see fit... and what do you think? They don't go, they don't want to go, and those who did go, returned. What a fertile and rich territory this Birobijan is! What regions!" The Lieut. Colonel spreads a map and shows the Major where Birobijan is situated, then takes a booklet browses through it and reads: "Birobijan is sparsely populated and the number of Jews living there are not more than 1000 to 1500 people. They don't come. But, if it will be declared that they are permitted to go to the Land of Israel, they

will all go! What a people they are" said the Lieut. Colonel. Then after a small break continues:

"They only believe in what is theirs. During the days of the revolution, I and two friends, once, lost contact with our unit, tired and hungry we tried to find our way, we arrived at some small town... we entered one dwelling which was Jewish, one of the three of us was Jewish too, we were young then only 19 – 20 years of age, our Jewish colleague whispered to me: 'just wait, soon we'll receive all the best that is in the house' he entered into a conversation with the owner of the house in their language, and what do you think? We were immediately fed and watered; they even gave us food for the way. The Jews, wherever they live, keep institutions where they feed their poor and hungry brothers, homes for their lame ones, everything for their own kin... what a people! Then pointing at me, "And here is one of the leaders of the Jews, who established eating places and hospitals, all for Jews."

He shows a page out of a thick volume to the major. "Why didn't you want to go to Birobijan, why did you fight against the Birobijan program?" Asks the Lieut. Colonel threateningly. "I was not in the Soviet Union and did not take part in any deliberations on Birobijan." "You want the Land of Israel, do you? I promise you, that you'll never achieve this or ever see this happen," threatens the Lieut. Colonel. "Perhaps I will not live to see this happen, but my children and grandchildren will and how will".

"You hear this?" the Lieut. Col. Shouts. "Because of people like this the Birobijan program failed" then he turns to me "You miserable fascist!"

For one long hour the interrogator did not utter a word. He probably had to calm his nerves, the major too. They sat and nervously leafed through their papers. They did not speak nor look in my direction. I remained sitting on the round table and pondered. I thought of the day when my children will win the right to settle in the Land of Israel. Another half hour went by, the interrogator turns to me and asks: "Were you a member of the Zionist-Fascist party?" "Zionist-Fascist?" I ask in amazement "such a party never existed" I answer firmly. "Never existed! You miserable scoundrel!" The Lieut. Col. Shouts heatedly, walks to the book case, extracts a notebook, leafs through the pages, then reads aloud: "In fire and blood Judah fell. In fire and blood it will arise! So said the Zionist-Fascist leader Jabotinsky! You knew him?"

"Zabotinsky was never a fascist, nor did a Zionist-Fascist party ever exist, these words have no connection to fascism nor are they Zabotinsky's". The interrogator jumps from his place and shout's "Well what do you say about this scoundrel? He's lying without batting an eyelid! Do you know Zabotinsky?" "Of course I know him, I met him personally, and even read his books and articles".

"When have you last met him?" "The last time I met him was about forty years ago".

This reply shook him up completely, the lieut. Col. lost all control of himself, He started swearing and shouting obscenities, then picked up the telephone and shouted in it an order that I should be removed immediately out of his room. On the next morning the interrogator opens the interrogation by asking me:

"How are you?"

"Not bad"

"Is the food good?"

"So, so".

The Lieut. Col. Is not happy with my answer. He gives me a sheet of paper on which three photographs of three people are pasted in a row.

"Do you know these people?"

"No, I don't".

"Look properly, which of them do you know?"

"I don't know anyone of them".

"The one in the middle, him too you do not know?"

"No, I don't"

"Look properly, he knows you very well".

I look at the picture again.

"No, I don't know this person".

"You know him, and how," shrieks the interrogator. "It could be that I met him some time in the past, but I cannot recognize this picture".
 "Do you recognize the name?"
 "Yes, I recall a young person named M".
 "But the picture in the middle, isn't it of M?"
 "By this picture, I do not recognize him, but it's possible..."
 "Yes that's it – he's also a Zionist... one of your people, he knows you very well... he also, like you, was arrested and sentenced to 15 years. He confessed to everything and told us that you and your community sent him to the Soviet Union to spy for England." The interrogator extracts another notebook, studies it then continues: " Well do you remember?"
 " I remember very vaguely a person named M', but I never met him and know him slightly..."
 "But here, according to his statement..." shouts the interrogator.
 "What statement?"
 "You don't remember? I'll remind you" yells the interrogator triumphantly, and reads from the paper:
 "In 1922 the Jewish community sent me to the Soviet Union for espionage purposes. By order of the chairman of the community I received 2000 Yen from the community fund. I traveled twice to the Soviet Union in the service of the community – Do you remember now?"
 Asks the interrogator.
 "Comrade lieut. Col. The only thing I can tell you is that these statements are complete fabrications and made by an insane person".
 "When did you see M'?"
 "I remember that during the years 1918-1919 there was a person in Harbin by the name of M', but I had no dealings with him or ever met him".
 "What did he deal in?"
 "If I remember correctly he either was a clerk or a salesman in a store".
 "And did you know Dr. Adler of Odessa?"
 "No."
 "How is that possible, did you not, or your community, to be exact, give M' a letter addressed to Dr. Adler, the English spy..."
 "All these are pure fabrications, I do not know in what state of mind M' was when he gave these statements, perhaps he went insane?"
 "Well, I want you to know this... M' was arrested in 1937 and sentenced to 15 years in prison for spying. He knows very well all that's going on and these are his statements about the Zionist spying activities for the English..."
 "Pure fabrications and nothing else" I answer. "I request to meet M' face to face."
 "Fine, we'll arrange a meeting," promises the interrogator. "You don't worry, we'll arrange this meeting".
 He repeats.

Chapter6

E

During the following weeks I reminded them several times about the requested meeting with 'M, each time they said "OK, OK we'll arrange the meeting", but the meeting never took place. Who knows in what circumstances they extracted this declaration from the unfortunate M'.

One day I was summoned for interrogation in the early hours of the morning. When I came to the interrogator he told me to follow him to the director of the interrogation department. We marched along the long corridor of the MG"B. We hardly made twenty steps when out of one of the crevices of the corridor a person, whom I've met many times previously in Harbin, stepped out for a short moment and looked at me. When he saw me he quickly stepped back into the crevice from where he came. It seemed strange to me to see a person walking alone along the corridors of the MG"B without any guards. It immediately became clear to me the work this person was doing, both here and in Harbin. They hid him in the crevice to confirm my identity as he knew me from Harbin, then he participated in all my lectures and Jewish meetings. I am not interested in meeting this Soviet agent. We entered the office of the director of interrogations. The director is sitting by his desk; he too carries the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. By the window sits a young woman, a typist. The interrogator presents me to the director.

"I know, I know him," says the director "Are you Russian?"
 "I am Jewish"

"Yes, yes, I know, but you are of Russian extraction, you were born in Russia, no? Where were you born?"

"In the Chernigov province".

"That is to say, in the Ukraine... I am from the Ukraine too," says the director with false happiness. "Why don't you want to tell us anything? You are a gold mine to us, a gold mine... you know a lot about Zionist activities, their cooperation with the United States and Britain. You also know the Japanese politics! So why do you refuse to help us and tell us all that you know? Aren't you a Russian, like me, aren't the white houses of the Ukraine dear to you, the sky of the Ukraine, the Dnieper river...isn't this your motherland!"

My reply to the heart rendering appeal of this "Cheka'ist" was: "I know nothing about all the things you mentioned. I am being accused of events that never happened and you want me to sign my name to these lies". The director interrupted my words:

"Don't lie! Are you looking for a stick?"

I repeat what I said previously that all that they are accusing me of and demanding that I confess to are nothing but lies and fabrications.

"Let's not speak about the past... Tell me about yourself and you're Zionist activities. You are a Zionist, aren't you?"

"Yes I am a Zionist..."

"And not just a someone coming from the ranks, but a Zionist leader" says the director emphatically. "Tell me what tasks were you assigned by London".

"London did not assign me any tasks and not to anyone else" I reply in the same emphatic manner.

"Isn't Weizman in London?"

"I don't know where he is nor do I see what he has to do with this matter. The Zionist Federation does not interfere in the politics of any country, its sole activity and interests are problems pertaining to Jewish national affairs".

"But Zionism is banned in the Soviet Union, didn't you know that?"

"I know that Zionists are hounded and jailed in the Soviet Union but what has this to do with me? I was a Zionist before the Soviet Union was established, before Bolshevism; I never was in the Soviet Union nor worked there. So what are my crimes or sins in that I worked for the good of my people?"

"So, I see, you don't want to tell us anything", concludes the director.

"Please ask me questions, and I will tell you all I know. I never was involved in any secret activity".

"Look" says the director with a serious expression on his face "When a petty thief or a burglar is stubborn and does not confess to his crimes, we beat him a little then he confesses. We will not have to use this method with a person like you. Hopefully we will quickly find a mutual understanding... But I must say you are not a patriot, you do not want to give us any help...what should we do? Don't blame us but only yourself. I just want you to know that stronger people than you succumbed and confessed and you too will eventually succumb to us". Concluded the director. During all this time the typist clicked away on her typewriter recording every word.

My interrogator escorted me back to his room then I was returned to my cell. From the threats made to me by the director of interrogations I understood that my prison conditions would very soon turn for the worse. And indeed, so they were, very swiftly.

On the next day I was summoned to my interrogator. His first question was:

"Did you ever see our underground train?"

"No, I was driven several times across Moscow, but each time on the 'on the Black Raven'..."

"There is no underground train like ours in the whole world...but you won't see it very soon... and the fault is yours, we tried to persuade you to talk in a positive manner but you are stubborn. Now your existence will be bitter!"

On saying these words he left the room and immediately another officer entered and told me cheerfully:

"Your case is now in my hands. My name is Major N'. You are being transferred to a military prison, the conditions there are not as good as here with us. But you yourself, by your behavior and your refusal to confess to your crimes against the Soviet Union, caused this to happen...me, you will not easily lead astray... I am an old CHEKA'ist" That's the way he introduced himself to me. He then telephoned and called in a guard to accompany me back to my cell.

At nine-thirty in the evening, lights out time when all the prisoners must enter their bunks. In the Lubianka prison there is a regulation requiring the prisoners to keep their hands on the blanket and never under it. When a guard sees a prisoner covering his hands by the blanket he immediately starts knocking on the door or even enters the cell and wakes the guilty prisoner and demands that he keep his hands "according to the regulations".

I was lying in my bunk, and could not fall asleep, pondering what's in store for me in the other prison where I am to be transferred. There are many prisons in Moscow, some of them, as I heard from other prisoners who experienced them, have a most brutal regime. One prison particularly, known for its infamy, situated in one of the former monastery buildings and has an especially cruel regime. Who knows, perhaps I will be transferred there too, or perhaps to an even worse place. The new interrogator said – to a "military prison".

That night I did not shut an eyelid. At two o'clock after midnight the cell door opens, an officer enters calls out my name and orders: "Collect your gear!"

I was lead out of the cell, to a "Black Raven" and shuttled again through the streets of Moscow. We arrive, enter, I immediately recognize the place – I was returned to Lefortovo prison.

It was March 1947. I was imprisoned in a cell holding a single person. Cells of this type are said to be intended for "very important" prisoners. The cell is small. Just below the ceiling, on the wall facing outside, is a small barred hatch. All, in accordance with "regulations". A cot is attached to one of the walls, by the opposite wall stands a small table. In a corner is a sink with a faucet and next to it stands a toilet bowl. A cell with all the "conveniences..." The Lefortovo prison has a toilet bowl in every cell, in this way they avoid having to take the prisoners to toilets outside of the cell. There are no chairs and one can sit only on the bed.

During my transfer process to this prison they took my eyeglasses away from me. One day without saying a word they just took the glasses off my nose. The next morning I told one of the guards that without my glasses I cannot see anything. He wrote this down, on the next day I repeated my request, the guard remarked: "Your interrogator must confirm in writing or at least by telephone that you are permitted to get your glasses back. Remind him of this when you'll see him the next time"

That same evening I was summoned for interrogation. I asked the interrogator to give the necessary instructions for my glasses to be returned to me. "What! You have not received the eyeglasses yet" he asked with an incredulous look on his face.

"They are waiting for your instructions either in writing or by telephone" "Alright I will instruct the guard"

"Thank you" I replied, believing that the glasses will actually be returned to me. But several days passed and the glasses were still not returned. Every day I reminded the guard of this, but the answer was the same: He needs the interrogators instructions while the interrogator promises to give the necessary instructions. After a week I told the interrogator that I still did not receive the glasses and the lack of them is most difficult for me. "They have not returned your glasses yet? Such inefficiency" the interrogator replies in a mocking tone.

I understood that they are molesting me so I stopped talking about this matter anymore. Two weeks have gone by, I still did not receive the eyeglasses. During one of the interrogations, the interrogator hands me the protocol of this session for my signature. "I see nothing without my eyeglasses and I cannot read this paper" He reaches into his drawer and hands me a pair of eyeglasses. "These are my eyeglasses" I shouted happily. I read the protocol then without taking off the eyeglasses said to the interrogator: "My answers to your questions were not recorded correctly... I did not say any of these words"

The interrogator approached me, took the glasses and returned them to the drawer of his table".

Once in two weeks we can take a book from the prison library. A cart carrying several tens

of books stops in front of every cell and the prisoner can choose one book out of it. I chose the book "Brides Fair" to read. I took the book with the hope that one of these days my eye glasses will be returned to me. However to my disappointment I changed books every two weeks without ever reading any of them.

Only after 42 days were the eyeglasses returned to me. I was overjoyed, I can read books again. I read days on end without stopping. Among the books were some that I found most interesting especially books of classical Russian and foreign literature.

In May 1947 I was called for a night interrogation for the first time. At nine thirty in the evening, I climbed up to my cot, undressed myself and fell asleep. About half an hour later I was awakened: "Attention!" and led by the guard to interrogation. The interrogator is sitting by his table. The room is shrouded in semidarkness. I sit in my regular place by the round table in the corner of the room. The interrogator is silent, rummaging through papers on the table, sometimes taking a book and reading something. The clock in the corridor chimes midnight. He does not utter a word. At two o'clock he gets up and goes to the corridor and brings himself a cup of tea. Then again reads something from the book, at times he throws a glance at me. Suddenly I hear him bang his hand on his table and with a berating tone he shouts: "No sleeping!" I do not respond, he shouts again, "No sleeping!" "I'm not sleeping..."

In this way I passed the night, a night with no words spoken. At six in the morning I was returned to my cell. I quickly undressed and lay down. I barely fell asleep when the prison guard started knocking on the door:

"Wake up call! Get up!"

"I did not sleep the whole night!"

"I said get up!" yells the guard threateningly. I get up and dress. My need for sleep is overwhelming I sit on my cot and doze. Again a loud knock on the door "No sleeping" I rub my eyes; rinse my face with cold water. Breakfast is brought – Indigestible gruel and a weak cup of tea, I eat sitting on the bed as there is no other place to sit, then I began to doze again, another knock on the door: "No sleeping!" after several minutes a sergeant enters the cell and severely reprimands me: "Don't you understand that it is forbidden to sleep during the day?" He lifted my cot and folded it against the wall. I sat on the toilet bowl. The guard knocks on the door: "Where are you?" he cannot see me through the aperture on the door and forbids me to sit on the toilet bowl. I have to stand, leaning on the edge of the table, suddenly my legs give way and I slide to the floor. "It is forbidden to sit on the floor! Get up" the guard yells through the door opening. The rest of the day I spend standing on my feet. I did not eat anything. At nine thirty in the evening, lights out. The cot is put down, thank God. I immediately lie down and cover myself with the grey, rough, prickly prison blanket. I fall into a slumber. Half an hour later they wake me up: "Attention! Get up". Again I'm led to the interrogator. I hoped that this interrogation will end at midnight, but it again lasted up to six in the morning. I passed eighteen nights like this, eighteen sleepless nights and in the mornings my cot is folded against the wall. This is one of the harshest tortures implemented by the Soviets in their prisons, While, every morning, when I am brought for interrogation, the interrogator asks me viciously: "Well, how do you feel?" "Excellent!" I answer in a bold voice. The "excellent" infuriates the interrogator. One night – during the period of the torturous nights, this one was the eleventh night, after I answered my usual response to his questions, he came to my table looked at me with blood-shot and eyes asked with fury "Will you talk, or not?" "What about?"

"About everything, if not you will rot in prison...talk!" He then showered a torrent of curses over me. I remain silent. He came nearer to me with clenched fists. Automatically in self protection I jumped from my chair and cringed against the wall. The interrogator stepped back and shouts loudly: "What are you jumping for? Do you really think that I will lift a hand on a piece of scum like you?"

One night, at a late hour after midnight, the director of the interrogations department enters the interrogation room. He was an interrogator who interrogated me at the Lubyanka prison. When he noticed me he approached my current interrogator and said: "I know him..." then he turned to me and added: "You are still keeping silent, still refuse to speak?"

"I am answering all the questions truthfully. I will never lie, as they want me to do, I am being questioned days and nights, and many pages were written in my name. This is a sign that I am answering all the questions...I answer with what is known to me, and this is the truth..." "Except for your name and family name you did not tell us anything...and you have to tell us the truth... no one asked you to lie...and if you lie – you will be thrashed. So, will you talk or not?" demanded the director.

"I told you and will continue to tell you about things that really occurred and not on what the interrogators demand that I tell, like, for instance, the confession on the spying activities of the Zionist Federation. Also the acts of sabotage that they were supposed to have carried out in the Soviet Union. This is complete nonsense, nothing of this sort ever happened and I will not sign any documents that assert this... even if the interrogator demands that". "Listen, doctor, you do not want to admit to what your colleagues have already admitted to. You too admit to this and you will be freed immediately, there's nothing simpler for us, however, if you still retain your present attitude we will be compelled to resort to force..."

A shiver ran through my body, but I replied: "What can I do, if you feel that it's necessary to use physical force on me, I will withstand this, too."

The director jumps up from his place and shouts: "We do not beat people... Where you come from, Japan or China, they beat and torture the prisoners. In the Soviet Union we do not do this. Why do you make up such stories?"

"But you said 'resort to force'"

"In your China you have stopped understanding the Russian language..." rebukes the director. He again gets up from his place, whispers something into the ear of the interrogator, then, leaves the room.

A week later the director of the interrogations division of the M"GB, himself, appears in the interrogations office. Upon his entry the interrogator springs up to attention. The director sits down on a settee near me, just the small round table stands between us.

"Well, well... I'm very well acquainted with your case. It's a pity that you don't want to help us. Are you really so hostile to the Soviet people?"

"I was never hostile to the Russian people and I never fought against the Soviet regime. I acted only for the sake of my people, for the rebirth of our national identity"

"For the sake of Zionism" emphasizes the head.

"Yes, for the sake of Zionism". The director holds onto my words:

"Isn't this the crux of the matter, I see that we found a common denominator. You are a wise person... so enough wiggling about. You must tell us everything. Your activities were most diverse and you were a Zionist leader, you are hesitant to talk about this, so are many others, but in writing they write everything. Perhaps you too would like to write? Fine with me, I'll give you paper, pen and ink, and start writing; you'll get as much paper as you want, hundred pages, two, three hundred? You can also write in your cell...I will permit that" he concludes festively.

"There is nothing to write about on hundreds of pages?"

"Write about the Zionists, on the assignments you used to receive from London, from your central committee, did they not act in the service of the English? Write about everything, everything. We know about the sabotage activities of the Zionist Youth Organizations, write about them, encourages the director.

"I cannot write about this," I answer "I cannot write about this as nothing of this sort has ever happened... it is all a lie..."

"Think again about this. You'll get as much paper as you want", he then turns to the interrogator and says: "Give him paper and he will write."

"As you say" answers the interrogator. The director leaves the room.

"The interrogator turns to me, "you heard that? Think it over. Do you know with whom you just spoke?"

This very senior officer, the director of the interrogations division, who suggested that I "write", was executed in 1953, when after Stalin's death details were uncovered on the trial of the Jewish doctors, that he interrogated those by applying "forbidden methods".

That same evening, it was our turn to go to the bath house. The bath-house is situated in the basement of the jail house and I had to drag on my back the heavy mattress and my blanket from my cell on the fifth floor all the way down to the basement, for fumigation, I nearly collapsed under the burden of this weight and had to stop several times on the way. The guard prods and hurries me, with the mattress on my back, and even kicks me with his

boots. It's good that the bathe and fumigations takes place only once in twelve days.

Chapter

7

C

I frequently wake up at night to the sounds of yelling. Heart rendering yells suddenly pierce the silence of the night then come sounds of moans and groans. Who is yelling? Who is crying so bitterly, people who have gone insane? Beaten and tortured?

One day I was summoned for interrogation. This time I was led to one of the rooms at the far end of the corridor. By the table sits my interrogator. I sit on the seat pointed out to me. The interrogator does not speak. I sit silently. We sit this way for half an hour, without uttering a word. Suddenly I hear a yell coming from the other side of the thin partition separating our room from the next, and sounds of beating by a leather strap or a rubber whip: "Why are you whipping me? What do you want from me?" someone shouts, with a Georgian or Tatar accent. Then again sounds of whipping. I am overcome with fear, but I do not lose my composure and try to remain sitting as if I do not hear anything and am not upset by the sounds coming from the next room. The interrogator is watching me from the sides of his eyes and is trying to estimate my reaction, but my face does not reveal anything. Finally he looks at me and says:

"Do you hear this? This will also be your fate" then adds "you carrion, you!"

No, I never did go through this "fate"; on me they tried more subtle methods. But nevertheless once in a while I was "honored" with some beatings. Once during an interrogation I needed to go to the toilet, the guard that accompanied me entered the toilet with me, suddenly he started shouting: "Finish!" then hit me twice with the butt of his rifle. "Why are you hitting me?" I responded angrily. "Shut up! Don't talk or I'll bury you right here, you carrion". When I returned to the interrogators office I asked him whether a guard is permitted to beat a prisoner. "What happened?" asked the interrogator. I told him. He did not reply. "It is inconceivable" I thought to myself "that anyone, be he either senior or junior is permitted to beat a prisoner who was not sentenced to punished"

A new interrogator was assigned to me. He started from the beginning: "Let's try the positive approach... Tell me everything, here and now, and then perhaps within several days you shall go free. Do you think that the Soviet authorities want to punish you? On the contrary, we appreciate people like you. You lived in China and Japan and where did it get you – to the prison! Here, with us you would have reached an important position... Tell us everything and you shall go free. At worst you will be sentenced to a five year term in camp. You could work there as a doctor...So, start talking" the new interrogator encourages me.

"I think that there is nothing I can add to what I told already. To invent stories and to tell lies, I do not agree. Ask me questions and I shall answer you!"

This interrogator, of Ukrainian origin, summons me every day, but for ten days did not ask me any significant question, most of the time he told me stories about kolkhozes, and about the good conditions of the members living there, how happy they are and of the greatness of Stalin, who is loved and admired by all the peoples of the Soviet Union.

One day I was summoned by him at noon time. His first question was:

"Did you eat lunch?"

"No"

He picked up the telephone and requested that food be brought to me. At first I became alarmed and a thought passed my mind that perhaps he wants to poison me, I heard a lot about various methods of eliminating people in Soviet prisons. For himself he requested a glass of tea and for me a whole meal, soup, beef with accompaniments, bread, butter and stewed fruit.

And why a meal, suddenly? I thought to myself, is he trying to bribe me? He then places a packet of cigarettes on the table and a box of matches. "No thank you, I don't smoke". "Take one anyway, you might feel like smoking in your cell, sometimes smoking improves the mood"

All this treatment was highly suspicious in my mind. I finished eating, the interrogator phoned and a soldier came and removed the plates and then the interrogation starts:

"From where did you know that there is religious oppression in the Soviet Union? Here is your comment on this subject"

"When did I say this" I ask incredulously.

"Doesn't matter, you said it"
"It does matter, citizen interrogator, it is important when and what I exactly said".
"I take it then that you do not want to answer this question" concludes the interrogator.
"Citizen Interrogator, you obviously are referring to things I said twenty five years ago... I request that you read to me what I said".

I remembered that some time in 1921 religious oppression did increase in the Soviet Union and some citizens rights were revoked from ministers representing various religions. As a result a Russian journalist interviewed some public figures in Harbin, among them me, who were asked to give their opinion on this matter. I asked the interrogator to read aloud, or to show me what I said then. When the interrogator saw that I refused to answer, he extended a newspaper to me and said angrily "read!"- I read. And this is approximately what I said at that time:

It is difficult to understand how a state who has proclaimed freedom of speech, press and conscience – can persecute people for their personal opinions and beliefs.

The interrogator looked at me and asked:
"From where did you know that the Soviet Union was persecuting people for their religious beliefs?"

"Every one knew... people coming out of the Soviet Union talked about this, the press wrote..."

"In what newspapers?"

"In all the papers...The Polish papers, Yugoslavia, France, England, United States..."

"It's all a lie..." The interrogator interrupts my sentence "There was never any oppression of any religion in the Soviet Union nor the rights of any minister of any religion were ever revoked...The people themselves closed down the churches because they had no need for them anymore, but, if anyone wanted to believe in any religion or God – let him do so. If he wants to pray he can pray to his hearts content, if he's crazy enough for that... everything that was written about this is nothing but a deception and a lie...For example, take me, I live with my elderly mother, above her bed hangs a religious icon, what can I do to her? If I take this nonsense away, it will destroy her life, that's the way she was brought up, all her life she was guided by her stupid belief in God, mumbling prayers...what should I do to her, so be it, let her hang this icon of God, of the Satan, the demon its all the same" The interrogator concluded his speech.

At the end of the interrogation the interrogator reads the protocol which he compiled and hands it to me for my signature. The protocol was written in the form of questions and answers and on every answer written the prisoner must put his signature. For the number of answers the same number of signatures must be affixed.

My answers to his question "from where did you know that the Soviet Union was persecuting people for their religious beliefs" he wrote under the question "Did you have any contact with America?"

"I never said any of these things, I protest very strongly"
"But you said that you read about the persecutions in American newspapers" he said with a cunning smile.

"I said people coming from the Soviet Union talked about this and it was also written in newspapers, Polish, French, American..."

"Aren't postal communications – a form of contact?" The interrogator asked cheekily.

"This means, citizen interrogator, that by reading an English newspaper, you are carrying on a contact with England?"

"I did not say that"

"You did not say it but this is what you wrote... I will not sign this protocol..."

I did not sign this protocol nor many others because of the words the interrogators tried to link to me, things that I never thought of saying, words, that for their own reasons they tried to associate to me. There are rumors that at times the signatures of prisoners appear on protocols without them even aware of it, that experts are being employed for this specific purpose. The MG"B interrogators receive a special bonus for extracting a confession from the prisoners for crimes that the prisoners are charged with and that is why they do everything possible to convince the prisoner to confess without using more forceful methods. The living conditions of these interrogators are very good. Their salary is high and they get a bonus for every additional star on their uniform which they receive for night interrogations and confessions. Once, during a heart to heart revelation, the interrogator told me that in Moscow they have the best hospital in the city at their disposal. And every one of them has a summer

home near the capital.

After some time I was transferred to another cell. A cell, for two people. As soon as I move into the cell my cellmate says to me: "I am very happy that you were transferred here...it was done according to my request...I was alone for two weeks, and the loneliness overcame me. I asked the interrogator to transfer somebody to my cell, but the person they transferred was an ignorant farmer, I could not stand his presence. I again requested the interrogator to transfer a cultured person to my cell with whom I could converse on literature and art. And so, yesterday the ignoramus was moved from here and you came instead of him. I am very happy"

I was suspicious of this person, perhaps he was a "brooder", and decided to be very cautious. He wanted to know who I am, where did I come from and for how long are they interrogating me. He told me his story. In 1920 he escaped from Soviet Russia. Lately he was living with his family in the American sector of Berlin. One evening he visited a theater in the Russian sector of the city. Near the theater he was arrested, jailed and within a week was flown to Moscow. It is already four months that he is confined in Lefortovo. He is being charged for espionage because in West Berlin he accidentally met a Georgian in a coffee shop who allegedly was a spy.

On the day following my transfer to his cell he was summoned by the interrogator. His interrogations are nearing completion and the interrogator says that at most he will be sentenced to a five year term.

"Very strange, only five years for espionage?" this thought passes through my brain. "Something's wrong here"

My cellmate was an educated person. Every day we speak for hours on literature, art, music and related subjects, things on the pinnacle of world knowledge. In the evenings we play the card game "Damka". One day my cellmate returns to the cell from his interrogation very irritated and without uttering a word climbed onto his bed and lay down, I was reading a book at that time and, of course, did not ask him what was wrong. Fifteen minutes later he turned to me and said: "I respect you very much and am very happy that you are my cellmate, but I have one request to you: Let us not discuss politics or matters concerning the Soviet Union anymore...We speak about the good and the bad on these matters, however I think it is best we do not discuss them anymore, I implore you"... he concluded emotionally.

"As far as I remember, we never discussed political matters between us nor am I too eager to talk about these matters myself".

"Yes, also about our private affairs or your specific case, it is better we do not discuss them"

I understood immediately what bothered this unfortunate person, it is most probable that at his interrogation he was ordered to try to extract information from me and pass it over to them. Within a week he was called again for interrogation and was never returned to our cell. Most likely his interrogation was completed and he was transferred to another cell.

Chapter

7

D

My interrogators are hardening their attitude towards me. The interrogations are getting more and more tedious. Every day they are trying to pin all kinds of absurd charges against me. They read to me the testimony's of two members of the "Brith-Trumpeldor" in Harbin, reporting on "sabotage" activities carried out by this organization, which supposedly dispatched into the Soviet Union people for purposes of spying and sabotage, and at the head of all these activities stood no other but me – "The head of all the Zionists", one of these men also said that two of the Rabbi's of Harbin took part in these anti-Soviet activities. "And do you know I?" The interrogator asks. "No I do not remember anybody with this name..." "But he knows you very well...he is a Zionist, he operated together with you and calls you the leader..."

"I do not know him" I repeated. "Try to remember, It was you who sent him into the Soviet Union. I admitted to everything and is now serving a prison term...do you want to meet him?" the interrogator asked, smirking slyly.

"Willingly, but you never carry out your promises. You promised to arrange a meeting, face to

face with some person who accused me of all kinds of falsehoods, maybe he did this due to ill health. Three times you promised but you never carried this out." "Which means, you do not believe these facts?" "How do you expect me to believe these insane charges" I protested.

My interrogators rotate amongst themselves. One day I again am interrogated by my old acquaintance, from Lubianka prison. When I entered his room he feigned cheerfulness. "Hello, how are you? You're still alive? You are still keeping silent and still don't want to open your mouth?"

A pity, we know everything about the espionage activities of the Zionists against the Soviet Union, everything is wide open and clear to us, even if you do not want to admit it, we know who and what you are. Do you want me to read to you our appraisal on your personality?". I keep silent.

"Do you want? I'll read it to you". "I have no need for this."

"No, no, it is very interesting. Listen" says the interrogator in a voice of authority. He began to read loudly a report of my character that someone has written back in 1933, and what was written there? "A talented spokesman and lecturer, influential among the inhabitants and governmental circles..."

"The Russian immigrants association and their leaders are concerned about his influence and are forced to take his opinions and that of the Jewish community whose head he is, into account for many years..." further on the report reads as follows: "A very cautious person in his political activities...He never takes part in general meetings of the immigrants or in any political demonstrations that are carried out by the Russian immigrants and the Japanese authorities" The interrogator read every word with emphasis and it was clear that he did not read everything but chosen parts only from a document that was prepared by the Soviet secret police in Harbin. When he finished reading and looked at me, I smiled. Well, "Well? Every thing is correct, isn't it" He asks arrogantly.

"Your informer who wrote this paper does not understand anything at all. All that he said about the pro Japanese attitude that the Jewish community and the Zionists were supposed to have adopted are pure rubbish... the Jewish community in Harbin, or any other place for that matter, and the Zionists did not deal in political matters but only in matters concerning themselves, cultural, economical and national Jewish. Political matters were never discussed. All the Jews living there were either Soviet citizens or Polish or Lithuanian or Stateless. The information that you possess is very meager, citizen Major".

The interrogator hands me a typed paper that was torn of some pad, he folds off the top part of the paper so that I could not see what was written there and orders: "Read!"

In the lower half that was open to me I read that the Jewish community was dealing in espionage for Japan and America. The paper was undersigned by the Deputy Minister for Internal Affairs, Markolov (Later, in 1953 he was executed, together with other "traitors").

"Well, did you read? Do you see who wrote this?"

"Yes I see, but nevertheless this is a lie and an abhorrent libel"

"Now talk, tell me how you and your Zionist community acted in favor of the Japanese" Demands the interrogator.

But I stay silent, what could I answer to a question that was asked of me for the hundredth time.

"Start talking, but tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth".

"We did not act in favor of the Japanese, neither the community nor me, and this is the whole truth"

"Did you give money to the Japanese?"

"What money? to whom?"

"Did you not pay taxes?" Yells the Interrogator.

"Of course we paid...everyone pays taxes"

"What taxes did you pay?"

"Income taxes, Taxes for dwellings"

"And the money, for what purpose was it used, do you know?" Yells the interrogator loudly.

"To finance their conflict against us, to prepare for war against the Soviet Union"

"How can that be? Were you not allies with the Japanese" I answer quietly. "You even signed a pact of neutrality and non belligerence with them".

The interrogator rose from his place and started to shout at me threateningly. "This does not concern you... this is politics, and if it is necessary we can make a pact even with Satan himself ... and it has nothing to do with you". "But taxes were paid by everyone, even Soviet citizens paid Land Taxes, income taxes and tyaxes for dwellings"

Again the interrogator started yelling: "There were no soviet citizens in Harbin...what kind of Soviet citizens are they who possess houses who own factories and even deal in trade? We do not recognize these Soviet citizens, they are traitors..." "But they held Soviet passports and were listed in the Soviet Consulate..." The interrogator cuts me off and yells again: "They are carrion and scalpers, and are not Soviet people".

Every day without any respite I am called for interrogation. I was transferred to another cell. The walls are black, dirty. The floor is filthy and the lice are biting viciously. We were three people in the cell, however every once in a while the cellmates are changed. One day a young German was billeted in our cell, a lawyer from Dresden. He does not speak Russian and we converse in German. He was arrested in Germany and flown to Moscow. In one of my interrogations the interrogator asks:

"Who are your cellmates?"

"Two – A Russian and the other one a German".

"Who are they? Do you know their family names?"

"I don't know, I did not ask them".

"But the interrogator continues to ask questions about the German, what does he tell me, on what subject does he speak. I answered that I do not enter into conversations with him"

The interrogator continues to connect me to all kinds of crimes. He reads to me various statements given by various people Jews and non-Jews on my "criminal" Zionist activities to which I listen with amazement.

Later on, when I signed the final protocol at the end of my interrogation I was permitted to read the statements. I did not hold any grudge or enmity against any of the people, some of whom I worked closely with in the past, they were trying to "save their skins" or anyway that's what they thought at the time. "We were not involved in this", "We know nothing about this, everything was in his hands", "He managed all the political activities and we were not in his confidence", they also said "He established the community and all its institutions, the social kitchen and the Hospital..." "He is the head of the Jewish Community loved and respected by everyone, he was in contact with the government institutions and served the Jewish People and we knew nothing of what he did", "he" was of course me. These people were the members of the Central Committee of the community, they were frightened to death of being tortured or punished and perhaps they were forced to sign the protocols. I read the statements of my colleagues, for a moment I was saddened, then, however, I pondered in my heart and thought...may God forgive them.

Chapter

7

E

During one of the interrogations, when I entered the office and sat on the place that was pointed-out to me, the interrogator turned to me and asked:

"Did you know Michaels or have you ever heard of him?"

"The Jewish actor Michaels?"

"Yes... Here read, the newspapers are writing about him. He was killed in a motor accident He was a great actor. He played King Lear, he was the best in the Soviet Union". He hands me a

Page from the "Pravda" showing a photograph of Michaels lying in a coffin and an article of appreciation of his achievements on the stage.

"Here, you see, in Moscow there exists a theater especially for Jews... only in the Soviet Union such a thing is possible. Nowhere was the question of Jewish nationality solved the way it was solved here and everything is thanks to Yosef Visarionovitch ...Did you read his book on the question of nationalities? A brilliant solution to such a complicated problem." The interrogator concluded. I kept silent all the time and did not utter a word to his last absurd sentence. At that time I did not know how Michaels really lost his life. Later, when I was in one of the camps in Kazakhstan, I learned the real circumstances of his death.

Most of my interrogators in addition to being uncultured and complete boors do not even know how to read and write properly. I was a witness to this when I read the protocols of my interrogation that were written by them. One of the interrogators, with a quite senior rank, even asked me to correct the grammar mistakes before signing the protocols, which I did and had many corrections to do.

During the last several months I had a cellmate, a shoemaker from Moscow. A nervous person, who, it was obvious, was on the verge of total nervous collapse. When he found out that I was a doctor he told me his life story and about his ailments. During the war he was seriously wounded in the head, he was discharged from the army and returned to Moscow. As a disabled war veteran, he received a meager allotment, which was not enough to support his family. He started to look around for a job but without success even though he was a wounded war veteran, he applied to many government institutions but in every place was rebuffed with empty promises. Finally he was promised a job as a vendor in one of the stalls of the government market but at the last moment the job was given to a young girl, a party member. When he was informed about this he harshly criticized the arrangements in that department. Someone informed about this to the MG"B and as a result the authorities started to harass his life. He was living with his wife and daughter in a one-room apartment. One day half his apartment was confiscated and given to another family. In order to sustain his family he started to work on his own as a shoemaker – a profession he learned as a youth – however, because he only had half the room at his disposal there was no space to house the workshop. He was very thankful to accept a proposal from an officer whom he met by chance, and who offered him a tiny corner in his apartment. One day the officer was arrested on charges of espionage and several days later the so was the shoemaker and he too was charged with cooperating with the officer in his spying activities. In his interrogations they demanded that he reveal who were the people with whom the officer met. In vain did the veteran repeatedly state that he never met the officer before nor did he ever speak to him when he worked there. In vain did he swear to his loyalty to the Soviet motherland for whom, during the war, he paid with his blood – nothing helped. Night and day he was interrogated and tortured. He returned from every interrogation in complete exhaustion and could hardly stand on his feet. He cannot sleep nights, and during the day he cannot lie on his bed, as it is removed from the cell every morning and returned only after lights-out in the evening. When he tried to lie down on my bed the guard burst into the cell and ordered me to forbid him to do that, if not they will also remove my bed from the cell. One day a doctor entered our cell and gave the veteran some sort of pills, "in order to reduce his need for sleep"- so the guard explained. After several weeks the veteran collapsed completely and by the doctors orders was transferred to a hospital. He never returned to my cell again, it could be that he was interned in a hospital for nervous disorders where he probably ended his life.

One day I was summoned for interrogation. The interrogator's first question was: "When did the all Jewish congress take place?" "We had three such congresses. The first was in 1937. The fourth was forbidden to take place by the Japanese authorities." The interrogator gives me a sly look then asks: "How much money have you paid the Japanese for the permit to hold the congress?" "I do not understand the question..." "Didn't you bribe the Japanese to let you have the congress? How much did you pay them?" Insists the interrogator. "We did not bribe the Japanese, we received the permit without any payment." "You are lying, you scum" shouts the interrogator. "The Japanese don't do any thing without payment. Just for your pretty eyes only the Japs would not let you hold a congress...we know that you paid the Japanese military authorities 300 thousand Yen for the permission to hold the congress..." "This is a lie...your source of information is not correct." "You refuse to admit this." "This never happened and I have nothing to confess to." "And if I show you written proof, what will you say?" "By all means, show me." "In here, documents from the Japanese Military Authorities." Says the interrogator, brandishing the briefcase in front of me. "If so, show me..." "You carrion you, you should be hanged..." Concludes the interrogator. But he never showed

me the documents. Two days later I was called for interrogation at seven in the morning, an unusual hour for interrogations. The guard leads me to an unfamiliar room. By the table sits my old acquaintance – the lieutenant colonel. “Did you have breakfast?”

“Not yet”

“We’ll eat now.” He picked up the phone and said just one-word “Serve!”

A soldier enters carrying a tray with two full breakfasts on it - for the colonel and me.

“Eat now and then you’ll write,” orders the interrogator. We ate. When we finished the soldier came in and took away the dishes.

The colonel then goes to his table and brings me paper, pen and ink.

“Here you are, write! Write as much and as long as you want...till you get tired”

“About what shall I write?”

“About the story of your life, on your Zionist activities, about the Zionist Federation and its structure...”

“My life story from the day I was born?” I asked tauntingly.

“We are not interested in your childhood days and also not in your family life...write about your Zionist anti-Soviet activities...”

“And if I did not carryout such activities?”

“Write about everything, but only the truth. We know everything about your criminal activities...”

“Fine” I said, “I’ll write only the truth.”

I began to write. I wrote about the activities of the Jewish community, on its institutions, cultural, religious and the various charitable organizations. I wrote about the Zionist Federation, its aims and activities. I covered about thirty pages. The hour was already 12 noon. I had no more paper. I told the interrogator “I have no more paper.” He gives me more. I continue writing till 5 o’clock in the afternoon. I already covered sixty pages. The interrogator did not expect such an output and told me with satisfaction: “Well, enough for today... continue tomorrow...” taking away my written papers. I was returned to my cell after working for 10 hours.

On the next day the interrogator tells me: “What did you write there? Who needs it? Just a waste of paper!”

“I wrote only the truth, they way it was.”

The interrogator tears the pages to shreds, all 60 of them, and throws them into the waste-paper basket.

“Enough of playing the fool! The truth he is writing. Wait, wait you will yet write the real truth with me! I will show you where the truth really is!” yells the interrogator and hands me another sheaf of papers. “Write about the structure of the Zionist Party. Whereabouts is the location of the Central committee, what is this party’s program, what are the relations between you and England and the United States...”

I started to write again. I wrote about the first Zionist congress, about the Basel program. About the Zionist Federation and its political stand, about its loyalties to the various countries in which its institutions are located, about the settlements in the Land of Israel and their cultural problems.

By writing the above, to me, it was a form of protest against the coercion and violence of the MG”B People and against their demands that I confirm in writing the “anti-revolutionary” activities of the Zionist Federation.

The interrogator takes the additional forty pages from me, studies them superficially then says: “You are making fun of us! You write nothing about the political activities of the Zionist Federation and on the missions that Weizman assigned you.”

“Neither Weizman nor anyone else gave me any political missions.” I reject vigorously the insinuations.

He started to yell viciously:

“And the dispatch of saboteurs into the Soviet Union, isn’t that a political mission? you British spy and so is Weizman...” the lieutenant-colonel goes berserk and again tears my papers into shreds, throws them into the waste-paper basket then sits down and writes something. He continues writing for one whole hour without even looking in my direction, then orders the guard to return me to my cell. 100 pages were destroyed for nothing. But I got my satisfaction.

The next day I was ordered by the interrogator to write again, this time about “Brith-Trumpeldor”, its aims, its functions and activities. I sat down and wrote 10 pages. The interrogator gives these papers a casual glance then asks angrily:

"Why did you not write about Brith-Trumpeldor in Riga?"
 "I never in my life was in Riga and know nothing about Brith-Trumpeldor in this city..."
 "It's a lie" The interrogator goes berserk again. "You had contacts with Brith-Trumpeldor in Riga..." and tears those papers into shreds again.

A stall was opened in our prison to sell various food items, all the prisoners, who have money in their prison accounts, can purchase various items once a week – bread, sausage, cigarettes and matches. I actually do not need any of these items, I do not eat much bread, I do not eat sausage and I do not smoke. My two cellmates, however, are excessive smokers and their daily bread ration does not satisfy their hunger. As they did not have any money in their account I decided one day to order for them a kilogram of bread, three packs of cigarettes and matches. I submitted this order to the prison guard. The guard returned an hour later and asked me:
 "And where is your money?" I show him the receipts from the Sverdlovsk prison – one receipt for the money and the other for the suitcase they took from me.
 "You have no money in our account"
 "Is it possible?" I murmur, "In Sverdlovsk they told me that the money and the suitcase will arrive here at the same time as I did".
 "Talk to the interrogator!"
 That same day I told the interrogator about this and even showed him the signed receipts. The interrogator immediately phoned the prison administrator and told him about my complaint and the receipts, he then told me:
 "The financial administrator will come to your cell today, show him the receipts..."
 On the same day an officer came to my cell, took the receipts and said that they will request the Sverdlovsk prison authorities to send the money and my personal belongings that up to now (already one year) did not arrive yet to Moscow. Two weeks later the financial administrator came to my cell again and informed me:
 "We received a reply from the Sverdlovsk prison, that they do not have your money nor any of your personal belongings"
 "So what are these receipts then, written on official prison stationary and carrying an official stamp and signature?"
 The officer shrugged his shoulders and said:
 "Today we shall telephone Sverdlovsk and clarify everything, don't worry! With us nothing gets lost"

A month went by, then another month. One day the interrogator hands me a confirmation for the sum of 310 rubles and says:
 "Your money has arrived...4 rubles and 40 kopeks have been deducted as dispatch expenses. But your belongings have not been found yet. We will continue looking for them and very probably they too will be found."

Upon the arrival of the money, I ordered from this stall a few times some canned goods, cigarettes and bread for a total sum of 76 rubles leaving approximately 230 rubles in my favor, but, to my surprise, when I presented my last list of items for a sum of 27 rubles, I was told that I had no more money left in my favor... this seemed strange to me, but to anyone I spoke to on this matter the answer was the same "You have no more money in your account". In my next interrogation I asked the interrogator about this, but he avoided giving me an answer. Several days later I asked the chief prison warden on what, in his opinion, happened to my money:

"You were a boy and you grew old a boy," he said "Don't you remember anything? Did you forget what happened in 1922?" – and did not elaborate

From one of my cellmates I learned that in that year the Russian currency was devalued. In my next interrogation I told the interrogator:
 "I already know what happened to my money, it lost its value due to the devaluation".
 He looked at me scornfully:
 "There never was a devaluation here but a reform in the monetary system..."

In any case my 230 rubles became 23 rubles, and as my order was for the total sum of 27 rubles it was not accepted. On the next day I entered another order for a total sum of 23

rubles and closed my account in the prison store. Neither the suitcase containing my belongings, which I gave them in Sverdlovsk nor my money and my personal effects, which they took from me when I was arrested, were ever seen again. Nothing that I did helped in this matter. Even my letters to the minister for MG'B affairs, which I wrote according to the advice of my interrogator, did not help, as he claimed that "Here, nothing gets lost".

During one of my next interrogations, I found the interrogator sitting on his desk reading a newspaper. Without raising an eye, he asked me: "Do you know Blum?" "Which Blum?" "That Frenchman, the minister Leon Blum...he also is one of your people, a Jew, Zionist!" I remain silent. "Don't you know him, this disgusting person? Look what mischief he has done", the interrogator curses, "He goes to America and works against the Soviet Union...It was us who saved him from a Fascist concentration camp, and now he works against us. Never mind! He too will fall into our hands and perhaps he will yet be your cellmate" He amuses himself with this thought.

One evening during an interrogation, the interrogator points at a newspaper and declares: "Here is what our Gromyko says concerning a Jewish State. Only the Soviet Union can give you a Jewish State in the land of Israel, and not England or America..."

"Let me read what he says" I ask the interrogator. "You will not understand him" he replies and then asks "And what is a 'two-nation' state?" I explain to him the composition of the word "two-nation" then ask him again to let me read Gromyko's speech.

"You are still not ripe to read newspapers" the interrogator answers and did not give me the paper. An hour passes then another, the interrogator sits and reads a book, while I sit by my small table deep in thoughts on what he told me.

"It must be," I think to myself "That the subject of establishing a Jewish state was discussed in the United Nations" suddenly I hear the interrogators voice saying:

"Do you know who is Loyola?"

"Ignatius Loyola" I ask.

"Yes, yes," answers the interrogator impatiently.

"Ignatius Loyola was the founder of the Jesuit Order, he lived in the 16th century".

"You know everything, a real academic... but you waste your days in the prison".

"That's not my fault"

"So its my fault? Confess and everything will be forgiven...Work for the motherland. People like you are needed in the Soviet Union. We appreciate people like you".

I was returned to my cell. Three weeks passed and I was not called for interrogation. My cellmates are changed from time to time. Then I was called again.

"As soon as I sat in my usual place the interrogator opens and says:

"Well, I must congratulate you"

I look at him in astonishment.

"The death penalty was revoked in the Soviet Union...you are lucky, if it were not, you would definitely be sentenced to death for your crimes", he declares. I still look at him with astonishment, and then I say, "For you it is a minor matter to execute an innocent person"

The interrogator raises his voice shouting at me "Shut up you despicable carrion!" After several minutes he began to interrogate me about...Zionism, the Jewish community, Brith-Trumpeldor.

Chapter

7

G

In The month of January 1948 I was brought to the Lubianka prison. I was told that the general prosecutor summoned me. Behind the desk set the prosecutor, an officer with the rank of lieutenant colonel, to one side of him sat my interrogator major Matchko, to his other side sat a typist. I was placed a little further away. First came the ordinary questions: Family name, first name, Year of birth, nationality, and citizenship. For some reason my interrogator answered these questions. The typist rattles on the typewriter. To the question of my citizenship my interrogator answers: "Soviet".

I turn to the prosecutor
"It is not correct, I am not a Soviet citizen, I am stateless"

The prosecutor orders the typist to correct it accordingly; he does not go into details. For about half an hour he asks me questions about Zionism, what was my position in the Zionist Party, and various other questions in this context while at the same time introducing questions on other matters: The Jewish community, the National council, all these, in his eyes, are part of the Zionist Federation. My interrogator, all this time, is trying to break into my answers to answer in my place. The prosecutor however stops him and does not permit him to interfere. The interrogation takes less than an hour and I was returned "home" – to Lifortovo. Usually the prisoner is brought before the prosecutor when his interrogations are at an end and so I hoped that my stay in this prison is coming to an end too and I will be released soon. I hoped and believed. But which prisoner, in a Soviet prison would dare to hope for a good ending. And indeed I still had a long way ahead of me.

On the next day after the session with the prosecutor, my interrogator rebuked me: "Why do make yourself so innocent? Why did the American news media write about your arrest? What can America help? We have only contempt for them. Let them write what ever they want... Who is Ben-Gurion? Why is he soliciting in your favor?" "I don't know" I replied, "I know nothing about this". "Don't look so innocent", hollers the interrogator "Here" pointing to a thick file "are articles written about you, and also your picture appears".

The interrogations continue, luckily at longer intervals. I am mentally tired of these interrogations and cannot withstand them much longer. It is already the second year that I am imprisoned in this terrible prison Lifortovo.

One day I was called for a medical check up. The prison doctor checks me. She takes my blood pressure then writes down the results. "You are familiar with the medical profession?" she asks. "Yes I am a doctor". She collected all the papers, then leaves the room and orders me to be led back to my cell. It is said that before a prisoner is brought before the court he has to pass a general medical check up. This is the general procedure. But for me it is not so, I still have long distance ahead of me.

Chapter

8

A

One day, In April 1948, the warden entered my cell. "Collect your belongings" – I did. After being imprisoned in Lifortovo for 13 months I was returned by the "black Raven" to Lubianka. In the cell to which I was assigned I found three people, towards evening another one was brought to our cell. All my cellmates introduce themselves by their names, I however, did not pay any attention to anyone of them, nor did I show any interest in them or cared who they were, and who knows for what reason were they imprisoned.

"Lights out!" we are lying on our shelf-bunks. Two fell asleep immediately while the third turns to me and whispers: "Comrade, are you Jewish?" "Yes"

"I also am Jewish" says the man and starts to tell me his life story. He is an engineer, a resident of Moscow. Originates from Podolia. A party member, 47 years of age, he also studied in a CHEDER and received a Jewish upbringing still remembers his Jewish studies of his youth and speaks Yiddish fluently. In the middle of the night he whispers to me: "This coming Monday is Passover. I suggest that in the first two days of the holiday we shall not eat any bread, do you agree?" "I agree" I replied. He was very happy and thanked me. In this manner we celebrated the Passover holiday. We did not touch any bread and ate only cabbage soup and tea. I contemplated on this Soviet engineer, a Communist, according to him he was active in the party, but, on the other hand, he wants to and even encourages others to celebrate the Jewish Passover holiday, which is considered "anti-revolutionary" but which else where is a national holiday of freedom. And where does he do it? In a Soviet prison, inside Lubianka, known for its oppression. The whole of next day the engineer does not leave my side, talks about Jewish subjects, mainly in Yiddish, he told me about the Yiddish theater, about Michaelis whom he knew personally. During this conversation he even sang several Yiddish songs that he heard performed in the Jewish theater.

A while later, when the engineer was being interrogated, one of my other cell-mates, a Russian, said to me:

"We are confined with this engineer for one month here in this cell and he never told us he is Jewish now suddenly he starts to sing Jewish songs.

Two months later the engineer was summoned for interrogation, after half an hour one of the guards came to our cell and took all his belongings, the engineer never returned to our cell. It is very probable that the prison authorities decided to separate us Jews.

My interrogations are getting scarcer. The "literature" of the MG"B on me is abundant and it already fills three thick files. During one of my interrogations the interrogator browses into a new file, reads something then says:

"So, you gave an anti-communist lecture"

"No, I never gave such a lecture"

"Here is your lecture....'Between Two Worlds'. The 'two worlds' are the capitalist world and the socialist world...and you refuse to admit... here, it's written in your Harbin Newspaper..."

"I never read about any lecture on this subject..."

The interrogator shoves the file in front of me showing a part of a Russian paper. When I read the article I burst out laughing:

"This lecture is on an literary subject, about the author Anski and about his play titled 'The Dibuk' or 'Between Two Worlds' and this does not concern either Capitalism or Socialism it does not deal in political matters, in fact it is a mythical drama on intimate spiritual life".

"You are talking nonsense...don't distract me with another matter..."

"Read what's written and you'll understand," I answer quietly.

The interrogator does not calm down and continues to yell:

"Do not blabber, you despicable villain, another one who is teaching me what to understand"

Then he writes a protocol on the lecture titled "between Two Worlds" stressing that it mainly deals with my glorification of the capitalistic world. I refused to sign this protocol. On the next interrogation the interrogator again tells me to sign this protocol. I again read the paper and found no references on any capitalist or socialist world.

The interrogator orders me to approach his table and shows me a file filled with newspaper articles on my speeches and lectures on various subjects – on Zionism, on the Land of Israel, on the situation of world Jewry, Zionist Congresses, Bialik, Shalom Aleichem, Mendele, Shalom Ash, Herzl, Nordau, on Stanislavsky, Tolstoy, The academic Pavlov, and on many other subjects, everything collected in one file.

The interrogator orders me to sign my signature on every article, I signed over a hundred articles, I read each one in a cursory manner, and signed

Chapter 8 B

May 1948. I was interned in a cell for two people. My cellmate, a severe looking person, in a state of deep depression with an expression of dire sorrowfulness on his face and showing no inclination to talk. We sit in this state during the whole day without uttering a word. It is Saturday, the 22nd or the 23rd of May. At 9.30 in the evening "lights out" I climb onto my cot. Less then thirty minutes later I hear the voice of the prison guard through the aperture calling to me:

"Attention!"

"Where to now? I think to myself. "On Saturday night? On Saturdays they do not work in Lubianka and no interrogations of prisoners are performed, and tomorrow it's Sunday which is a day of rest, where are they taking me to?" I think anxiously.

"Go"

The guard leads me to the corridor; we rise by the elevator to the seventh floor, then leading me to a room containing four writing desks. It is dark. Behind one of the desks someone is sitting. On the desk stands a lamp with a green lampshade. The guard reports:

"I brought the prisoner"

"Good...go".

I look at the person and recognize him he is one of my investigators, an officer with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

"I did not summon you for interrogation purposes" He starts "I have happy tidings and also something sad to inform you...It was proclaimed that a Jewish state will be established in the land of Israel..." on hearing this I stopped hearing anything else, my brain became dizzy and my heart started to pound heavily, threatening to burst out of my body. I started crying from

happiness...the investigator looked at me, not fully comprehending of what's going on in my inner feelings...he continues:

"The Arabs started a war against the Jewish state and the Jews are fighting them back...here read what's written in "Pravda" about this."

The investigator hands me the paper. I take the paper and try to read, but I am not capable of reading, my hands are shaking and the paper rattles in my hand. Tears filled my eyes and the only thing I see and feel in front of me is "Jewish State". I am sobbing and the tears are quietly pouring out of my eyes, tears of happiness. The investigator picks up the telephone and orders the guard to return me to my cell.

"No, I'm not a prisoner anymore" I think to myself "I am a free son of a free nation" I enter my cell and sit on the cot still crying, tears of happiness running from my eyes.

"Lie down" orders the guard, I lie, but I cannot fall asleep, the words "Jewish State" blaze in front of my eyes.

Many experiences and memories flash through my brain. I think of the long journey that my people passed. The struggles of the Zionist movement, the congresses, the conventions, the years, the people...everything flashes passed my brain. The dream of generations is finally realized, an independent Jewish state on the land of its fathers, on the land of Zion.

That night I did not sleep a wink. How bright is the light in our cell! How clear everything is! Our lovely homeland, the Altneuland.

A few days later the investigator said to me reproachfully:

"Why is the president of the Jewish State Weizman in the United States now? Why isn't he in Israel? You are directing your attention towards America aren't you?"

I remain silent, but the investigator continues his line:

"Why is Weizman in America?"

"What can a person who is already three years in prison, and who is forbidden to read any newspapers answer you?"

The interrogator continues angrily:

"You are directing your sights towards America. If not the Soviet Union the Jewish State would not have been established, but you are directing your sights to the United States and England"

My regular investigator summons me very rarely for interrogations now, but on the other hand, I am frequently summoned by "experts" on Jewish and Zionist matters. One day I was brought to a small room. On entering I find five interrogators sitting by the table, all of officer rank. Following me enters a young man, about 30 years of age, wearing civilian clothes, very well dressed with a nice tie, his face bore Jewish features. He sits down on the table near me and asks:

"Are you a Zionist? Why did you give us information on Zionism which was not correct?"

"I do not understand what you mean..."

"On the Zionist congress, for instance" he continues

"What did I say that was not correct?"

"Everything was incorrect" reply's the investigator with authority.

"For example, why did you conceal from us the anti-revolutionary decisions of the congress..."?

"No such decisions were ever reached, nor is there any reason or possibility for such decisions to be reached" I answer emphatically.

"In other words you do not know anything about them, is that so?" continues the "expert"

"I know quite a lot about the Zionist Congresses. No such decisions were ever reached. Someone with an imaginative mind invented this. Show me these decisions..." I demand.

"There's no point in all this" declares the investigator. "And what is WIZO?"

I explain what WIZO is.

"No you don't know a thing about WIZO. Or you are lying deliberately?" declares the investigator, then started uttering meaningless words about WIZO - on its failures and its "anti-revolutionary activities" giving an arrogant look at the "MGB" officers sitting, whose ignorance is even bigger than the investigator. Concluding: "So, this is your WIZO...do you understand?"

"All I understand is this, the information you possess is not correct and all the information you received on WIZO and the Congresses are far from the truth like east is from west".

The investigator became offended at what I said, fearing that his colleagues would become aware of his ignorance and he quickly left the room. Another expert on Jewish affairs, with the rank of major, summoned me to an interrogation. For three straight hours he carried

on a conversation with me on the subject of Zionism, on the national problem, on Birobijan, asked many questions, listened to my answers but he did not argue nor did he reply to anything that I said. And most surprising of all he did not curse or abuse me in any way. At the end of our session and before calling the guard to escort me back to my cell he said: "I am very sorry to say but you made a mistake and took the incorrect path".

This was the only person out of all the ignorant and boorish investigators, commanders and experts that I came across during my three years imprisonment that treated me in a manner as one cultured person to another.

Chapter 8 C

During the last several months I am imprisoned in a cell for a single person. I am very rarely called for interrogations. They probably are now in the process of preparing my indictment for the big trial against Zionists, against the "Zionist Leader" as they call me. Every day I am taken out for a walk, usually in the evening hours. We take the elevator to the roof of this eight-story building. On the roof, surrounded with observation posts and armed guards, I walk around for about twenty minutes. From this roof one can see the city center, which I observe from a birds eye view of the "Capital City Number One".

Every ten days I am taken to the bath which is situated in the basement of the building, but when I'm there I become concerned that they might shoot me in the back of the head, like it was customary to do in the time of the Dzersinsky's and the Yezhov's. I turn my head and look backwards, immediately I hear a reprimanding voice:

"Move on...Why are you turning your head, what did you miss seeing?"

In August I was summoned by the interrogator, to what later proved to be a sort of "farewell" interrogation. The interrogator, a lieutenant-colonel, places three thick files and another smaller one, all tightly crammed with written pages, on the table:

"Here, look through all this... you can read as much as you want, you have the whole day at your disposal."

All this means that the investigation of my "case" came to an end and I am to sign on paragraph 206, regarding the ending of the investigation. The protocol ends with the wording of the indictment.

For approximately three hours I leafed through the files, read the protocols, the testimonies of various people some of them I knew some not, friends, acquaintances and enemies - fascists, anti-Semites... very quickly I stopped reading the material, I was fed up and did not want to read anymore nor was it of any avail.

The interrogator turned to me and said:

"Sign, and if you do not agree to any of the charges mentioned here you are entitled to sign and state that you are not guilty."

The major from the "CHEKA" who is sitting opposite the interrogator interrupts him and says:

"He will sign on everything without mentioning his reservations. He will sign on everything!"

The lieutenant colonel was at a loss what to say and remained silent, I came to his rescue: "I will not sign on any one of these charges, just to one item, that I was a member of the Zionist Federation, to which I do not feel any guilt, on the contrary, this was my duty and an honor to me".

"You will sign and how you will sign, you dog excrement". Shouts the major.

"No! All the charges against me are lies and I will not put my signature to them"

The major leaves the room scornfully. The lieut. Col. Comes to me and says with satisfaction:

"Sign, and add your reservations, that you do not recognize your guilt to various charges that were submitted against me".

I signed and added that I do not recognize the indictment issued against me. But what is the use of this? People who experienced this say that there is no difference whether you sign or not, you can be sure that your "signature" will appear on the protocol, and not a trace will remain of your "reservations". And they are "experts" on things like these, they produce perfect work and it's not important at all if you confessed or not to any crime. Every prisoner is guilty and has confessed to his guilt.

And lo, they really did a good clean job of it. Within one week they summoned me from my cell, placed me inside a small chamber, an officer entered, with a file in one hand and an

inkstand in the other. He read out to me their decision to transfer my case before a "Special Council" by the Ministry of State Security.

I signed, confirming that this decision was brought to my attention. The implication of this decision is that I will not be brought before a court of law but that my fate will be decided by a "Special Council" – a "triumvirate" that is believed to consist of representatives from the "MGB", the public prosecutor's office, and the party. Many prisoners preferred that their case be brought before the "Special Council" because this triumvirate does not go into matters of the law, but judges the prisoners according to administrative principles and sentences them to shorter periods, 5 – 7 years. The "triumvirate" is not a court and its decisions are reached without the presence of the accused, without witnesses and without any representative for the defense, so to speak. To this triumvirate 80% of all "cases" were transferred and especially "cases" where they had no legal proof as to the guilt of the accused, or that no legal bases existed for putting the accused on trial, meaning, he is arrested while being completely innocent, this in order to fulfill the "quota"...thousands, tens of thousands of completely innocent people were kidnapped, arrested and imprisoned, and on what charge will they be judged? What image will their courts and judges have? So, for this purpose the "triumvirates" exist. Although, legal trials also take place within the confines of the "MGB", they are of course nothing but a sham, but just to show that the "trial" is actually taking place, even if it's only for show, the presence of the accused and a representative of the "defense", prevents to a certain extent overt arbitrariness and abuse. And so my case, during its many stages of examinations in which the interrogators did not find any solid proof on what to base their accusations upon me was transferred to the "Special Council".

In the middle of the night between the 2nd and 3rd of September I was aroused from my sleep and lead by a guard to the interrogators office. Behind a small table sat someone dressed in an army uniform and on the sofa sat someone in civilian clothing. The lighting in the room was gloomy, being lit by one small table lamp.

"Sit!"

I sat by the table. The interrogator rummaged through the papers that were in front of him for some minutes then commands:

"Stand! Attention for the sentence". He too stands up and also the person in the "civilian clothing" that sat on the sofa. The officer reads the sentence, the reading lasts for about two minutes. The sentence does not contain the relevant paragraphs of the law; it just specifies that I belonged to a Zionist party and that I was active in "anti-revolutionary" activities and in espionage... I am being given the heaviest sentence possible: 25 years of hard labor.

"Sign!" commands the officer. I sign. The number 25 does not leave any impression on me. Suddenly, I am engulfed by a feeling of peace of mind and in complete apathy. I just remembered that the officer mentioned the date of the sentence –the 21st. of August 1948, and I was arrested or to be more exact kidnapped on the 21st. of August 1945... exactly three years! Well, that's a court of justice... a quick trial.

The officer orders the soldier to remove me from the room. I was brought to a cell. Along the length of the walls were three stone benches. Someone dressed in army uniform with the epaulets torn off turns to me and asks:

"How much did you get, comrade?"

"Twenty five..."

"Twenty five? And I only - 15. I'm a major in the Red Army. Commander of a regiment. I was at the front during the whole war of the motherland. I was wounded. I received a medal of excellence and here am I sentenced to 15 years for espionage ... those fiends"

A third person is brought to our cell; he too was sentenced now, by the triumvirate, and received a sentence of 15 years.

"For what?" asks the major?

"There isn't a crime that I'm not accused of " answered the wretch

"I am accused of maintaining contact with people that I never met and never knew, even their names I never heard of. They are worse then the *Gestapo*. Even *fascists* are not as bad as they"

An officer and the prison supervisor enter our cell. They order us to return the prison garb, which we received. I give them a coat and an under vest. This is my entire property. The officer hands me a small envelope containing 37 *kopecks* that remained in my account in the prison cash box. I remained without any under clothing. "No matter " I thought, "I'll wear the trousers and the shirt on my bare body. Who knows what's awaiting me in the future!" The major however, pointing at me says:

"How will he travel, he's nearly naked? You should give him some kind of underwear".

The officer, a little embarrassed, answered:

"I'll go and see if I can find something for him"

In ten minutes he returned and brought me a torn undershirt and undershorts.

I pondered to myself: "whose were they? – Perhaps to one of the deceased. Or to someone who was executed?" Outfitted with these clothes and with a capital of 37 *kopeks* I am ready and willing for the journey. The three of us, myself and the other two convicts were led to the basement level of the building where we were confined in cells, each one to a separate cell. In my cell I found 4 prisoners. One of them was sentenced to 25 years; two were sentenced to 20 and the fourth 12 years only, child's play. In this cellar I was incarcerated for four days, on the fifth day we, nearly 15 people, were transported by the "Black Raven" to the railway station and so I again find myself traveling in the railway wagon "Stolipini". After four days of traveling we got off the wagon and after a short drive on a "Raven" I arrived to the gate of the Sverdlovsk prison, well known to me from previous occasions.

Chapter 8 D

After taking our documents and checking the lists of names we were put into cells. My cell was small and narrow and crowded, 48 prisoners were packed inside. We settle down on the filthy floor. Some one squeezes himself under a lower wall bunk. There are many young people sitting on the wall bunks, Latvians and Lithuanians, they were all partisans who fought during the world war on the side of the Germans against the Soviets for the sake of gaining freedom for their countries. Nearly all of them were sentenced to a period of 25 years. In a separate corner of the cell were bunks for criminal prisoners, thieves, rapists, and murderers. All were young people. About 20 people were sitting on the floor, among them two German generals dressed in Hitlerite uniforms, without the epaulets of course. One of the generals was the commander of the Königsberg garrison. He surrendered the garrison to the Russians and for that was sentenced by Hitler to death in absentia. His wife, daughter and her husband were arrested and imprisoned for the sins of their father. The General himself was captured by the Russians and sentenced to a 25-year prison term; he is now on his way to a hard labor camp. The second General, more elderly than the first was commanding part of the German forces that blockaded Leningrad. He was battle experienced and an expert on strategic problems; he too was sentenced to 25 years of hard labor. Sick and frail lying on the floor with hardly any strength to rise up and go to the toilet stool. Both generals do not understand a word of Russian.

Nearly all the Lithuanians and the Latvians in our cell – are members of the Nationalist party, and sworn enemies of the Soviets, even here in our cell they are not hiding their real feelings. They hate the Russians for forcing their homeland and people into slavery.

One day a big brawl erupted in our cell. The criminal part of the prisoners began to go wild (they consider themselves a privileged group in our cell "real Soviet people" while all the rest, the political prisoners, are nothing but Fascists) and started to take the belongings from the latter, from one of them they took a pullover, from another one his shirt and from the third his trousers. Some of the Latvians approached the leader of the criminals and demanded that they return the stolen items, but he, responded by grabbing one of the Latvians by the throat and started to choke him. A general fracas resulted. They beat each other mercilessly. Everyone was hurt especially those who fell on the floor. The leader of the criminals, a young man of about 25, went mad with fury. When one of the Latvians saw that the criminal is nearly choking his friend to death, he hit him on the head with a nail studded shoe from the top of one of the bunks, the criminal collapsed and sprawled on the floor his head pouring with blood. Some one started banging on the door in order to summon help, but no one responded to the yells. Only when the clamor, the banging and yelling became louder one of the guards finally opened the door. When he saw the pandemonium and the blood on the floor he called the camp commander and other senior officers who forced their way into the cell. The wounded criminal was taken on a stretcher to the clinic. While one of the officers started an inquiry as to how and why this brawl erupted. His main interest was to find out who it was that hit the leader of the criminals on the head. However, "nobody saw anything". As a result of this brawl the criminals were transferred to another cell and separated from us. Several days later we too were transferred to other cells, according to the length of time each one was to serve. I was interred together with the prisoners serving "long term" sentences of 20 to 25 years of hard labor. We were approximately 20 people in our new cell, among who

were one priest and two Spaniards, one of whom was a medical surgeon who in 1936 participated in the fighting in Spain on the side of the Communists and who later relocated to Russia. Ten years later he became disillusioned and decided to leave the Soviet Union. He approached the Argentine Embassy, was arrested on charges of espionage and was sentenced to 25 years. The second one, a painter, he too, as a communist, fought in Spain, later relocated to Russia. MGB agents in Moscow airport captured him while he was hiding in a diplomatic box belonging to the Argentine Embassy. In this manner he tried to escape from the Soviet Union, the MGB agents got wind of this plot, opened the box and found him. He too was sentenced to 25 years.

I stayed in this transitory prison in Sverdlovsk for two weeks. During this period I went into a deep depression. Everything around me is despondent. There is no fresh air to breathe and no light can penetrate to brighten my day. What made me happy was when through the cell door opening they threw a copy of the newspaper "The Ural Worker". A very small number of the prisoners wanted to read it. Most were not interested in it and the others did not know how to read Russian. There even were Russians who were not familiar with the Russian alphabet. One day, when reading the paper I came across an article about the arrival to Moscow of the "Ambassador of the State of Israel, Mrs. Golda Meyerson". I read this article several times and then again another several times. The article was printed in small type in an obscure corner of the paper, but it was the only ray of light for me in this Sverdlovsk prison. I concealed the paper and from time to time I reread this article and my eyes were moist with tears.

On September 27th in the middle of the night we were taken out of our cells and gathered in a windowless room with no benches or chairs. We all set on the floor. Till five in the morning we were packed in this filthy room. Someone whispers into my ear: "Watch you personal belongings...many of the inmates here are thieves" This, however, did not bother me too much, what can they steal from me? The coat is spread under me, my meager clothing is on me, and all the money I have on me is only 37 kopeks. Their loot from me will not be very big.

In the morning we were taken to the railway station. We were loaded into wagons containing grated cells, in each cell they herded 20 – 25 people, but this time the doors of the cells were not locked. Guards were stationed in the passageway between the cells and the window openings, with one of them marching lengthwise along the passageway all the time. The prisoners were not prevented to leave the cell to visit the toilet but were not allowed to close the toilet door, while a guard positions himself directly in front of the entrance... Where are we being taken? No one knows and no one tells us anything. Some one tells, however, that in Sverdlovsk, before boarding the train he noticed that one of the officers carried a portfolio with the name Nerilsk written on it. This, according to him, means that we are being taken to Nerilsk. Nerilsk is situated in the Yenisei region, about 2000 kilometers distant. And indeed some of the prisoners were taken there. We, however, were taken off the train after four days of travel, at Karabas – a big transit camp in Kazakhstan. On getting off the wagon we are lined up in fours – with the men at the head of the column, women at the tail end. Under heavy guard we were marched through the town towards the camp. We marched through narrow alleys, through muddy paths, and finally arrived at the gate of the camp. A sentry position checks and counts us, then the gates of the camp open widely in front of us – "Welcome, newcomers".

Camp Doctor, Chapter 9 section A

In the initial period of my imprisonment I was convinced that a court never could find me guilty. For what reason? I asked myself, reflecting in my memory on my past life. At times I even believed that I would be released and free to go soon. However, when I got acquainted with the Soviet reality from close at hand, their interrogation methods, the lies on which the life in the Soviet Union was based upon, I ceased to believe in this. Whenever I stand in front of the door of my cell or near the gates of the camp, the words from Dante's *Inferno* run through my mind – "Abandon all hope, all you who enter". With this thought in my mind I passed through the gate into the prison camp Karabas. This was a transit camp where normally thousands of prisoners stay, waiting to be transferred to permanent prisons. They stay in this camp for several months, sometimes for six months, or even up to a year, the reason for this waiting period is the large number of inmates in all the Soviet prison camps totaling about 25 million people. At the time of my arrival in Karabas the camp held 6,000 prisoners.

We were herded into the yard of the camp and left on the out side as all the barracks were full to capacity. To our luck the weather was mild and even though it was autumn the day was warm and sunny. The yard was half full of prisoners. It was divided into several areas – a special area held the hospital and the bathhouse, sentries were positioned between the areas. All the areas were fenced off by barbed wire. A special barrack holds 800-900 "thieves". They are very well organized and are subject to the stringent discipline of this organization. Another barrack holds the "shrews", thieves who quit the organization. "Traitors" so to speak, they too number several hundreds. These two camps are hostile to each other; never a day passes without fistfights, clashes or even murder between them. These "thieves" and the "shrews" too are considered part of the Soviet youth. And more than once they declare themselves proudly: "I am a member of the Komsomol".

Murders are frequent occurrences in the Karabas prison. It sometimes happens that during a fracas a commander of a camp unit is stabbed to death, or that the body of one of the prisoners, either from the "thieves" or the "shrews", is found in the camp gutter. Investigations do not uncover anything. The barracks in all the Soviet camps, where these criminals live are called for some reason "Shanghai".

I'm lying on the ground in the yard of the camp. Lunch is being distributed, some gruel and bread, that's all our lunch. A short distance from me two prisoners are sitting, I overhear their conversation with the food distributor... "No need.... We are not eating..." The food distributor was surprised and did not understand the meaning of this. Hunger strike? For some reason this matter aroused my curiosity, and I listened more closely to the conversation of these two prisoners, then suddenly I hear the words "Yom Kippur"...and I understood the reason of their refusal to eat. I approached them. They are Jews, and because it's Yom Kippur today they are fasting. I gave my gruel to neighbors and joined the two in their fast uttering some words of prayer that I remember. For what reason these two Jews were arrested? Who knows? I never saw them again.

By the evening, I, with some tens of other prisoners, were brought to the "transit hall", I took a place on a bench by the wall and slumbered the whole night half asleep. This half sleep was hampered all through the night. At midnight the camp commander entered the transit hall and began to shine his flashlight on those sleeping on the floor. Suddenly he noticed two youths and began to holler at them: "Caught you, you miserable nothings! Again your hands are outstretched, stealing". Then mercilessly, like a wild animal, he started beating them with a stick he held in his hand, and

kicking them with his boots, this lasted for about ten minutes, when he finished the two were half dead. “I will yet return to you two and teach you a lesson,” he shouted. After seeing this event could I fall asleep again? I did not close an eyelid the whole night.

On the next morning – “medical check-up”, which took place in a small wooden shack. The doctor inquires: “Healthy? Any illnesses in the past?” that’s the whole medical check. The doctor is a prisoner too; he is serving as the head doctor in the camp for the last two years. However, a month later he was fired and transferred to another camp, I learned that he was not a doctor at all but a watchmaker, he was employed as a hospital orderly in other camps, gradually learned hospital routines then started passing himself off as a doctor. When he learned that I was a doctor, he billeted me in the hospital barrack in a special ward for the “frail” patients, sick prisoners who require hospital food. This ward is like any other cell with bunks attached to the walls except that the inmates who are billeted there get better food which includes some milk, butter and an additional portion of ten grams of sugar. Doctors also are billeted in this ward. About 150 people were billeted in this ward among them twenty doctors who were waiting for their turn to be transferred to other camps. Some of them were in this transit camp for over six months. Several days later I was appointed the official doctor of this ward for the frail patients and also started to receive patients in a small room adjoining the ward. In addition to this I was also appointed the official doctor of two woman’s wards. The number of women billeted in the adjoining barracks came to 1500.

Camp Doctor
Chapter 9, Para B

One day during the morning hours, a woman dressed in a white robe entered the clinic reception room and informed me that she was appointed to work as a nurse in my clinic. Following her, the director of the hospital barrack, a Jewish druggist (a former prisoner who completed his prison term), entered and confirmed what the nurse informed previously. At the end of the clinic reception hours, the nurse told me that she too is Jewish and studied nursing in a school for nurses in... Jerusalem! She knows Hebrew and her tutor was I. H. Brenner in person. Following this revelation we spoke very often on my favorite subject...the Land of Israel. Even before she finished serving her first prison term she was sentenced again to another term of ten years. She worked in my clinic for a short while and was then transferred to another camp where I met her again four years later. In the year 1953 she finished serving her second term and was freed. Later on, this nurse met a friend from her past life who came to the Soviet Union with a Polish delegation headed by Gomolka, this friend helped her leave the Soviet Union to Poland where she joined the Communist Party. In 1961 she came to Israel and visited me at my home in Ramat Gan. Our meeting as free people in our free homeland was most inspiring and stirring, we recalled many memories of our mutual past.

During one of the evenings while I was reclining on my bunk immersed in doleful thoughts, someone entered our barrack and told me that I am wanted in the clinic of the hospital. I hurried to the hospital where, in the semi-darkness of the room, the head doctor (he too was Jewish) pointed at a woman standing by the window:

“This woman wants to see you”.

“Do you recognize me?”

“No... but who can see in this darkness?” I answered a little excitedly, “Who are you?”

She told me her name, to which, on hearing it I was stirred to tears. She did not want to turn on the light, as she was afraid to be seen with me. I knew her and her family during my childhood years in Perm. After the revolution her family moved to Manchuria and we met again in Harbin. Her parents died in Harbin. Her two daughters, one a doctor and the other a nurse, and one of her brothers, returned to Russia (“the motherland is waiting”). The brother disappeared and no one knew what befell him – perhaps he died in prison or executed. This was the time when Yezhov was in power. The sisters were arrested for “cooperating with the Imperialists” and “assistance to world bourgeoisie”. They were

prosecuted according to paragraph 10 of the Soviet penal law and both sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. The sisters served their sentences in prisons and camps, were released at the end of their terms. Both are now working at their specific professions in hospitals in various camps in Kazakhstan. They learned that I was imprisoned in camp Karabas and one of them, the doctor, came now to our camp on duty to accompany patients who were being transferred to another camp for surgery, and took this opportunity to see me. She brought me a sack full of clothing – a coat, quilted trousers, a cap with earmuffs, a blanket, gloves and also foodstuffs. In addition to that, after the doctor left Karabas, the nurses from her camp sent me every week, for several weeks, underwear and other clothing items, once they even included a small sum of money. This, of course, was carried out most carefully, so that their contacts with me were not exposed. Many ex-prisoners who remained employed in the camps were punished and sentenced to prison terms for maintaining contacts with prisoners. I never met these sisters again. They were later transferred to other camps and all my efforts to renew contact with them were fruitless. In time it came to my knowledge that both of them died from cancer – one in 1951 and the other one a year later.

Life is hard in Karabas. I am perpetually shrouded in loneliness. Of the 20 doctors billeted with me in the barracks, no one arouses any interest in me. The younger ones among them, the new Generation, are of a low cultural level. I found out that some of them were not even doctors at all.

There is a big demand for doctors in all the prison camps and the head of the “Sanitary” department began to summon the doctors living in my barrack in order to check their medical abilities. Some gave their specialization as surgeons, some skin doctors others gave their specialization as internal doctors. Two admitted that they did not complete their studies in medicine. Some just lied about their medical abilities as none of us had any medical documents. Because of this it was decided to carry out a sort of exam to determine the real abilities of these doctors. A board comprising of three doctors from the hospital was formed to carry out the exam. Of the 20 doctors that were summoned for this exam only six showed up and only two of them, one a Spanish surgeon and the other an internal doctor, were asked some questions pertaining to medicine. The remaining four and me among them, were not asked any questions at all and the head of the sanitary department even apologized to us for the inconvenience. The names of the people that did not appear for the exam were struck out from the list of doctors, as they were not really doctors. They were even forced to admit this.

One day a doctor was brought to our barrack – a prisoner who was on his way to Moscow to appear in court as a witness in one of the trials. He

does not know nor does anyone tell him anything about the trial. He stayed in our barrack for three days and was my bunk neighbor. This doctor was an active worrier for Macedonian independence, one of the Macedonian leaders. A Bulgarian citizen, on one occasion he passed through the Soviet Union, was arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison. He is serving his sentence in one of the Soviet camps. During the three days he stayed with us he told me a lot about himself and his struggles. His confinement in the Soviet camp did nothing to change his beliefs or resolve.

One evening as I was reclining on my bunk I suddenly heard someone calling my name. An unfamiliar voice telling me that a group had arrived today from Petropavlosk and that one of the group has a letter for me from my family. I became overjoyed: "A small event!" a letter from home! God in Heaven! It is more than three years that I did not hear anything, and knew nothing about my family. Where is this person who brought this letter? In which barrack is he billeted? What is his name? No one knew. I ran through all the areas where the group from Petropavlovsk might be. In the first two areas I ran from one barrack to another but did not find anyone. In one of the barracks of the third area I was told that the group that arrived is there, they comprise 400 people but they are all asleep now. I explain my request to the "Elder" of the group and plead with him to help me find this person. We walk carefully among the sleeping bodies calling out "Who brought a letter for the doctor?" no one responds, everyone is sleeping. Eventually someone answers. He points to his sleeping neighbor and says that the letter is with him. It was difficult to wake him up and it took some time until he understood what is it that we want of him, and after giving a big yawn and stretch he pulled a small note out of his stocking. This note was a short letter from two friends from Harbin that were imprisoned in Petropavlovsk, informing me that my family is well and that just a short while ago they saw my wife and my two sons. May God bless them both and with many thanks from me. This was the first news I heard of my family for three years

Some Jews arrived in our camp and were billeted in our barrack. One of them, a professor of philosophy. He is serving a second term of ten years. The first ten years he served in a camp called Kolima. In this camp his right leg froze and had to be amputated. He now walks around with the aid of crutches. Highly educated, intelligent and knowledgeable, he was very bitter, hated humanity and did not trust anybody. Sometimes we carried on long conversations on philosophical subjects especially on Spinoza and his teachings. He was not interested in Judaism or its problems or the fate of the Jewish people. He gets very excited when we touch the subject of Bolshevism or Communism, just like waving a red cloth in front of a bull. Another Jew, from the recently arrived group,

was born in Warsaw. Like many other Polish Jews who found themselves in Russia after the war, he too was arrested and sentenced to a term of ten years. An angry and nervous individual. He was aware of his Jewishness and liked to speak in Yiddish. He changed bunks with someone and is now sleeping next to my bunk. Our conversations on subjects close to our hearts made our harsh existence a little more bearable. In a low voice we talked about Judaism, on the Jews of Poland on Israel. He tried to persuade me to write to my relatives in the Soviet Union so as to establish contact with them; this might help us here in the camp. I actually pondered this matter more than once by myself but feared that writing to my brother and sister might cause them harm with the authorities because of their brother the “Zionist”, the “anti-revolutionary” they too might be arrested. My neighbor did succeed in persuading me and even dispatched the letter through one of his free friends residing outside the camp. I wrote to my brother, without mentioning where I am staying and from where the letter is being sent, only this – That I am alive, in good health and when I’ll have a permanent address he’ll be informed. This was in the month of October 1948; I did not know then that my brother passed away in 1942 during the siege of Leningrad.

Camp Doctor – Chapter 9, Para C

The snow season has started. Every once in a while we are struck by terrible snowstorms that rage for three to four days. One cannot see anything out-side; we cannot venture out of the barrack because of the danger of being swept away by the wind or buried by the snow. In order to get to the toilet, which is situated outside the barrack, one has to hold on to a thick rope, which was stretched from our door to the door of the toilet. Before the rope was stretched, some people lost their way, were swept away by the storm, then buried by the snow and died. Now we hold tightly on to the rope while the storm shrieks and wails and echo's all through the barrack. Dear God, how can one fall asleep on a night like this, often the storm does not subside for days, and even after the storm has subsided it is impossible to leave the barrack for days as the snow is piled up everywhere and no one can pass neither by foot nor by vehicle.

One of the prisoners committed suicide by cutting his throat with a piece of glass. A commotion erupted in the barrack, everyone was talking about the suicide –“ He was tired of living” “He had a sordid life...” Then suddenly from the top bunks someone shouted: “What are you all cackling about, aren't you all tired of the life here? you don't have the will power to put an end to your wretched lives... he had the courage to put an end to his life and must we judge him in a negative light for that?” Yes, this wretch had the strength to put and end to his life; he lost faith in himself, in humanity and everything else.

One day the women were moved to a special area of the camp, at some distance from the men's quarters. While the women were quartered nearby scandals occurred, night hunts, fistfights, and the barbed wire fence that separated the women's area from the men's was easily scaled. Men used to be found in the women's barracks and women in the men's barracks. A special area of the camp was prepared and nearly 2000 women were moved there, the children who stayed with the women were moved to special children's barracks. I was appointed to be the resident doctor of the women's area and was provided with a clinic in the basement of one of the barracks. I received the patients in a small room and behind a partition in this room my bunk was located. The patients, who were in need of longer hospital treatments, were sent to the civilian hospital in Karabas where a separate room was allotted for the inmates of the prison. The doors and windows were barred with iron bars and in front of the door an armed sentry was stationed day and night. The men were not permitted to enter the women's area except those specifically authorized, and of course me. Of the 2000 women about half are “political” that were sentenced according to paragraph 58. The other half were “criminal”, mostly for theft but some among them for murder. The “politicals” were billeted in separate barracks from the “criminals”. Never a night passes that I am not awakened and summoned to give first aid to someone. When I am summoned to the barracks of the “politicals”, the reasons are usually for illnesses such as:

Heart attack, high fever, gall pains or liver problems and so on. On the other hand when I am summoned to “Shanghai”, that’s the name of one of the barracks of the “criminals”, the reason, very likely, is to tend to serious wounds resulting from fist fights or brawls. The nurse who accompanies me carries with her bandages, iodine and drugs to stop serious bleeding, and so on.

One night I was summoned to “Shanghai”. A serious brawl took place. The “prefect” of the barrack, an elderly woman, who is serving her third term for various “good deeds” – theft, robbery and even poisoning – meets me and the nurse very cordially and reports of several wounded women. The barrack was in uproar. The “prefect” bangs on the table and succeeds to somewhat quiet the situation, she then shouts to her flock “girls, do not dare to take anything from the doctor, nothing is to be stolen from him – do you understand? If not I’ll skin your hides with my own hands, understood?” She then turned to me saying “Don’t worry doctor, nothing will be taken from you”.

The “prefects” speech impressed me very much, although we tended to the wounded for several hours, nothing was “taken” from neither the nurse nor me. This is real discipline I thought to myself.

One of the barracks in the women’s area housed women mainly from Latvia; they were imprisoned for belonging to the Latvian Nationalist Movement. This barrack also housed women from the Ukraine mostly for the aid they rendered to the anti-Soviet gangs of Bandera*. These gangs, on entering various villages, used to take forcefully from the farmers their horses and food. On leaving the village and the return of the Soviet authorities, the whole village including the women were charged with giving aid to the gangs and sentenced to 20 – 25 years in prison.

Quite a few of the political prisoners were nuns and other religious women who spent much of their time in prayer. From time to time they lead the whole group in prayer and every Saturday evening they hold a general festive prayer. Once I happened to be present at one of those prayer sessions. The whole barrack participated. They sang all together in harmony, causing a solemn atmosphere all around. On Christmas the festive atmosphere was even higher. Yes, Christmas was a big day for the prisoners, in their sordid lives in the camp, a holiday, a spiritual uplifting, joyful and happy faces hugging each other with wishes for Christ’s resurrection.

Every day at a regular hour the women gather on a slope at the perimeter of the camp to meet their steady boyfriends, fiancées, and husbands (The women refer to their men as “mine”) from the men’s area who gather at a certain distance. They wave to each other and carry on a conversation by a sign language and shouting, some of them using a sort of horn voice enhancer made of paper, or a rusted samovar smoke pipe. I tried many times to look at them when they conversed but could never understand anything, they, however were completely proficient in their sign language with the aid of head movements, lips and fingers and other parts of the body they could easily understand each other.

Once every ten days the women go to the bathhouse, which is situated in the men’s area. Heavily armed guards escort the women. Guards too surround the men’s barracks in order to prevent any meetings between the men and their girl friends. Hundreds of men, however, who long to see their wives or girl friends, or just to look at a woman’s face, gather on the other side of the barbed wire fence to watch – nature is stronger than the guards or their weapons.

*Leader of a gang that fought the Soviet Authorities in the Ukraine

Camp Doctor Chapter 10 Section A

At the end of January 1949 I was informed that I am being sent by “ATAP” to another camp. Two weeks earlier a doctor and one of the administrative commanders of all the camps in the area arrived to Karabas in order to choose a work group to be sent to camp Kangir. A committee was formed for this specific purpose to determine the working ability of all the prisoners. I too was a member of this committee in the women’s section. When the two visitors learned my name they told me: “We need you, you will come with us”.

“Where to is ‘with us’?”

“To the mine...in Jiskazgan... you will be our doctor”.

From Karabas the ATAP traveled for four days. We were about 60 – 70 people among who were three doctors. During one of the four days of travel the train stopped for a long time in the wilderness. No reason for this stoppage was given nor were we permitted to leave the wagon. After four days we arrived somewhere. The place was the camp Kangir, situated About 500 kilometers north of Karaganda. This was on the 31st of January 1949. “Well, here I am in a new place, in a new Soviet camp” I pondered. All the arrivals were interned in an isolated barrack, while us, the doctors, were billeted in a barrack for doctors, where we met three other colleagues of our profession. On the next day I was summoned to the director of the hospital (a Jewish woman from Minsk, previously, she served a prison term of ten years, but a year later was fired from her job as the director of the hospital for the reason that ex-prisoners are not permitted to work in camps). She appointed me to serve as the head doctor of the internal department of the hospital. I received a room adjacent to the office of the sanitary department, where my old friend from the Sverdlovsk and Karabas prisons was billeted - the Spanish surgeon.

The camp hospital was quite large and included a surgery and two internal-medicine departments. Kangir, itself, is a big camp; it has two areas for men and one area for women and houses a total of about 6000 prisoners. This is a “special” camp that holds only prisoners who were sentenced under paragraph 58, namely - political prisoners that were charged for “counter-revolutionary” activities, “betrayal of the motherland”, “spying”, “terror”, “aiding world bourgeoisie”, “cooperation with the imperialistic powers”, “belonging to dangerous elements socially”, “acquaintance with foreigners”, “sympathy to the West”.

A strict prison discipline prevails in the camp. The area designated for women is situated between the two areas designated for men. This situation causes many disruptions as the men and sometimes the women cross over at night from one area to the other. During day light hours the internees meet near the barbed wire fence that separates between the men and the women. The authorities had no power to prevent these meetings until one day they decided to put the men in two adjoining areas and separate the men’s areas from the women’s by erecting a high stone wall between the areas, which they did. The hospital, however, was situated in the women’s area and the men who required hospital treatment were brought there. In time, a hospital was also set up in the men’s area and only when surgery was required were the men brought to the women’s area. The wall, however, that separated the men from the women did not stop the contacts between the sexes, the men and also the women

managed to cross over the wall by means of a rope ladder. Some of the prisoners were caught and there were even cases where the wall climbers were shot at by the guards.

The hospital, as mentioned previously, was situated in the women's area and all the men, including the doctors were separated from this area. Only myself and another doctor a bacteriologist remained. I was the doctor of the internal section and also of the children's ward, which too was in the women's area. In the children's ward there were 120 children, all of whom not over two years old, most, breast-fed. I was responsible for their well-being. Every once in a while the mothers of the children cause a furor when they forcibly enter the children's ward and demand to see their children. According to the regulations, however, the mothers, who are breast feeding, are permitted to enter the children's ward only at nursing times, while the rest of the mothers are permitted to visit once a week. There were many mothers, who became pregnant to some coincidental man in the camp and gave birth to the "bastard" (in their language) in the camp. There were also mothers who were pregnant by their lawful husbands and were arrested and imprisoned while being pregnant. First the husband was arrested and later the wife too with no consideration of her being pregnant in the sixth or seventh month and giving birth in the camp.

My activities in the children's ward take up much of my time, nearly most of the day, and very often I am also called during the night. My duties in the internal department, which normally contains about 150 sick, also take up many hours of my time. My department had only two doctors working and among the 150 sick women in the ward I had to treat 70 – 80 of them. The work was hard and really beyond my strength. In addition to all that I was transported daily, for a period of two hours at least to Sotsgorod (a new city being built which was later renamed New Jiskazgan) and to Kangir, the city, to treat patients who were outside the camp. I also treated all officials and their families, from the camp commander down to the lowest supervisors. In time I was also summoned to treat people from the civil authorities, this of course with the special permission of the camp commander. Every day I was transported either by cart or automobile to treat the engineers, bank managers, accountants, all this in addition to the camp personnel. I worked daily for 16-17 hours. And in addition to all that village residents used to visit me in the camp with their sick children whom I treated because I was ordered to do so. Often I was ordered to vacate a room in the hospital for some important personality who was sick and I personally was obliged to treat him. My department had three rooms, in one of which I lived and the two others were intended for the seriously ill. Many times I had to vacate a room in favor of someone from outside the camp who did not want to be treated by the regular civilian hospital and received special permission from the prison authorities to be treated at the camp hospital. I of course, was obligated to treat them too and also to give him a special private room, supply them with drugs from the meager hospital stores, and to put at his disposal a nurse. Could I refuse? They are the masters while the prisoners are nothing but slaves at their master's mercy.

One day an engineer came to me, Jewish, he was assigned to work for a period of two years in Jiskazgan, His child was sick and he received a special permission from the camp commander to see me. I checked the sick child and wrote the necessary prescription after which I intended to return to the camp. The engineer and his wife insisted that I remain and have lunch with them. My escort whose duty it was to see that I return to the camp was also fed in the kitchen. The engineer lived in a small two-room hut nearly empty of furniture the lunch, however, was good. During the lunch we talked about Jewish topics, the persecution of the Zionists and even on the State of Israel. Talking to them I felt their hearts were with me. Three days later the

engineer, his wife and the child, who has meanwhile recovered, came to see me in the camp. As a gesture of their appreciation the father placed on my table a collection of selected stories by Shalom-Aleichem in Russian.

D–Camp Doctor Chapter 9

Among the 2000 women prisoners I cannot find any woman of the Jewish faith. I search everywhere for Jewish inmates. I am aware that many hide the fact of their being Jewish. "Life is easier" for non-Jews. I suspected some of being Jewish but no one ever admitted to this. One day a young girl came to the clinic, about 18 years old, she is not feeling well. I examined her and prescribed a medication, but the girl does not leave the clinic, she looks around her then asks hesitatingly:

"Doctor, are you Jewish"

"Yes I am Jewish"

"I am Jewish too" answers the girl, "I am from Georgia, of the Mountain-Jews" Her parents were born in Georgia and live in the Dagistan region. The girl speaks Russian fluently, and also speaks a little of her mother tongue, the Tatic language. Her parents, as do most of the local Jews, cultivate silk. They adhere to the Jewish traditions, celebrate the Jewish holidays, especially the Passover. There are about 300 Jews living in their village and they even have a Rabbi. The girl knows very little about Judaism and about the Jewish people.

"Why were you arrested?" I ask her. "Under which paragraph?"

The girl becomes confused and a blush spreads over her cheeks. She was confined with the criminals, in the "Shanghai" barrack.

"You are Jewish from a good Jewish home, it is not fitting for a girl like you to be involved in such matters, and to be found among those criminals. You must change your ways after you are released, even now in prison, you must try to be honest and straight".

The girl bursts out in tears and answers humbly:

"I am ashamed of myself, I am sorry that I told you I am Jewish and caused you pain. I have no redemption, I am lost forever" and with a tearful face she runs from the room.

After several days I am called at night to the woman's "Shanghai" barrack. Again a brawl took place and there were several injured. I came, accompanied by a nurse; we started to tend to the injured. I asked the prefect about the girl without mentioning of her being Jewish, as no one knew about this. The prefect told me that several days earlier she was injured very seriously by one of the inmates, she lost a lot of blood and was sent to the hospital. I never saw this Jewish girl again and I don't know what befell her.

One day in accordance with a decree declared by the camp authorities, they began to send the women to hard labor – to a brick factory and also to work in a quarry. The road to these sites was long at least two hours. Many women tried to evade this work giving all kinds of excuses; the main excuse was running to the camp doctor asking to be released due to illness. A most trying situation for me. One woman, for instance, is lying on her bunk claiming she cannot get up, what should I do with her? She was imprisoned for nothing, rotting in prison for several years, not getting enough to eat and now she is being sent for hard labor. Working with no compensation for her labors. There was a time when the workers were receiving something for their work But Stalin, in 1948, established "special prison camps" for prisoners sentenced under paragraph 58, where the meager salary they received was revoked too. There are many cases that the prisoners wound themselves on purpose or poison themselves in order to be exempt from going to work. In the prison jargon it is called "Masterka". The most used and tested method is to thread a needle, dip the thread in some dirty puddle or dirty sand, insert the needle under the skin of the hand or leg and to guide

the thread under the skin for some length of the hand or leg. The result: an inflammation with pus and abscess. Many do it; many times sick women are brought to me sick with abscesses and inflammation with pus of the hand or leg. The hand is red, swollen with high fever and very painful. In cases like this the patient must be hospitalized immediately. The camp commanders, however, are suspicious and question me whether this is not a case of self-inflicted injury. I insist that this is an urgent case for hospitalization and the abscess must be opened. The commanders are not satisfied and ask again: "Is this not a case of masterka?" I do not enter into any arguments; the woman is very ill and is in need of urgent hospitalization. I am questioned very often by the camp commanders on these matters.

On the basement level of the clinic barrack next to my room lives a woman prisoner who is in charge of economic administration. One evening she fell ill and I was summoned to help her. When I came to her room I found her bedridden with high fever. One hand was swollen and enflamed and she is groaning with pain. "What happened?" I ask her. She confessed to me that she committed a "masterka" on herself.

"Why did you do it? You are not working at hard labor".

"I'm fed up" she replies, "This is a good excuse. I'll rest in hospital for a couple of days, if not I'll put an end to my life". I went to the guard and told him that the woman must be sent immediately to the hospital and added that the matter is urgent. For three days I was questioned, by the various camp commanders, about her, how could this have happened, could her illness be self-inflicted.

"I do not know, perhaps this was caused by an infection or a lesion on her skin, I do not know for sure, all I know is that I found she has an inflammation with pus, high fever and is in need of urgent hospitalization" I answer the interrogators. They are not happy and are not satisfied. If this was a case of self-infliction they could charge and try her again and sentence her to an additional period of imprisonment.

Self-infliction is the most used method in the camp, but many other ruses are tried by the wretched souls suffering from violence and duress by the authorities.

Camp Doctor Chapter 10 Section A

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engineer, his wife and the child, who has meanwhile recovered, came to see me in the camp. As a gesture of their appreciation the father placed on my table a collection of selected stories by Shalom-Aleichem in Russian.

Camp Doctor
Chapter 10, Section B

One day the "Ophir" (the KGB representative in the camp) fell ill and was bedridden. I was summoned to his bedside. The examination revealed a possibility of stomach typhus and I recommended that he be hospitalized. He insisted to be hospitalized in the camp hospital and that I personally tend to him. "I will go there with you and you see to it that a special room is prepared for me". said the "Ophir". I answered him that a new directive has been issued that only the prison inmates are permitted to be hospitalized in the camp hospital. The "Ophir" who is a captain by rank, hollered at me: "Who can prevent me from being hospitalized in the prison hospital? I will go with you to the hospital without any delay, now".

For six weeks this officer, who was also Jewish, was interned in the hospital in a special room. As he was all by himself in this room we used to talk every day on Jewish matters. In his childhood he studied in the "cheder" and he still remembers many things he learned as a child. He reminisced with fondness on his life in the past. His wife, who is also Jewish comes every day to visit him, she told me once that her husband was a "good Jew".

One day as I was resting in bed in my room, a nurse came in and said: "Doctor, the "Ophir" wants to see you".

I went to his room, his wife was with him, the table near his bed was covered with a tablecloth and on it stood a bottle of wine and some baked items. The wife locks the door and asks me to sit, then says:

"Today is the holiday "Shevuot" and we should celebrate"

She poured wine into the glasses: "Chag Sameach" (happy holiday), we then sipped of the wine and ate from the baked items. In this unexpected way I celebrated Shevuot.

This "Ophir" was admired by the prisoners in spite of the unpleasant duties that he had to carry out which caused hardships on the prisoners and as a result hate. In the days of the former "Ophir", who also was Jewish, the punishment ward was full to the brim; he used to punish the prisoners for every minor misconduct. While at present this ward was nearly always empty. After some time, however, he was transferred to another camp. Among the people of authority in the camp there were quite a few officers of Jewish origin. It was rumored that the Jewish officers serving in the Red Army were intentionally assigned to serve in the camps at jobs that naturally caused hatred by the prisoners. I met Jewish officers in nearly every camp in which I imprisoned, there were officers of Jewish origin serving as camp commanders, in charge of supplies, health services and also among the "Ophirs".

There were Jews among the prisoners in camp Kangir, some of them trying to hide their Jewish identity. Among the women there were ten of Jewish origin. One of them was in prison just because her brother was a Jewish poet who was active in the Jewish Committee for Anti-Fascism. After he was arrested she too was arrested and sentenced to a term of seven years. Her brother in 1952 suffered the same fate as all the Jewish poets and authors at that time.

A young woman of about 22 years of age was hospitalized in my department. An expression of deep sadness was permanently spread over her face. She does not speak to anyone. Isolates herself from everyone in the barracks and in the yard during the daily walk. Alone, always alone. One evening during my routine sick round in the ward she approaches me:

"Must I still remain in the hospital for a long time?"

“Why are you asking?”

“I would like to speak to you, doctor”.

“Certainly, after I finish my rounds”.

The girl is Jewish from the Ukraine, tells me what befell her: In many cities in the Ukraine there exist groups of Jewish youth, who in secret study the Hebrew language and the history of the Jewish people. She was active in one of the groups. Someone informed the authorities on them. Most of them were arrested for this “crime”. Tried and sentenced according to paragraph 58 clause 10, and all were sentenced to ten years of hard labor. After serving about half a year in preliminary detention, she was sentenced to ten years and sent to the Kangir camp. Young, educated, alert she was very nervous all the time. Every day during my break from the hospital work while I’m walking in the yard of the hospital, she comes to me and asks to hear on Jewish life, on Jewish problems, on Zionism and she on her part tells me about the state of mind of some of the Jewish youths of Ukraine, on the change that took place in their minds since the State of Israel was established and their ardent desire to take part in its development... “Fate, however, decided differently” she used to end with tears in her eyes. Life in the camp was hard and difficult for her and draining her strength gradually. Very often she used to cry bitterly. I kept her in the hospital for as long as possible and when she fully recovered and had to be returned to her barrack, I confirmed that she was unable to perform physical hard labor and did everything I could to see that she should not be abused. She was assigned to work in the hospital area at easier tasks. What befell her eventually, I do not know. In 1950 I was transferred to another camp and have never seen her since.

There were other Jewish women in the camp. Some of them held previously senior positions in the Soviet Union and even were members of the communist party. One of them, a lawyer was heading a very important trust concern. She was imprisoned because she was a sister to a famous communist, a general in the Red Army in 1936 during the era of Yezhov who was executed, her husband too, in that period, was eliminated. Some of the woman prisoners are already serving a second term in the prison. After an imprisonment of ten years they were released but within a month they were arrested again tried on the same charge as the previous one against the same paragraph 58 and sentenced to an additional ten years, there were many cases of this type, too many.

The camp has a library and a reading room. The book stocks are very meager. “Pravda” and “Izvestia” are received in one edition only and 7-8 days late. I read mainly the last page where the news from abroad is printed. Although these reports are censored and very often do not reflect the truth I read these news items as there are no other news papers available. Editions that carry a picture of Stalin are not forwarded to the library, this, to avoid his “admirers” to make fun or abuse the picture of “his Majesty”. Among the prisoners there was one man who was sentenced against paragraph 58 clause 8. This clause deals with terror. This person tore and cut with a knife Stalin’s picture that hung on the wall. For this act of “terror”, “an attempt on the life of Stalin” he was sentenced to 15 years. This story sounds like a joke, but this is the whole truth – this demonstrates the reality in the Soviet Union.

Days of anxiety arrived at our camp. The detention center is full to the brim. From time to time prisoners are brought to trial for crimes committed in the camp itself. A poet who was among the camp prisoners was tried in court because one evening while reclining on his bed he read poems composed by himself to his “poetical circle”. The poems, it was charged were saturated with “anti-Soviet” implications and his “poetic circle” is nothing but a secret “anti-revolutionary” organization. Six of the participants

were tried in court, they were charged with holding meetings in the hospital, including in the prison. After a detention period of about a month were tried and sentenced, The poet was sentenced to 25 years and the others to 15 years each one. This in addition to the period they all were serving presently. One of the girls among this group was declared not guilty. It was rumored that it was she who exposed the group To the authorities.

One of the doctors gave me the poems to read. I read them and found nothing “anti-revolutionary” in them. On the other hand, is it conceivable to sing about freedom and liberty while you are imprisoned and handcuffed and not be an anti-revolutionary? Is it also conceivable to sing of the free open fields of the motherland while one is behind barbed wires and not be an anti-revolutionary? Slavery and thoughts about freedom do not go together and are definitely “anti-revolutionary” in the eyes of the authorities.

Trials like this were spectacles that take place very often in the camps. My colleague, a doctor, that in the past was the minister of health in one of the Soviet republics, a long time member of the communist party, was sentenced to 15 years at a work camp. After serving six year of imprisonment he was sentenced to another 10 years after he carelessly said something that they considered counter revolutionary.

Camp Doctor
Chapter 10, Section C

One day I am summoned by one of the interrogators, whom I knew previously, when I was sent to his home to treat his child who was ill. I am brought to his home in the camp. For some unknown reason his home was called the “house of guile” and whenever the woman who works in his home as a servant, comes in to one of the camps barracks all the inmates are stricken with fear; perhaps she came to fetch him to the “house of guile”. The interrogator shows me photographs of three women. I am not acquainted with any one of them, but the interrogator claims that I do know one of them, the one whose picture is lying between the other two.

“You know her well and so does she, she told us a lot about you”.

I still insist that I do not know the woman. He then asks whether I know a Mr. A.

“Yes I knew him. That was twenty years ago when he left Harbin to go to the land of Israel and since then I never heard of him”

“And did you know his daughter?” he asks.

“I do not remember”.

“Well,” says the interrogator, pointing at the picture “That’s his daughter – and she knows you very well”.

Strange, this woman went to Israel together with her father, how did her picture get to the MG”B, only God knows. I was never questioned again on this matter and up to the present day have never learned the reason.

Life in camp is becoming harder and harder every day, restrictions, constraints, abuses, shortages. A new directive was issued by the camp authorities: The wearing of private clothing was forbidden and only the prison garb is to be worn. As punishment for those caught wearing private clothing the prisoner is put into solitary confinement for a few days and the only food he receives is 300 grams of bread and water daily.

The women are issued with a shirt, a skirt and a coat. They, however, do not concede and insist on wearing private clothing and often an uproar erupts for this reason. The inspectors chase them then drag them to the “House of Guile” and to solitary confinement. In the barracks searches are carried out for private clothing and when found they are forcibly taken away. After some time it was decided by the authorities to sew on to the clothing numerals – on the hat, on the back of the pullover, the coat, the shirts and the trousers. The prisoner is covered from head to toe with eye attracting numbers of groups of four or five numerals each. If, God forbid, numerals are missing on one of the clothing items, the punishment is solitary confinement I did not sew any numerals on my clothing and informed the camp commander that I will never agree to go outside the camp area to treat patients in the city if I’m forced to wear numerals on my clothing. The camp commander nodded his head without saying a word. Eventually they “decorated” only one pair of my trousers. Only in 1954 after Stalin’s death this “directive of numbers” was cancelled

Every evening after the head count of the prisoners all the doors to the barracks are locked by lock and key till six o’clock in the morning. The prisoners suffer from the heat, especially at night during the summer months, the windows are grated very densely, and each barrack houses approximately 800 people. The hospital barracks are locked too and even the doctor on duty is locked in his barrack and cannot visit the hospital during the night, only at midnight the doors of the hospital barracks are opened and the doctor on duty accompanied by the duty supervisor make the night rounds of all the other hospital barracks. After the rounds the doctor is returned to his

barrack and the doors are locked again till the morning. The doctors mentioned this to the prison authorities many times about this restriction hampering them to render immediate aid to the sick due to the locked doors, but nothing helped, the answer always was “it is forbidden”!

One night while I was the duty doctor, I suddenly heard knocks on the wall followed by loud shouting coming from the neighboring barrack:

“Help! Some one is dying”.

I was locked in my barrack and could not go out. I too started knocking on the door, the nurse started to shout and so did the hospital patients. The shouting continued for about half an hour until the duty supervisor, who was asleep in one of the further barracks, arrived. He opened my barrack and together with him I hurried to the neighboring barrack. I examined the patient and diagnosed that he had a strong inflammation of the appendicitis. I summoned the surgeon and the patient was operated on immediately. The next morning I reported on this urgent surgery during my session with the prison authorities (called by us the “five minute” hour- every morning the duty doctor had to report on all the happenings in the hospital during the past day, the number of new patients accepted, the number released, deaths and so on, these sessions were supposed to last five minutes but usually lasted an hour)) and again I raised my request not to lock the hospital barrack doors. The director of the hospital answered me on this request “What can I do? My instructions are to lock the doors for the night” at the end of the session the director added:

“And if someone will escape who will then be responsible?”

Nothing changed and as in the past the doors remained locked every night with seven bolts. A week after of this event the camp commander summoned me to his office, his daughter fell ill and he wanted me to go with him to his home. On the way I told him what happened at the hospital, he knew nothing of that incident and was surprised that the duty officer did not report to him about it, I replied: “Perhaps the duty officer did not know anything about what happened then, we were locked in our barracks and could not inform him about this”.

The camp commander hesitated. I could feel that he too was not completely satisfied with this “ban”!

He offers a suggestion, that a duty officer be stationed near the hospital barracks during the night hours, then, after further thought on this matter he said that he’ll agree not to lock the hospital barracks on the condition that the duty doctors be responsible that no prison rules or regulations are broken. Contrary to other camps where I have been during my prison years, the hospital barracks were locked at night and many mishaps occurred because of that. Only after Stalin’s death were the iron bars taken off the hospital windows and the duty doctors were not locked-in during the night hours.

Although I am responsible for the internal department and the children’s hospital I have been “offered” or to be more exact, “ordered” to take charge of two minor wards in the surgery department, where the number of patients does not reach over 50. My first visit to these wards took place in the company of the hospital head doctor and two nurses.

While going through one of the wards we heard a heart-piercing scream, one of the women patients is calling me by my name and bursts into hysterical tears. I approached the woman, while my escorts look at me in amazement. She kneels on her bed and stretches her hands towards me weeping. Who is she? Her face is not familiar to me, I try to placate her but her emotion infects me too.

“Who are you?”

“Doctor don’t you recognize me? I’m Valia K...” She answers and continues weeping. I tell her that I’ll return to her in fifteen minutes. To the hospital commander I explain that the woman is the daughter of very good friends of mine and I know her since her childhood. The commander nodded her head in understanding. When I returned to Valia I found her in a calmer state of mind, she told me that she was arrested in 1947 for “espionage” and was sentenced to 25 years of camp. We met many times during her anguished life in the camp and even after we were freed. Valia was an accomplished pianist. In camp she was assigned comparatively light physical duties and later she worked as a librarian in the woman’s section and also participated in plays that were staged by the “drama circle” of the camp. In the hall of the education and culture section of the camp stood a piano, which was not used by anyone. The hospital surgeon and I approached the head of the cultural department and asked him that Valia be given permission to play on it. He agreed on the condition that no one except us is present when she played. Valia played for us various classical musical compositions and her playing made our lives more pleasant in the camp.

Among the prisoners in the camp were some actors and musicians, including an opera singer from Kiev who was a very good mezzo-soprano, an operetta singer from Moscow, two drama actresses and a cinema “star” who used to play leading roles in Soviet movies. This intelligent lady was married to a well-known Soviet author. She even was once a member of a delegation of Soviet cinema actors to Czechoslovakia. On her return, however, she was accused of various offenses and sentenced to ten years in camp. Her husband, the author, who was in fear for his own skin severed all contact with her, never wrote to her nor sent her any parcels. His behavior depressed her very highly and I had many talks with her on this matter. But what could I do for her? In time a group of “self expression” was formed in the camp, with the permission of the camp authorities, of course, and plays and concerts were performed from time to time. One of the problems that hampered the activity of this group was that all artists were working at hard labor outside the camp either in the quarry or in a brick factory. One of the commanders of the women’s section who formed a liking to this group and its activities asked me to employ some of the actresses and singers in the children’s department and in this way they would be exempt from work outside the camp. With the agreement of the commander of the children’s section, a pleasant lady of Tatar origin, I was able to agree to this request. However, because of their lack of experience in handling babies and their frequent absences from work due to rehearsals I had to dispense with their services. In time I came to an agreement with the camp commander to employ them at lighter work outside the camp.

Camp Doctor
Chapter 10, Section F

Every day heavy skirmishes erupt in the men's area. Injuries, stabbings, smashed organs. In the camps for political detainees, murderers who were convicted for "political murders" are detained there too, and they are the ones who cause this entire furor. One day eight wounded prisoners were brought to the surgical department, we treat them, operate on them and dress their wounds. In their fights they used daggers and no one does anything to stop them. The supervisors, the officers and the commanders all ran away or hid themselves from the prisoners. After three days, around noon time five husky men, who participated in the fracas, with daggers in their hands climbed over the wall into the hospital area and headed for the surgical department. Many women who were in the vicinity of the hospital - employees, mothers, the sick, all stand and look at the courageous men who came, while the supervisors and all other service people ran away, no one of the prison administration remained. The five powerful men entered the surgical department without any opposition and started to query two of the wounded men. They wanted to know who stabbed at the end of the fracas their "leader". When they finished their investigation they went back, climbed the wall, stood on top of it sending kisses to the girls then jumped back into the men's area. Only then did the officers and the various supervisors, who were scared to death, come out of their hiding places and started to query the sick men and women about the "guests".

One day in one of the Soviet labor camps, a prisoner disappeared. It turned out that his prisoner friends hid him in a coffin in place of a sick prisoner who died, in this way the coffin was taken to the cemetery that was situated outside the prison compound and from there he escaped. After this occurrence a new regulation was determined in our camp that the coffin (in the camp jargon it is called a "box for special cargo") is taken out of the camp only at night, close to midnight. A wagon rolls up to the camp morgue, in the presence of the duty doctor the "special cargo" is loaded onto the wagon. The duty doctor is responsible for the body and accompanies it up to the guard position by the entrance to the camp. The guard opens the box and stabs the body with his bayonet, the doctor confirms that this is the body of so-and-so who died in the camp hospital, only then the gate opens and the wagon with the body rolls out of the camp area - to freedom. With the initiation of this procedure the camp authorities were satisfied that no more bodies would be substituted with live people.

Everything is repulsive in this camp, and out of it. Everything is based on lies, fraud and self-deception. Every year, mainly in the months July-August a dysentery epidemic erupts in the camp. These epidemics infect many victims. In 1949 the department of internal ailments was cleared of all prisoners suffering from other illnesses to make place for those caught with the dysentery epidemic numbering about 150 people. All those cases were examined and proven to be correct with the aid of laboratory tests and entered, as customary, into the case histories of the patients, The developments of the illness records, treatment records and test result records. One day a committee made up of representatives of all the prisons of the area administrations visited our camp. They also visited the hospital. All our camp administration personnel were present during this visit. "What type of ailments are kept in this department?" asked one of the visitors.

“This department is occupied entirely by people with dysentery,” I answered innocently. On hearing my answer the visitor gave a frowning look on the director of the hospital who immediately paled.

“Do you have patients with dysentery?...dysentery!!” asked the visitor maliciously.

“Since when?” the supervisor of the department asks one of the hospital workers. Just as if she just found out about this now.

“The first cases started arriving in July,” Says the director hesitantly.

The supervisor then turns to me and tells me firmly:

“We have no cases of dysentery!”

All the visitors then enter the treatment room where all the records are kept.

“We have no cases of dysentery,” repeats the supervisor firmly.

“All the cases up to the last one were proven by laboratory tests” I replied “Bacterium Shigea-Krusa and Flaksner* were found”

The supervisor took the illness records, read two or three of them, and then declared,

“The diagnosis is Gymocolit! **...”.

Well, we do not harbor cases of dysentery. It is not permitted to even uncover them. I could not bear this lie and deceit. But, “we” neither have cases of murder, thievery, drunkenness, fist fights etc, etc. They are not printed in the papers; they don’t dare to write about such things here. The era of crime in the Soviet Union has passed. I was forced not to diagnose cases of dysentery, to ignore laboratory findings of this disease. Bacteria of this disease are found only in capitalist countries. Only there cases of dysentery are found. While here they are not recognized.

After some time a committee from Moscow came to our camp. This time, among the members of this committee were members of the NKVD***, a doctor was also among them, a Major in the medical service. The committee visited the hospital and in the department of internal diseases. The major asked me about the types of illnesses suffering by the inmates in this ward, I answered that mostly are ill with Gymocolit and Anthrocolit****. He looked at me with amazement and asked: “Dysentery?”. I shrugged my shoulders and said nothing. The major did not continue with his visit to my department and turned to go the treatment room requesting to see the papers of the “Illness Reports” on some of the inmates. On seeing these reports he looked at the supervisor with amazement: “Why gymacolit? Don’t the findings point clearly to bacterial dysentery? Without any doubt!” Someone who was sitting next to the major whispers something in his ear. The major got up and with some bewilderment exited the treatment room.

When the group left the treatment room I asked the supervisor:

“Well, what do we diagnose, gymocolit or bacterial dysentery?”

Without looking in my direction she answered dryly “Gymocolit!”.

* Names of scientists who discovered these bacteria

** Diarrhea with blood

*** Initials of the Ministry of the Interior

**** Inflammation of the intestines

Camp Doctor
Chapter 10, Section G

An issue standing in its own category is the exchange of letters with relatives, those living in the Soviet Union and especially with those living on the outside. In a camp having a special status like ours under a prison-like regime, a prisoner is permitted to send letters twice a year and not more. The letter is first sent to the censor who crosses out everything not to his liking or taste. Sometimes he tears out half a page and sometimes he destroys the whole letter. The censor registers every letter so that the prisoner should not send, god forbid, more than one letter within the half year. The prisoner can receive letters, in theory, without any restrictions, but in practice, he gets the letters very seldom as most of the letters received for him are never given to him. At times, months pass before a letter received for a prisoner are given to him. There are prisoners, however, who know how to get around this problem of sending letters, They give the letters to some supervisor without writing the name of the sender on the letter this supervisor sends letters to their destination without them passing through the hands of the sensor. For this service the supervisor receives some gift from the sender, usually some item from a parcel the prisoners receives from time to time. The letters coming from the outside do not carry a specific address but just the name of the prisoner and the post office box number, each hard labor camp in the Soviet Union has its own post office box number.

During my entire stay in the hard labor camp I never wrote to anyone. To all my family living abroad or to my relatives in the Soviet Union. I was afraid to write so that no harm should come to them because of being in contact with a “criminal” like me. In the late summer of 1949 a Jewish inmate of the hospital, originally from Lithuania entered my room and said:

“I know that you are not in contact with your family, living abroad for many years, and you and they know nothing about each other, write them a letter and I shall see to it that it is dispatched, and be sure that it will reach it’s destination”.

His offer caused me to be suspicious, but in any case I asked him cautiously:

“I don’t dare to ask you how you are going to do it and how my letter will reach its destination, this is your secret, but is there no fear that some harm should come to someone?”

“Don’t worry your letter will be dispatched from Lithuania or Poland...”

I was attracted by this offer, and wrote a few insignificant words on my health situation and that I did not lose hope for better days to come. Ten days later this person returned again and suggested that I send another letter. I did as he suggested. A month and a half later one of our female doctors came to me, she too was a prisoner; she looked around, to make sure we were not observed, and handed me a paper and in a shaking voice whispered into my ear “Take this letter its from your family” when she noted my awe she added “I was asked to give this to you...” and quickly left the room. My heart started to beat faster, I lock the door with shaking hands, I recognize my wife’s handwriting. This letter is actually from my home. Tears fill my eyes. I read the letter and read it again and again tens of times. The Lithuanian Jew did not betray me, the letters I sent arrived at their destination, in time a received a second letter from my home. After some time this person was transferred to another camp and the contact that was established through him with my family was lost. Since then, and up to 1955 I knew nothing of my family, and they knew nothing about me.

One day the supervisor of the Sanitary Department fell ill and her second in command, a Jewish officer with the rank of captain, took her place, he carries out her

duties over zealously, very often he used to interfere everywhere and it was obvious that he enjoyed the extra authority that befell him. One night he remained to sleep in the camp. In the evening he called me and suggested that we take a little walk in the yard. We walked around the hospital barracks. The captain started our talk by praising my expertise and professionalism and that I enjoy the full confidence of the prisoners and also the sick that are not in the camp. I felt that the reason he asked me to walk with him was not for showering me with praises and I was not wrong. When he finished praising me he began talking about my "behavior", that I forget that I am only a prisoner and I have to follow the rules of behavior towards my superiors, I understood that he implied by this about the orders I receive from the young lady doctor who is the head of the children's ward.

"Yes" I replied, "I am a prisoner and I must take orders from my superiors even if I see that the head of the children's ward permits herself to act harmfully to the patients while the responsibility for her actions lie on me and not on her. All of us employed in the ward are resentful of her actions, but we keep silent, as we prisoners have no rights, while she is "free". However when the head of this ward told me to choose only Russian women to work in the ward, I told her: No, I will not agree to be a part of her scheme"

The captain interrupted my words and said loudly:

"This is not for you to decide, and she probably had a good reason for her decision"

"The Tsar too had probably a good reason to impose restrictions on the Jews..."

The captain does not stop shouting:

"How dare you...you are now in the country of Soviet Socialism..."

"Exactly, Comrade Commander", I replied, "what she proposed is not socialism, and it has a smell of 'The Russian League' or the 'The Black Hundreds'"

The captain is filled with wrath and yells at me angrily:

"Don't forget you are a prisoner...do what you are ordered!"

We walked for a few minutes without uttering a word. When we returned to the barracks the captain asked me to come to his room. When I entered the room he said: "You are a Jew and you must not forget it"

"Yes" I said, "Also in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic I must remember that I'm Jewish, I am, citizen sir ... I do not forget it, and I am not permitted to forget it... more than once I'm reminded of it!"

The captain replied in a low tone:

"The effects of the past have still not been obliterated, we are still struggling against them, but it's not easy at all"

"Yes" I said "but for that one is not arrested or punished, as the Jews are punished for having feelings of national identity as Jews or Lithuanians or Ukrainians...people here are not punished for anti-Semitism, for Russian chauvinism, or for 'only Russians' and 'except Jews and Poles' for this they are not sent to prison, this is not counter-revolutionary..."

The Captain jumped from his chair and declared in a loud voice:

"Yes, Russia is conscious of its national identity, and all of us too, are conscious of our Russian national identity in the positive sense of the concept and this was mentioned by our leader, the brilliant, Joseph Visarionovitch ...you understand?"

He concluded in a menacing tone of voice.

"Yes, I understood everything..." I answered. The captain continues in a tone of severity threateningly:

"There is nothing in common between us and people like you, you are enemies of the revolution, and there can never be anything in common between us. We hate you

prisoners, you are the enemies of the revolution, while we are are loyal to communism which carries with it the promise of freedom and liberty for the whole world, to all humanity... this you do not understand and never will..." With this our talk ended, I left his room and returned to mine.

I never wanted to meet this person again, however, very shortly afterward I was forced to approach him again. It happened like this:

One day we were informed by the camp authorities that instructions were received that a group of prisoners are to be transferred from our camp to another camp. A general rule of the camp authorities is that prisoners are not kept for long in one camp and are transferred from time to time to other camps and there is no end to these comings and goings of prisoners. The reason for this is that the authorities are afraid that the prisoners will develop friendships between themselves, which could be turned into an action against the despotic treatment, which exist in the camp.

The Jewish captain decided to transfer in the next batch among others also a woman, an Estonian, a mother of a one and a half year old child and in this way separate her from the child. The woman approached me and asked me to help her. Her husband was arrested in 1948 and no one knew what befell him. Some months later she too was arrested, as the wife of a traitor. At the time of her arrest she was pregnant in her seventh month and gave birth to her son while in prison. When the child was only 4 months old she was transferred to our camp. On arrival at our camp the child was feeble and ill, but because he did not go through the quarantine period yet, I could not enter him into the children's ward, I hospitalized the child in my internal department ward. And here in the hospital, while coming to visit her sick child she met her husband by chance, a prisoner among prisoners who was an inmate of our camp and was hospitalized with dysentery. Here in the hospital the husband saw his child for the first time. I was present during this meeting and it is difficult to describe the excitement that they experienced together with myself. No one but me knew that they were husband and wife, if this would have been discovered by the camp authorities, they would have been separated and the husband would have been transferred to another camp. When the child recovered from his illness and entered the children's ward, the wife continued to see her sick husband, to which I helped her to make the visit, sometimes even in my room. When the husband recovered he returned to the men's area, they used to write to each other. Every day at a set hour a woman prisoner used to throw a batch of notes tied with a string over the wall to the man's area. In this manner too the men's notes used to reach the women's area (incidentally, in nearly all the camps all over the Soviet Union, these notes were called by the Hebrew name "KETIVA" [writing] no one knows why and how this Hebrew word infiltrated into the language of the camp prisoners). The Estonian woman and her husband exchanged these "ketivot" between them and no one knew that they were husband and wife.

This Estonian woman and two other Russian women who also had children in the children's ward were included by the captain in the list who were destined to be transferred to another camp. When this became known, the Estonian woman came to me and asked for my help not to be separated from their children. I had no desire to approach the captain but when I saw these women and heard their pleas I could not refuse them.

I went to him and asked him to postpone the transfer until the children grew a little older so that they could be housed in one of the children's quarters. The captained turned a deaf ear to my request and in addition started to curse nastily.

"No, they will definitely be transferred, those whores..."

When my request was rebuffed I approached the commander of the camp with the rank of lieutenant colonel, who knew me, more than once he used to invite me to his home, outside the camp area to treat some of his family members who were ill. I voiced my request to him – to cancel this verdict. He immediately called the duty officer and ordered him to cross out the names of these women from the transfer list. I returned to the hospital and informed the women of the good news, they cried with happiness, kissed me and there was no end to their delight.

Camp Doctor
Chapter 10, Section G

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duties over zealously, very often he used to interfere everywhere and it was obvious that he enjoyed the extra authority that befell him. One night he remained to sleep in the camp. In the evening he called me and suggested that we take a little walk in the yard. We walked around the hospital barracks. The captain started our talk by praising my expertise and professionalism and that I enjoy the full confidence of the prisoners and also the sick that are not in the camp. I felt that the reason he asked me to walk with him was not for showering me with praises and I was not wrong. When he finished praising me he began talking about my "behavior", that I forget that I am only a prisoner and I have to follow the rules of behavior towards my superiors, I understood that he implied by this about the orders I receive from the young lady doctor who is the head of the children's ward.

"Yes" I replied, "I am a prisoner and I must take orders from my superiors even if I see that the head of the children's ward permits herself to act harmfully to the patients while the responsibility for her actions lie on me and not on her. All of us employed in the ward are resentful of her actions, but we keep silent, as we prisoners have no rights, while she is "free". However when the head of this ward told me to choose only Russian women to work in the ward, I told her: No, I will not agree to be a part of her scheme"

The captain interrupted my words and said loudly:

"This is not for you to decide, and she probably had a good reason for her decision"

"The Tsar too had probably a good reason to impose restrictions on the Jews..."

The captain does not stop shouting:

"How dare you...you are now in the country of Soviet Socialism..."

"Exactly, Comrade Commander", I replied, "what she proposed is not socialism, and it has a smell of 'The Russian League' or the 'The Black Hundreds'"

The captain is filled with wrath and yells at me angrily:

"Don't forget you are a prisoner...do what you are ordered!"

We walked for a few minutes without uttering a word. When we returned to the barracks the captain asked me to come to his room. When I entered the room he said: "You are a Jew and you must not forget it"

"Yes" I said, "Also in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic I must remember that I'm Jewish, I am, citizen sir ... I do not forget it, and I am not permitted to forget it... more than once I'm reminded of it!"

The captain replied in a low tone:

"The effects of the past have still not been obliterated, we are still struggling against them, but it's not easy at all"

"Yes" I said "but for that one is not arrested or punished, as the Jews are punished for having feelings of national identity as Jews or Lithuanians or Ukrainians...people here are not punished for anti-Semitism, for Russian chauvinism, or for 'only Russians' and 'except Jews and Poles' for this they are not sent to prison, this is not counter-revolutionary..."

The Captain jumped from his chair and declared in a loud voice:

"Yes, Russia is conscious of its national identity, and all of us too, are conscious of our Russian national identity in the positive sense of the concept and this was mentioned by our leader, the brilliant, Joseph Visarionovitch ...you understand?"

He concluded in a menacing tone of voice.

"Yes, I understood everything..." I answered. The captain continues in a tone of severity threateningly:

"There is nothing in common between us and people like you, you are enemies of the revolution, and there can never be anything in common between us. We hate you

prisoners, you are the enemies of the revolution, while we are are loyal to communism which carries with it the promise of freedom and liberty for the whole world, to all humanity... this you do not understand and never will..." With this our talk ended, I left his room and returned to mine.

I never wanted to meet this person again, however, very shortly afterward I was forced to approach him again. It happened like this:

One day we were informed by the camp authorities that instructions were received that a group of prisoners are to be transferred from our camp to another camp. A general rule of the camp authorities is that prisoners are not kept for long in one camp and are transferred from time to time to other camps and there is no end to these comings and goings of prisoners. The reason for this is that the authorities are afraid that the prisoners will develop friendships between themselves, which could be turned into an action against the despotic treatment, which exist in the camp.

The Jewish captain decided to transfer in the next batch among others also a woman, an Estonian, a mother of a one and a half year old child and in this way separate her from the child. The woman approached me and asked me to help her. Her husband was arrested in 1948 and no one knew what befell him. Some months later she too was arrested, as the wife of a traitor. At the time of her arrest she was pregnant in her seventh month and gave birth to her son while in prison. When the child was only 4 months old she was transferred to our camp. On arrival at our camp the child was feeble and ill, but because he did not go through the quarantine period yet, I could not enter him into the children's ward, I hospitalized the child in my internal department ward. And here in the hospital, while coming to visit her sick child she met her husband by chance, a prisoner among prisoners who was an inmate of our camp and was hospitalized with dysentery. Here in the hospital the husband saw his child for the first time. I was present during this meeting and it is difficult to describe the excitement that they experienced together with myself. No one but me knew that they were husband and wife, if this would have been discovered by the camp authorities, they would have been separated and the husband would have been transferred to another camp. When the child recovered from his illness and entered the children's ward, the wife continued to see her sick husband, to which I helped her to make the visit, sometimes even in my room. When the husband recovered he returned to the men's area, they used to write to each other. Every day at a set hour a woman prisoner used to throw a batch of notes tied with a string over the wall to the man's area. In this manner too the men's notes used to reach the women's area (incidentally, in nearly all the camps all over the Soviet Union, these notes were called by the Hebrew name "KETIVA" [writing] no one knows why and how this Hebrew word infiltrated into the language of the camp prisoners). The Estonian woman and her husband exchanged these "ketivot" between them and no one knew that they were husband and wife.

This Estonian woman and two other Russian women who also had children in the children's ward were included by the captain in the list who were destined to be transferred to another camp. When this became known, the Estonian woman came to me and asked for my help not to be separated from their children. I had no desire to approach the captain but when I saw these women and heard their pleas I could not refuse them.

I went to him and asked him to postpone the transfer until the children grew a little older so that they could be housed in one of the children's quarters. The captained turned a deaf ear to my request and in addition started to curse nastily.

"No, they will definitely be transferred, those whores..."

When my request was rebuffed I approached the commander of the camp with the rank of lieutenant colonel, who knew me, more than once he used to invite me to his home, outside the camp area to treat some of his family members who were ill. I voiced my request to him – to cancel this verdict. He immediately called the duty officer and ordered him to cross out the names of these women from the transfer list. I returned to the hospital and informed the women of the good news, they cried with happiness, kissed me and there was no end to their delight.

Camp Doctor
Chapter 11, Section B

Among the doctors at the camp hospital there were 5 doctors of Jewish origin, and among the prisoners there were many Jews too. Since my assignment to the internal ailments ward the doctors of the hospital started coming to me to introduce themselves. They knew and heard about me from people that arrived to this camp by ATAP from camp Kangir to Spask. One of them was a surgeon whom I met previously at another camp, and here too we used to meet often for consultations. In the past this doctor was the deputy minister for health of the Soviet Union and the Chairman of the Soviet Red Cross. From childhood he was a member of the Communist Party. However, his past loyalties and high positions did not help him and he too was arrested and sentenced to ten years hard labor. His guilt was that in his line of duty he maintained contact with the International Red Cross in Geneva by exchanging letters with its members. One of the charges against him is quite funny: In his capacity as the chairman of the Soviet Red Cross he came to England as the head of the Soviet Red Cross delegation, at that time Churchill's wife was the head of the British Red Cross and gave a reception at her home in honor of the Russian delegation. She presented him with a photo of herself, as a memento to this visit, the photo was inscribed, as customary, "To dear doctor.....". This photo was found during a search that was carried out in his house and the word "dear" was used as the basis to charge him as a "counter revolutionary", "sympathizing with the West" and one of the reasons for sentencing him to a term of ten years.

Among the prisoners there were also two professors of medicine and many other scientists. Most of them never took part in any political activities and none of the them ever knew why they were imprisoned and exiled.

Among the prisoners at the camp were many of various nationalities: Ukrainians, Russians, Georgians, Bielorussians, Jews, Estonians, Lithuanians, Latvians and Azerbaijanis – A real "International". Most of them were Russian speaking. Only the Kazakhstanis or the Uzbecks did not understand a word of Russian. They led a quite and tranquil life in their villages and worked at cattle raising, however the long hand of the CHEKA reached them too, arrested and exiled them blamelessly all in the framework of filling their "quota" of arrests.

With the Jewish prisoners I met often and we mostly talked about Jewish matters. About ten of them were sentenced for "Zionist activities" in Moscow and Odessa; the Jewish prisoners consisted of many authors, poets, newspaper reporters and even one editor of a communist Jewish newspaper "Einheit" and two old "Bund" leaders.

During the early period of my arrival at the camp, a man approached me, about 45 years of age, stretching out his hand to me and with emotion said to me in trembling voice:

"I came to beg for your forgiveness" his eyes filling with tears. This looked very strange to me. I never seen this person in my life, and did not understand why he was begging my forgiveness. When he calmed down a little he continued: "I belonged to the many members of the Komsomol who used to inform the authorities on the Zionists, fabricating stories about them, trailing them and handing them over to the CHEKA. That's the way we were taught and ordered to do. Many Zionists were arrested and sentenced because of me and my friends, and here you too are among the prisoners of Zion and your suffering too is now on my conscience... please forgive me. How can I help you? here in the camp I am in charge of the tailors workshop, perhaps you need some sort of clothing item? Tell me and I shall make it for you..."

but before I had time to answer him anything, he turned around and walked away and quickly disappeared, probably because he did not want me to see him crying. In the course of time I met him many times. He was a permanent “guest” in our “Jewish” get-to-gathers and even participated in discussions we carried out in my room on various Jewish and Zionist matters. After one and a half years, he completed his prison term and released from the camp, he was then exiled to Karaganda. In 1956, when I too arrived to Karaganda and inquired about him, I was told that he committed suicide, most probably because of his conscience over his deeds in the past, his burden at present and no future ahead of him, all of which were too much for him to endure.

In time a new director was appointed to the hospital, a major in the medical service. An evil and uncouth person, who began to tyrannize the hospital staff. On taking up his duties at the hospital he summoned all the prisoner doctors and announced that as of now they are not permitted to address the “free” doctors by their names but only to address them as “citizen commander”. His wife too was a doctor, she was Jewish, but she hid this fact. Her attitude to the doctors and the prisoners was fair. Once during a conversation with me she accidentally spoke a few words in Yiddish.

I asked her quietly:

“What nationality are you?”

She looked at me cunningly and with a sly impish smile answered:

“I’m Greek – Can’t you see that I look Greek?”

Among the Jewish prisoners there are some very interesting individuals, one of them is Dr. M. His expertise is neurology, but in this camp he was appointed to head the tuberculosis ward, he headed this department very successfully. From the time of his youth he joined the revolutionary movement and was a member of the social-democratic party (the Mensheviks). During the Czarist regime he was exiled for 10 years and after the revolution, in 1924 he was arrested by the Soviet regime and for 27 years he was moved from camp to camp, from jail to jail, serving jail a total of 37 years. One of these camps where he served was the camp Kolima. He went through a lot of suffering but he kept his clearness of mind, good faith, physical fitness, and sense of humor and even did not lose hope for a better future.

One day someone of authority arrived at our camp, he was in charge of health matters of all the camps in the area. The morbidity rate in our camp is very high, the hospital is overcrowded and there are no free beds available, the death rate is very high too. Every day 8-10 sick people die. The visitor inquired for the reason of this high death rate. Everybody was silent and did not utter a word. Only then Dr. M spoke up:

“Most of the dying suffer from tuberculosis and are weak from undernourishment, they all come here from Kolima and they are the main group who die here”

On hearing this visitor was furious:

“Do you say that in Soviet camps the prisoners are being starved and because of that they get sick and die... this is not true, the food rations in our camps are more than enough...” With this declaration, the discussion was terminated and all the doctors were ordered to leave the room. On the next day Dr. M was relieved of his duties in the tuberculosis department, and moved from the hospital barrack to the general prison barrack where 900 other prisoners were held, in time he was relieved from work in the hospital and sent to work in the quarry.

Camp Doctor
Chapter 11, Section C

Most of the people in authority in this camp were anti-semites, Not only was this felt by the prisoners of the Jewish faith, but by the “Free” Jews who were working in the camp and also the two Jewish officers who served in the camp administration. These two officers, when they did not attract any attention very often used to meet the Jewish prisoners and enter into conversations with them on various Jewish matters and the State of Israel. One day one of them asked me:

“And me, would I be permitted to make “*Aliya*” to Israel? I am a party member here” This officer used to help the Jewish prisoners as much as he could so as to make their plight easier. But this did not remain a secret, some one informed on him and he was summoned by the “Ophir” who warned him not to come into contact with the Jews anymore. After several days this officer was transferred to another camp. The same fate awaited the second Jewish officer. One of the Russian officers in the camp made a very insulting anti-semitic remark to him, the Jewish officer slapped him in the face, a scandal irrupted, but the commanding officer, before whom this case was brought, wanted to silence this matter, declaring that the Russian officer was drunk at that time, the Jewish officer was transferred to another camp.

The Jewish prisoners in the camp used to meet from time to time to talk about Jewish matters. Among them were three former residents of Moscow who were arrested for Zionist activities. In 1948, when the State of Israel was established, they were among the initiators who organized a special prayer of thankfulness on this occasion in the Moscow Synagogue. One of them told me some details of this event: They approached the authorities and requested a permit to carry out this prayer, but no establishment that they approached dared to give them the necessary permission. This matter was brought before Stalin himself, and finally they got the license. When he received the license he approached some of his friends, Jews in high positions, and invited them to the prayer, among them Eherenberg, who was amazed by my request and did not accept the invitation. “What have I to do with this matter? And what’s more in a synagogue! What are you trying to prove?” He refused to come. Some time after the prayer in the synagogue the initiators of the prayer were arrested and condemned to ten - fifteen years in a work camp.

With one of the Jewish prisoners I developed a friendly relationship. In the past he was an army man and reached the rank of general. He served as the Soviet military attaché in the Embassy of the Soviet Union in China, was a member of a Soviet delegation to the United States, was a member of the editorial staff of the Soviet Newspaper “The Red Star” and headed the political department of the Red Army. He was an intelligent person, with knowledge and understanding in many fields. When we met in Spask he was serving his second term. He was arrested in the period of Yezhov*, and sentenced to 10 years, and later exiled to the Petropavlovsk region, however, a few months later he was sentenced to an additional 10 years. For several years we served together in the same camp, we used to meet often and conversed a lot. He very often used to say to me:

“Why were you jailed? For your activities for the Jewish people, for their rights and for their revival, and me – I was arrested and sentenced, most fitting for me, I was always loyal to the party, and I myself am to blame for getting into this mess”.

In 1955 he fell ill, and because of his age and the living conditions in the camp it was difficult to give him the necessary treatments necessary to cure him - he was freed and all his rights were returned to him, even his awards and medals, he was accepted back into the ranks of the party and returned to reside in Moscow... For 19 years he was imprisoned in various camps until he earned his freedom. In 1956, when I too was freed from the camp, and resided for a while in Moscow, we used to see each other often and our friendship deepened. When I left the Soviet Union we corresponded with each other, he was always interested to know about the Jewish life. He was a good Jew.

In 1951, on the eve of "*Yom Kipur*", we, the Jewish prisoners, congregated in the bedroom of one of the Russian doctors, our friend. By the Ark stood one of the prisoners, Rabbi Aharon from Bialostock. The prayer was conducted in secrecy and by the entrance door to the room, stood one of our "guards". The *Chazan* Sang the prayer "*Kol Nidrei*" in a very subdued voice, we responded in the same manner. During the prayer the *Chazan* could not hold back the tears in his eyes, as were all our eyes too. It was interesting to note who were the participants in this service: A Soviet General - who was once a leader of the "Mensheviks"; A famous neurologist from Moscow; a famous leader of the "Bund"; A professor of economics from the university of Leningrad - an anti-Zionist; Myself and some of my Jewish friends sharing my barrack. I looked at them participating in this prayer and in my imagination I visualized the "Marranos" of Spain praying in secrecy and in danger, fulfilling their Jewish heritage. I then looked at the present "Marranos" praying to the Gods of Israel in a Soviet prison camp and recited to myself "*Ve nislach lecol edat bnei Yisrael ve le ger hagar betocham, ki lecol haam be shgaga...*"

After Stalin's death an order was issued not to lock up the prison barracks for the night, since then our get to gathers took place more frequently, we used to meet in my room which was near the hospital and carried on conversations on Jewish subjects and other topics, also from time to time one of us, usually me, used to give a lecture on various subjects. In November of 1952 I read in the "Izvestia" a news item, printed in small type on the "death of the President of Israel Haim Weizman", my heart in my body cried out in pain - Haim Weizman is no more... memories, one after the other, cross my brain, of my meetings with him in the years 1903-1905, in the period when I lived in Switzerland, I sat in my room with a most saddened heart. Soon one of the prisoners entered my room - a Jewish journalist:

"Did you read this? Haim Weizman is dead!" And he too remained with me with a saddened heart. Just a few minutes later another Jewish prisoner entered my room, a butcher from Moscow, he too remained with me. The most elder prisoner of the barrack was an Ukranian, he came with ten other prisoners. All of us dedicated this day to the memory of this distinguished person. I raised memories of Haim Weizman, as a young man, and his struggle for the revival of the Jewish Nation. For many hours we secluded ourselves to the memories of Haim Weizman. Towards evening the group began to disperse, but before that, an elderly Jewish prisoner, from the town of Gomel, rose and recited the "*yitkadal ve yitkadash...*"

During the holiday periods, - Hanukah, Purim, Shevuot - we used to organize joint meals where we recited the holiday prayers and talked about the daily matters of our camp.

In 1954, on the fiftieth year of Herzle's death, we held a memorial gathering at one o'clock in the afternoon, the time when the camp authorities have their luncheon meal. We assembled in one of the storage halls. The storage hall supervisor, a Jew, from the town of Gomel, who was sentenced to serve ten years in a labor camp for

“Zionist activities” recited the “*El Maleh Rachamim*” and I said the “*Kadish*”. After that, we, 22 people, assembled for lunch, organized by the Zionist prisoners from Moscow. The elder of our barrack, the Ukrainian with who we were on friendly relations, put his room at our disposal, supposedly to celebrate the birthday of one of the prisoners. In front of the entrance door stood one of our guards who was changed every half hour, so that every one of us could participate in the meal. I gave a comprehensive lecture on Herzl and his life’s work; this was followed with speeches by the other participants. From the 22 people who took part in this gathering 7 – 8 were Zionists while the others were either former Bundists or Communists. Another participant in this gathering was an Austrian Jewish journalist, a social democrat, who concluded his enthusiastic speech with the statement “Long Live the State of Israel”. In this manner the Jewish prisoners in a Soviet labor camp commemorated the 50th anniversary of Herzl’s death.