

*George Kitchin, his wife and child, May, 1933, convalescing in Italy while writing this book*

# PRISONER OF THE OGPU

BY  
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PRISONER OF THE OGPU

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## PREFACE

STORIES of prison experience in Soviet Russia are not new. In fact the sordid details of nocturnal searches, incarceration in filthy jails, midnight inquisitions, and executions without warning have been made known to English readers through many personal accounts. But the narrative of the present author is unique in several respects and deserves a special place in literature descriptive of Russian conditions.

In the first place it gives the only first-hand authentic account of the penal camps of the Far North that has yet appeared. Two or three of those condemned to penal servitude in these camps have, it is true, escaped or been released, but in these cases their stay was brief and came at a time when for special reasons the severity of the regime was relaxed. The present author is the only man, so far as I am aware, who has undergone the actual experiences of these penal camps and lived to tell the tale.

George Kitchin is a gentleman of education and culture and an able and successful business executive. His social standing and business reputation were above reproach. The authenticity of his account is implicit in the narrative.

As will be seen in his story, he had the good fortune after a time to be assigned clerical work in the office of the penal camp administration. This undoubtedly saved his life and it also gave him a unique opportunity to observe the inner workings of the OGPU organization.

Perhaps the most noteworthy feature of Mr. Kitchin's vivid narrative is the absence of violent partisanship. Despite the injustice of which he was a victim and the hardships

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to which he was subjected, the author in describing conditions in Russia and the operation of the Soviet system, treats the subject objectively and without bitterness. His attitude is that of a man caught up accidentally in the meshes of a vast impersonal machine, the operation of which he can observe and describe without rancor.

Mr. Kitchin, whose mother was English, was born in Finland. His English and American connections together with his Russian experience fitted him especially for his work in Russia as the representative of an American company, and at the same time enabled him to view conditions broadly and without the strong partisanship of the native Russian. As a citizen of Finland, his case was a matter of concern to the Finnish government, whose efforts finally obtained for him permission to leave Soviet Russia.

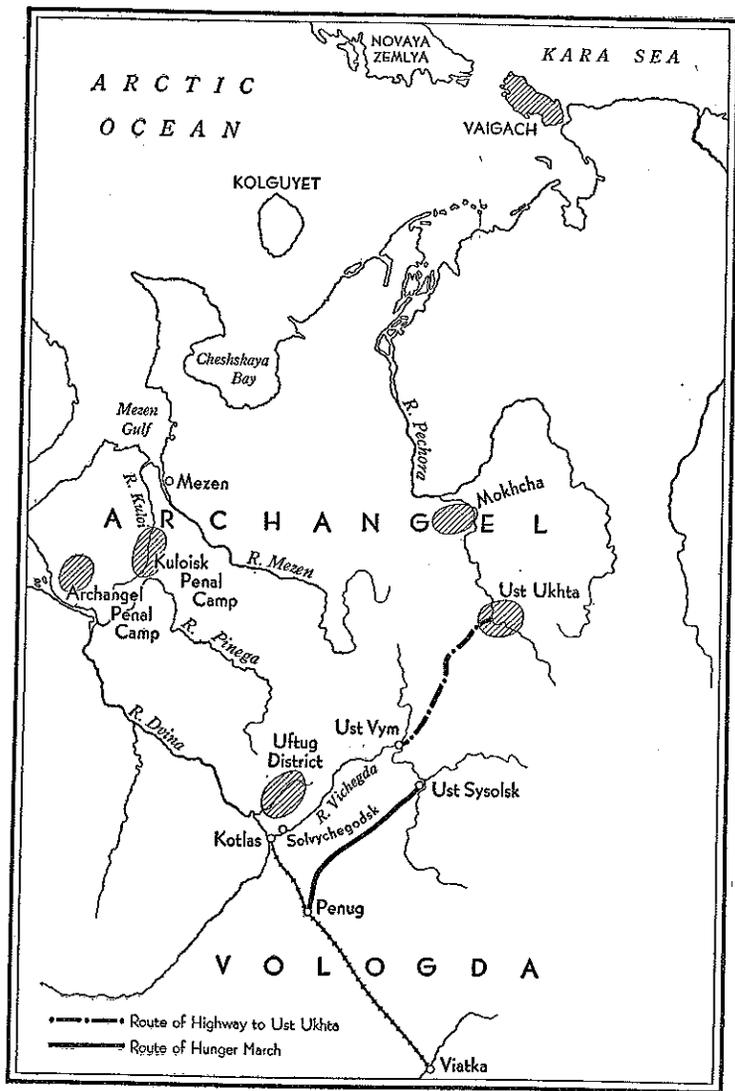
His physical condition after four horrible years can well be imagined. A year and a half were spent in convalescing, and another year in preparing his notes and writing the present volume. It is now offered to the public as a vivid narrative of personal experiences and as a contribution to the understanding of conditions in the Soviet Utopia.

JEROME LANDFIELD

As this book was being prepared for the press, news was received of the death in London of George Kitchin from pneumonia following complications which resulted from his privations in Russian penal camps.

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*Penal Camp Area in North European Russia*

## PRISONER OF THE OGPU

# PRISONER OF THE OGPU

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE NET

THE doorbell rang in the dead of the night. It was an agent of the OGPU calling. He was accompanied by armed soldiers. The agent was polite, but taciturn. The soldiers stood there like statues.

The agent presented a warrant for search and arrest. The warrant had been issued by the counter-espionage department of the OGPU. What were they looking for? What did they want? The search was on. It lasted five hours.

I was in the living room, sitting by the fireside, while the search was being made. A soldier stood at the door and watched every move of mine. Luba was nearby, her eyes filled with terror. On my knee was our new-born baby, a tiny little being with violet eyes. A pink coverlet was wrapped around her, and she slept tranquilly through all those anxious hours.

Finally the search was over. Nothing incriminating had been found, as was to be expected. The OGPU agent stepped to the telephone.

"Hello, hello. Is this the OGPU? Extension 76, please. Is that you? There is a new-born baby here, what am I to do? What? Six weeks old. What? His wife? But she is a foreign subject. What is it? Yes, yes, all right."

Luba's lips were pale, her hands trembled.

"Will they take me, too? But how about Baby?" she whispered almost inaudibly. There was something unforgettable in the expression of her eyes. I tried to calm her, to assure her that she had nothing to fear.

The agent hung up the receiver. There was a long pause.

"Citizen," he turned to my wife, "we shall leave you in peace, for the time being."

What a relief! The agent made out his report and we quickly signed it. I packed a few things. I lifted the little being that I had already learned to love.

"Good-bye, little one."

The moment of parting came. There was Luba. And here was the dark stairway. I turned back for a last glimpse. Her silhouette was in the lighted doorway. "Good-bye, my darling."

The steel-shod boots of the soldiers echoed as they struck the stone steps:

"Good-bye, good-bye."

The clock in the prison office pointed to a quarter past five. In half an hour I had passed from freedom to jail, leaving behind me a series of grilled and locked doors. Here I was thoroughly searched. My necktie, belt, shoelaces and towels were taken away. It was the routine, to guard against attempts at suicide.

I was then led to a damp and dreary cell on the "special" fifth floor of the notorious Shpalernaya prison. Attached to the wall of my cell were a bunk and a small iron table with a seat. There was a window beneath the ceiling. Under the window was a toilet seat, and adjoining it an iron basin with a faucet.

I sat down on the bunk and tried to collect my thoughts. I was in the Shpalernaya, on the special floor where the OGPU kept only grave offenders. What did it mean? Why had they arrested me?

It was March 26, 1928. The seven years I had spent in Soviet Russia raced past me in swift review. I was a citizen of Finland, a business man, lured by the promises of the NEP (New Economic Policy) proclaimed by Lenin in 1921. I had started out as the representative of a Finnish group seeking a concession in Russia, and within a year developed an import business on a large scale.

My offices were then in the Finnish Government Building in Leningrad which housed many foreign firms. It was a building kept under special observation by the OGPU, which suspected every foreigner of being a spy. That did not worry me, as I had no connection whatever with espionage.

I recalled my first contact with the OGPU. It was in the summer of 1921. A modestly dressed young man called on me at my office. He introduced himself as Trotsky, an official of the OGPU in charge of the Finnish section, and openly proposed that I become informer on all the activities of the Finnish Trade Delegation. He said that he had selected me because his agents had described me as cool and careful in my work. I thanked him for the honor and unceremoniously showed him the door.

"We shall meet again," was his parting remark.

At the time I reported the incident to my headquarters, but forgot about it in the following years. It was not until after the death of Lenin in 1924 that my next contact with the OGPU occurred. There was a British consul in Leningrad, Mr. Preston, who occasionally entertained both foreigners and Russians at tea. Mr. Preston was a thorn in the flesh of the Soviet officials. He wore a monocle in the land of the Soviets, donned a silk hat when driving out on official visits, and his English manner irritated the comrades exceedingly. Moreover, he consistently ignored the local representatives of the Commissariat for Foreign

Affairs whenever he sent out invitations to a reception.

My fiancée, Luba, frequented the Preston five-o'clocks. One day, there came an end to the fashionable receptions. There were wholesale arrests among the Russians who had attended them. Luba was one of the prisoners.

It was Luba's second experience with the OGPU. She had been arrested two years earlier, together with her first husband, and had left the prison a widow. Now she was taken to the OGPU headquarters at the Gorokhovaya. Here she received a flattering offer to serve the OGPU as an informer on the British consulate. It was her duty as a loyal Soviet citizen, she was told, to accept the offer.

"Think it over carefully," the examining official said to her. "Consider it well before you decide. If you do not consent, you will not leave these walls. It is not prudent to quarrel with the OGPU."

Luba refused point-blank and was taken to the Shpaler-naya, where I was now confined. At the time we sought the intervention of the higher Soviet authorities, but in vain.

Within a week after her arrest, I had my next direct encounter with the OGPU. I was having supper alone in a restaurant when Troitsky suddenly appeared at my table. He was the young OGPU official who had called on me two years before.

I got up and made a move to leave, but he stopped me. He had business which concerned my fiancée.

"Don't you really want to help her?" he asked. I stayed.

Troitsky offered to release Luba in exchange for my services. It was the same proposal that he had made two years earlier. He sought information on the Finnish Consulate General.

"Say the word and this very evening a telegram will be sent ordering the release of your fiancée," he concluded.

I refused the offer. He began to threaten me. He was vexed by his failure to enlist my services. He left in anger.

I went away filled with disgust. The threats were not to be taken lightly, but I would not be dragged into the net.

The Finnish consul advised me to leave the country at once, but I could not even think of leaving without Luba.

She was condemned, after five months in solitary confinement, to three years in Siberia. I continued my efforts to secure her freedom, but without avail.

It looked as if I would have to wait until Luba had completed her term in Siberia. Then something happened. There was an upset in the OGPU headquarters. A number of officials were dismissed or punished. Many of their victims were rehabilitated. Troitsky was among the banished officials. Luba was one of the fortunate prisoners to be set free.

We were married immediately upon her return to Leningrad. Two months later we received from Moscow the precious document canceling her Soviet citizenship. She was now the wife of a citizen of Finland. This was no mean achievement.

During Luba's exile in Siberia, a New York firm, the Lidgerwood Manufacturing Company, appointed me as its representative in Russia. I had also established a plant for the manufacture of oil and candles for churches. There were sixty thousand churches in Russia at the time and I enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the business.

There was a quiet interlude. I was happy at home. Business was good. Luba was on the eve of becoming a mother.

It was January 1928. The shadow of the OGPU suddenly appeared again. I heard that Troitsky was back. He had been reinstated as chief of the Finnish counter-espionage section.

"Let us leave the country immediately," pleaded Luba.

"Leave everything and go?" I retorted. "Don't let the thought of this scoundrel get on your nerves. We are foreigners and he will not dare to start anything."

"But suppose he lays a trap for you with his agents-provocateurs?" she insisted.

Well, here I was in the Shpalernaya. If I had only heeded Luba's warning! But why did they arrest me? It was useless to seek the reason. I had simply fallen into the second category of Soviet citizens. According to a popular saying in Russia, the population of the U.S.S.R. is divided into three categories, those who have been in prison, those who are in prison, and those who will be in prison.

My reflections were interrupted when the light went out in my cell. I threw myself on my bunk and sank into oblivion.

During the two following days I had all the time to consider my situation. I waited in vain to be taken before an examining official. I worried about my wife and child. Were they arrested, too?

They came for me in the night of the third day. I followed the armed guard who led me to the examination. In a small office, a man in the uniform of an OGPU official sat at his desk, bent over papers. He raised his head and smiled.

It was Troitsky. My worst apprehensions were confirmed.

Four years had passed since our last meeting but he had changed little. He greeted me sarcastically as an old acquaintance and proposed that we have a quiet little talk.

He asked me to keep in mind that I would face grave consequences in the event that we did not arrive at a satisfactory agreement.

I brushed all this aside and demanded that I be presented with a formal charge for my arrest.

"Don't you worry," he smirked, "a charge will be found, but that will be so much the worse for you. Let us settle matters amicably. Some important considerations demand that we be fully informed of everything that is going on in your consulate. Our present sources of information are not satisfactory and you will have to help us."

He said that his department had caught a group of spies whom they had long suspected and that all the evidence pointed definitely at the consulate. It was imperative, he repeated, that they receive positive information as to whether it was the consul or his assistant who was directing this espionage.

This turn of events was utterly unexpected and I realized that even had I been willing I would not have been able to assist him.

"Do not forget," said Troitsky, "that when we arrest a foreigner we do not fail to have on file enough evidence to justify such action."

He supplemented this statement with the assertion that he was in possession of a signed confession by one of the arrested spies to the effect that the latter had called on me in connection with his work.

This was ridiculous. Never had I had any connection with any foreign intelligence department and no spy had ever called on me.

In order to dispel my doubts Troitsky then produced and showed me the confession of the arrested spy, which stated plainly that the latter had delivered to me a locked brief-case and a package of letters from the Finnish Intelligence Department.

This was such a preposterous lie that I expressed doubt of the very existence of the man who was supposed to have signed the confession. Troitsky offered to confront me with him and a few minutes later a man who was a total stranger to me was brought into the room. On Troitsky's request he repeated the statements made in his confession. He spoke in a low voice and was afraid to look me in the eye.

Troitsky's face bore a satisfied smile and seemed to challenge any further objections on my part. He dismissed me but said that he would call me again in a day for my final answer. He counseled me to weigh my decision carefully, for it would determine my whole future.

"If you make a wrong step," he said, "you will be sure to regret it. Remember, we mean business."

Two hours were left before the morning call and I spent them pacing my cell and thinking. I was now fully aware of the danger of my situation. I was sure that my consulate would intervene on my behalf, I also knew the value of such intervention. Undoubtedly there would be lengthy correspondence, conferences, numerous demands and a like number of refusals. I was a citizen of little Finland, and the U.S.S.R. pays scant attention to the protests of small unimportant countries.

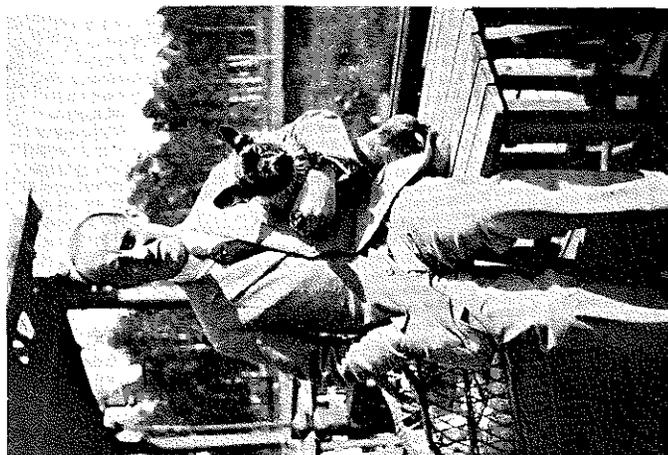
"But there must be some way out," I thought. "While I am in prison I am cut off from the rest of the world. Prisoners are not allowed to see an attorney and I know only too well the worth of a petition to the attorney-general. So what can I do?"

In desperation I ran about my cell considering various courses of action. Some definite course had to be adopted. Toward morning I had arrived at a decision.

The following night I faced Troitsky again. I told him that I would comply with his request. He jumped up and



*In November, 1929, in prison, just before being sent to the penal camps*



*George Kitchin, 1927, before his arrest*

made several quick steps about the room. He was excited and obviously pleased.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "You should have done it long ago. Well, here are three documents, all ready for you. Sign them and you will be home tomorrow."

The first document was an agreement whereby I became an informer of the OGPU; in the second I pledged secrecy concerning the first; the third was a report divulging some incriminating actions on the part of the consulate.

"As to the report, you will have to copy it in your own handwriting and sign it," said Troitsky.

There was a limit to what I had been willing to do. I had never intended to bear false witness against anybody.

I explained to Troitsky that my consent was not entirely unqualified and that I could not sign such a report. I would sign the first two papers and a report incriminating myself, but no one else. All of this I would do on one condition, only upon receipt of a postmarked message from my wife that she was safe in Finland.

"You do not need my wife," I said. "Besides, she has a young baby. You cannot arrest her anyway. The moment I receive the message from her I am at your disposal."

The all-important thing was to get my family out of the danger zone. I had laid my plan with that in view. If my services were badly needed, I would at least be enabled to ascertain the OGPU intentions regarding my wife. Of course, I had no idea whatever of acting as an informer. I felt that once my wife and child were safe, it would be an easy matter to slip out of the country.

"Take the prisoner back to his cell," Troitsky called to the guard. He had listened to me in silence and with a frown.

"Tomorrow morning I shall have your wife arrested also," he turned to me.

Had I unwittingly caused the arrest of my wife? The next forty-eight hours were full of torment. I was again brought before Troitsky on the third morning. To my surprise his manner was extremely pleasant. Apparently all was not yet lost.

"Listen here," he said, and renewed his proposals. I firmly maintained my position. "Perhaps you distrust me personally," Troitsky added. "I shall have you discuss the matter with my chief. It may be easier for you to settle things with him. And so far I have not disturbed your wife," he concluded, "but beware, it will go badly with her if you persist in your obstinacy."

Peterson, Troitsky's superior, was present at the next examination. This time they received me cordially, asked me to sit down, offered me cigarettes and drinks. We argued the matter for a long time and in the end I understood that my game was lost. They did not need me at all for obtaining information, but wanted to use me for manufacturing evidence to enable them to instigate a sensational court action against the Finnish consul.

When I saw their purpose I knew that we had reached an impasse. But they did not wish to give up without playing all their trumps. Evidently they could do nothing without the evidence they hoped to obtain from me.

After a whispered conference with his superior, Troitsky stepped to the telephone and in my presence gave the order for the arrest of my wife. "This is your last chance to reconsider," he said, as he took the receiver off the hook.

I shook my head in refusal. I still had hope that they would not dare to carry out their threats. It seemed so monstrous and improbable, considering the baby.

But in another minute my hopes were dashed. I shook like a leaf as I arose from the chair. A guard entered.

"We shall see both of you rot away in prison, together with your brood," snapped Troitsky, as I left to go.

The blow they had aimed at me had struck its mark. Back in my cell my nerves gave way. All night and all of the next day I was in the state of mind which makes men commit suicide in the cells of the OGPU, as Luba's first husband had done.

Like a drowning man clutching at a straw I sent a petition to the attorney-general demanding his intervention. What naïveté!

I handed my petition to the guard. From him it went to the chief of our section, then to the warden, and from the latter to . . . Troitsky, who then forwarded it to the attorney-general with his notations. He told me all of this himself at the next examination and openly laughed at me.

"You may be sure," he said, "that all legal formalities will be complied with, but remember that it is the attorney-general's first duty to facilitate the inquest."

Two weeks after my arrest I was handed a formal charge accusing me of espionage in behalf of the Finnish General Staff and the British Naval Staff. Not only had I no connections whatever with either one of these institutions, but I was even ignorant of the existence of the latter.

For five months I remained in solitary confinement in a cell on the "special" floor of the Shpalernaya prison. The first month was especially hard because of the intermittent examinations, always in the middle of the night, and the constant worry about my wife and child. I had had no news of them whatever and all my inquiries were answered by the stereotyped reply that "they were feeling fine."

I was not allowed books or newspapers, was never taken out for a walk. Absolute silence was maintained on the "special" floor. I was completely isolated in my stone box, shut in with my sad thoughts. My nerves went back

on me and I could not eat, getting dreadfully thin and feeling as helpless as a lamb in a slaughterhouse. But I would not give in.

After the first month the regime suddenly changed. I was allowed to receive parcels from outside, was given books and newspapers, and was taken out for a walk in the prison yard. It was due to the efforts of our consul on my behalf.

The very first parcel brought me great relief. My wife, who had had her own experience with Soviet prisons, wrote my name with an ink-pencil on the napkin in which she had wrapped the food. I recognized her handwriting and knew that she was safe at home. A heavy weight was lifted from my mind.

In another parcel Luba had very ingeniously contrived to hide a message apprising me of the fact that the consulate was fighting for me and insisting that my case be brought to trial in court. If these efforts were successful, it would mean that the principal danger would be averted, namely, a sentence by the board of the OGPU, reached behind closed doors. I was looking forward to the court trial, never doubting that it would be an easy matter to confute the false evidence brought against me.

## THE RED MILL OF JUSTICE.

My wife and child were safe in Finland! What thrilling news! The consul's efforts were bearing fruit. The guard handed me a copy of an order of the OGPU transferring my case to the jurisdiction of the court. That evening I was brought before Peterson, who advised me to plead guilty at the trial.

"Just think about it a bit," he said, "you will have plenty of time to consider my advice. In a few weeks the examiner of the military tribunal will take your testimony. If you do not plead guilty, it will go badly with you and you will regret it."

But encouraged by the favorable turn in my affairs I decided to ignore this advice, thinking that once my case went to court, it would be difficult for the OGPU to influence it further. So I quietly awaited the trial. But I had a longer wait than I had expected. After waiting for five months in my solitary cell I was finally brought before the examiner of the military tribunal.

He looked like a decent young man. Inasmuch as I thought him to be independent of the OGPU I seized this opportunity to tell him all about Troitsky and how the OGPU was persecuting me.

"I have already written a petition about this to the attorney-general," I said, "but without result. Now I shall write to the military prosecutor, for it is not conceivable that the latter should also be working hand in glove with the gentlemen of the OGPU."

CHAPTER V

HUNGER

A low forehead, protruding ears, a fleshy hook nose with a slight dent in the middle, large, strong, yellow teeth, a powerful jaw and dark "pop" eyes — these were the external clues to the character of Grigoriantz.

He was the son of a small tradesman in Rostov and already as a lad he began to show wilful tendencies. In 1918 he joined the Bolshevik Party, took part in the civil war and then in punitive expeditions of the cheka. Later on he was expelled from the party, and, sinking lower, reached the profession of a hired murderer. They caught him in the sensational affair of the Rostov attorney M.

The attorney had a pretty wife and a renowned Rostov gangster fell in love with her. It was decided to murder the attorney in order to get him out of the way. Grigoriantz, who had a good record in the execution of such commissions, was given the job for five thousand roubles. This time Grigoriantz decided to act as a good business man and hired a smaller bandit for the job, promising him five hundred roubles. The murder was executed, but the gangster was caught and squealed on Grigoriantz. His trial brought to light all his former crimes and he was sentenced to be shot.

By some means he escaped execution and was now commander of the disciplinary squadron in Kotlas, transfer point of the OGPU. He enjoyed excellent standing and was on friendly and familiar terms with his superiors.

HUNGER

"Attention!" he shouted again. "Third squadron, greetings!"

"Zdrah!" came from our square fairly uniformly.

"Not so good, but tomorrow I shall teach you some more. You'll learn it, I assure you. And now to work. Front fifteen rows, march ahead. Rear fifteen rows, step back. Middle rows, stay where you are."

After some confusion we divided into three columns. I found myself in the middle one. What next?

A detachment of armed sentries came up to us and behind them several men in felt boots and short jacket uniforms.

"Foremen, distribute the work, a full job to each, no leniency." Grigoriantz gave these last instructions and stepped aside.

The thirty rows from the front and the rear, surrounded by the convoy, went out of the camp gates. Part of those remaining were assigned to clearing away the snow in the yard, others to construction work on the barracks, some to splitting and sawing firewood. A large group was sent to the river bank to free a large float of timber from the ice. Ten men, among them the unfortunate Granovsky, were allotted the disgusting work of cleaning the lavatories, twenty men were carrying water in buckets, and another twenty were sent to the kitchen to clean fish.

My lot fell with the men shoveling snow in the yard. I soon learned from those who had arrived before us that we were not to remain long at the transfer point. From here we were to be dispatched to our permanent work in one of the camp divisions. Almost daily fresh bands of prisoners arrived in Kotlas from all parts of Russia. The supply was not diminishing in spite of the fact that prisoners in the Northern Penal Camps already numbered over forty thousand.

The Kotlas Transfer Station of the Northern Penal

Camps of the OGPU was located five kilometers from the town of Kotlas, on the steep bank of the Northern Dvina at its junction with the Sukhona River. This location, exposed on all sides, offered no protection whatever from the constant disagreeable winds. When there was no wind from the north, it blew from the south; if not from the east, it howled from the west. Only during the summer the weather was comparatively quiet and the summers were very short. Unfortunately we arrived in mid-winter.

The Transfer Station itself occupied some fifteen acres and was surrounded by barbed wire. The long barracks were located near the center and served to house transient prisoners. Partitions divided the barracks into several parts, each one of which was occupied by the so-called squadrons. Besides the barracks the buildings comprised storehouses, kitchen, hospital, dungeon, office and the bathhouse wherein we were temporarily quartered on our arrival.

Our party was theoretically added to the third squadron, which was occupying the central part of the barracks, but as the latter was chock full we were for the time being shoved into the bathhouse. The second and fourth squadrons were housed next to the third. The first squadron consisted of teamsters, load carriers and other prisoners assigned to permanent work at the Transfer Station. It occupied separate barracks. Women prisoners lived in a detached building and so did the office workers, foremen, storekeepers and others. All barracks and other buildings were constructed of green lumber and looked very new.

The Transfer Station was filled to overflowing and therefore three enormous tarpaulin tents were set up in the yard opposite the office. These were intended for not over four hundred and fifty men, but already sheltered about a thousand.

The small second squad consisted chiefly of carpenters,

joiners and helpers of the woodworking shop which was furnishing door and window frames, tables and all other household furniture needed in the encampment.

The boss of the woodworking shop was the Finnish communist Karjalainen, carpenter by trade, who was said to have been in command of an entire army of the Reds during the civil war in Finland. For some years he had been active in the Finnish Communist Party in Leningrad. Later he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment in the penal camps for having been in communication with Finland through other than party channels.

He had already served three-quarters of his term in the Solovetsky camp and was transferred to Kotlas to take charge of the woodworking shop.

Prisoners who worked under his command led a better life than the others. This tall, slim, quiet, blond, blue-eyed Finn took care of his men, and though he was exacting, he did not overload them with work.

Several of his countrymen, sentenced for various offenses to longer or shorter terms, were working in his shop. As for himself, he enjoyed some quite extraordinary privileges as a former communist, was allowed outside the barbed wire, and lived with his Finnish wife in an apartment in the town of Kotlas.

He was an incorrigible drunkard and, as a true Finnish carpenter, drank pure alcohol instead of vodka. From time to time he would detail his countrymen to some work in town and they were allowed to go there without escort on his personal responsibility. Such days always ended up with great drinking orgies at his apartment where Finnish national songs were sung and scenes of the Fatherland were recalled. In the morning they would all return to camp and sober up in their shop, consuming large amounts of varnish if no more alcohol was to be found.

Camp Commander Monakhov knew of these escapades,

but overlooked them because Karjalainen was an old friend of his while already in the Solovetsky camp, and they would often go on a drinking bout together. Besides, Karjalainen had some important protectors in Moscow. Monakhov himself made personal use of some of the alcohol allocated to the hospital and therefore did not bother Karjalainen about the unwarranted consumption of the state varnish supply.

Camp Commander Monakhov also lived outside the barbed wire, in town. Every morning at eight o'clock a smartly turned out sled with bearskin coverings would be sent to his door from the camp. There it awaited him, sometimes several hours, depending on his condition. Usually he arrived at eleven o'clock and signed the papers which were prepared for him at the office. After that he would immediately return to town for lunch. His useful activity commenced upon his return from town after lunch where his nervous system was reinforced by vodka. Before luncheon he was a totally worn-out man with dim, restless eyes, trembling hands and a twitching face. After luncheon, on the contrary, his eyes acquired an especial sparkle of hardness and cruelty, his mouth would be distorted into a grimacing smile and his paleness became pronounced. In camp he enjoyed an infamous reputation for cruelty.

He was a former chekist and had filled a fairly important position in the OGPU, but got caught in a very ugly affair. Having released a young woman prisoner on condition of cohabitation, his sadistic tendencies finally drove her to suicide. Before killing herself, the unhappy woman wrote a letter to the district attorney describing the whole affair in detail. It was all brought to the knowledge of the OGPU heads. He was arrested and tried by the secret tribunal.

Thanks to influential protection, the OGPU sentenced

him to only five years' imprisonment in the Solovetsky camp. In that camp his good connections again aided him in making headway, and after serving a part of his five-year sentence he became the strongest candidate for replacing the former commander of the Kotlas Transfer Station in the new Northern camp district. He was twenty-five years old.

He impressed one as a fairly intelligent man, always clean-shaven and well dressed, dandyish in a manner that smacked of degeneracy. He seemed to take better care of his outward appearance than you would expect from a regular party communist. By origin he belonged to the petty bourgeoisie.

Monakhov's staff consisted of his secretary Skryabin, a convict who was formerly prosecuting attorney of the Rostov OGPU; of the guard commander Ogloblin, a typical soldier type who was an out-and-out drunkard and took little interest in anything around him; of a number of clerks chosen from among the prisoners; of the chief of the station's secret intelligence department, Zakhariantz, who was also a former accredited agent of the OGPU now serving a three-year sentence. Then there was the warden, a coarse, cruel man appointed from among the prisoners; fifty soldiers and the manager of the commissary department, prisoner Lyskin.

In 1917 Lyskin was mayor of one of the smaller towns in the South of Russia. The prisoners liked him and he did not give himself any airs. He always readily granted his assent to any request of the prisoners though he hardly ever fulfilled his promises. He did not know how to work, the management of his department was neglected and his chief concern was the comfortable arrangement of his personal life. He was one of the few non-communist prisoners who were allowed to live beyond the barbed wire. He had one weakness: he loved steam baths and massage. Twice a

week the bathhouse was especially prepared for him, floors covered with fresh straw, and two prisoners, professional steam-bath attendants, would wash and massage him.

WE worked slowly, the cold penetrated my light overcoat and low shoes. Hunger and fatigue were becoming poignant. We were promised dinner at five, but every minute made it more difficult to await it. The sentry would not admit me back into the bathhouse, the storekeeper in his tiny shop refused to sell anything without a ration card and all my entreaties to let me buy a piece of bread were unavailing.

I was slowly congealing. All thought was directed to the one aim of getting something to eat and warming myself. The pangs of hunger were stubborn torture. The degrading occurrence of the morning was almost forgotten. Now and then a thought would flash through my brain, "poor Seryozha," and immediately it would be superseded by another, more tenacious one, "I must get something to eat."

The group which had been detailed to freeing the frozen float of timber from ice returned to camp at five o'clock. They presented a horrifying appearance, blue from cold, hands swollen, eyes watering, some with frostbitten noses, ears or cheeks.

In another half hour the men who had been sent to the forest returned. All of them were desperately tired, having given their last efforts to the new, unaccustomed work. Since it was their first day, they were allowed to return earlier though many had not completed their assignments, but they were warned that on the next day they would be detained in the forest until the whole task assigned was finished by the group.

At six o'clock we were finally admitted into the unheated

bathhouse and, in anticipation of the "dinner," we threw ourselves like wild beasts upon the remains of bread given us in the morning. We had but one thought — to eat and to warm up. For a whole week we had had no dinner, had not washed and had not slept properly. I felt pangs in the pit of my stomach and was so tired that I would have thrown myself on the dirty floor just as I was, had there been room. But the thought of the promised dinner overcame even this fatigue.

We had not received the morning porridge promised by Lyskin. It appeared that it had to be fetched from the kitchen, but when this was made known to us it was too late as the porridge by that time was all eaten.

More than two hours passed, but no semblance of a dinner. Somebody announced that the newly-arrived prisoners would be fed right out in the open yard. The sentry was constantly approached by questions as to the dinner. But the well-fed cannot understand the famished. First he pretended ignorance which later gave way to abuse. "Go to the devil, don't bother me, you'll gobble it up all right when it's thrown to you, wait." After the morning lesson nobody even dared to think of making any demands and we all humbly waited.

At eight o'clock Lyskin entered. He told us that "dinner" would be served soon and that we would get it in the yard.

"Don't forget your spoons," he advised.

He blamed our own selves for not getting the morning porridge and calmed us by a promise that soon everything would be organized, that we would stay in the bathhouse only one more night and that we would then be transferred to the barracks, which were warmer and roomier.

"This place here is, to be sure, not all that it should be," he added, "but you understand that after all this is a penal camp and there is nothing you can do about it."

Getting ready our spoons, we waited. Time dragged slowly and every minute sharpened our hunger. At last a joyous cry announced dinner. Pushing and shoving, the crowd noisily made for the exit.

It was dark and cold. At the right, near the kitchen, open fires were blazing in the snow. Silhouettes of moving men could be seen against this background. Spoons in hand we rushed to the fires. The architect and I were overtaken by some prisoners from the rear room of the bathhouse. Six blazing piles of wood illuminated the feast. Spread upon upturned empty barrels were large iron wash-basins filled with a hot souplike concoction.

"Twenty men to each basin," exclaimed a voice, though it was quite evident that twenty men could not approach one basin.

While we were thinking this over we were almost swept off our feet by a veritable avalanche of running men. It was the gang of criminals from the tents, men who had lost the last vestige of human feeling, hungry like wolves.

Upon being let out of the tents they flung themselves upon the barrels, elbowed and shouldered their way through our privileged crowd from the bathhouse, which was just preparing to eat, and in another minute were complete masters of the situation. Surrounding the barrels in a tight ring, all armed with big wooden spoons, they ate, ate, and ate.

But how they ate! The huge spoons filled with boiling hot liquid were shoved into hungry wide-open mouths, the contents were instantly swallowed, the spoons went back into the basins and out again. Some threadlike shreds of substance were hanging on the spoons and all this was swallowed with incredible speed.

The criminals crowded around the barrels two rows deep. Those in the second row shoved their spoons in between those in the front row, spilling half the contents but

catching up the drippings somehow and licking them from their hands and spoons.

Without resorting to brute force there was no way of squeezing oneself up to the barrel and we certainly could not fight them! In a few minutes the entire contents of the basins were devoured and we left as empty-bellied as we had come. It was evident that if there was no change in the service of the camp "dinners," we would have to sustain ourselves on the half-kilogram of bread which was our daily ration.

We returned to the bathhouse in a very depressed state. Our quarters were still as cold and damp as before, there was insufficient light, no room to sleep; knees gave way from fatigue and one's body shook all over with cold.

On the way back I had tried to refresh my face with snow and noticed that the snow melted unusually fast and my face remained as hot as ever. I was feverish, which was not surprising under these circumstances. However, as there was nothing I could do in the way of treatment I decided to pay no attention to the condition of my health. I sat down again upon my basket and quickly fell asleep in this strained position.

I do not know how long I slept. I dreamt that I was falling into an abyss, I cried out and awoke. The room was filled with bodies heaped all over and across each other. Hands, feet, faces, were all intermingled. Men were lying on top of each other, their open mouths breathed heavily, some slept with half-open ghastly eyes.

I perched myself on my basket and lit a cigarette. So this is what is called a penal camp! How long can a man bear up under these conditions?

Dim visions of toothsome dishes swam before my eyes: crystal bowls with salads and lobster, my favorite porterhouse steaks with luscious lyonnaise potatoes, salmon and meat, meat in all forms!

All around me men slept like the dead. The architect was all crumpled up in his corner, and on the floor, in distorted positions, were Timofeyich, old Trotsky and the deathly, livid Pevny. I alone had awakened and could not fall asleep again in spite of all my efforts. Time dragged on with oppressive slowness.

So the night would last another four hours or so. And then what? Again the degrading trot-in-place, the disgusting "zdrah," the abominable faces of the guards and the croaking crows overhead?

In some strange manner my thoughts would constantly revert to food. Perhaps it would help if I tried to chew the remnant of a very stale crust of black bread which I still had? Yes, it did.

Two prisoners were standing at the door begging the sentry to let them out to the lavatory. I overheard their conversation:

"You were told no and that's the end of it," from the faithful sentry. "My orders are not to let out less than five."

"But you cannot expect us to go and awaken some others," argued the two prisoners. "Perhaps they do not need to go out?"

"That is your business, but I shall not let out less than five," answered the implacable sentry.

Two more prisoners came up from the rear room. They all continued to beseech the sentry but he would not relent.

"I said no and no it is, understand, intelligentsia?"

Jumping from foot to foot, one of the prisoners turned to me imploring me to make up the necessary number. Judging from his uniform cap, he was a railway construction engineer. In his hand he already held the lantern without which we would be exposed to the risk of being shot by the sentry on watch.

It was not far to the lavatory. The proud name of a "lavatory" did not quite fit this hole in the ground covered by a wooden shed. Thanks to Granovsky, who had worked hard cleaning, chopping and carting away the frozen impurities, conditions were not as bad as they might have been.

When we came back we handed our lantern to the next group which was already awaiting our return. Morning was approaching and men were gradually awakening.

Thirty prisoners were sent out for the porridge and returned carrying washbasins filled with mush. It did not bother us that prior to our arrival these washbasins had been used in the bathhouse. Hunger made us forget such fastidiousness. Armed with wooden spoons we closely surrounded our basins and ate the lukewarm buckwheat mush with no trace of butter in it. Then bread was rationed out and everybody cheered up perceptibly. It does not take much to make man happy.

One hour, and another, passed; nobody came to fetch us. Had they forgotten us?

Then the door opened and the grinning mug of Grigoriantz protruded through it. After him came the warden and the noise quieted down. Their appearance evidently promised some unpleasant surprise, but just what?

"Prisoners of the third squadron, greetings!"

"Zdrah," came from our ranks, in unison. Yesterday's lesson had not been in vain and the majority seemed to have decided not to irritate the commanders.

"Listen attentively," the warden shouted in his clear voice. "We shall presently do a little assorting. All those who have ever worked for the OGPU or the cheka and all former communists will go out into the yard and proceed to the office. Secondly, all former members of the Red Army or Navy or of the town or village militia, go

to the armed guard detachment and receive further orders there. Understand? All others, wait here."

One after another, about eighty men left the room. It was getting quite light and I decided to take advantage of the roominess left by their departure to visit some of my old friends in the rear rooms. Very few of the Lefortovskiy prisoners had joined the group of eighty, as that prison held only a small number of communists and most of these had already succeeded in Moscow in making better provision for themselves.

Utilizing the free time and space, men gathered in groups and were exchanging ideas and impressions. "What a nightmare!" was one of the constantly recurring expressions. The gray, dirty, unshaven and unwashed faces of the speakers presented not too pleasing an appearance. The unnaturally bright eyes and the heightened color in the cheeks testified that yesterday's experience had left its mark. The clothing of the forest workers was still wet and they could find no way to dry their shoes. There was a stove, but there was no fire in it.

A dreadful stench filled the third room. Granovsky, who had climbed on top of the stove, looked more dead than alive. He was feverish and coughing in spasms, but his eyes were still full of bitter hatred and the harrowing coughing fits were interspersed with streams of cursing. Funk, too, as well as his little company, had found room on the stove. They had lost their former bright unprison-like appearance and were no different from all the others, gray, dirty, unshaven.

Returning to the front room, I saw the architect standing at the door beckoning to me.

"Here is the comrade I spoke of," he said to the guard. "We shall come back presently. Come on."

Out in the yard the architect laughingly informed me

that our momentary freedom had cost us five roubles. He was a clever dog.

"All men are human," he laughed, "but I can spot a drunkard instantly. We started chatting, I mentioned vodka, we became friends. He accepted the five-spot. And now, old chap, no loitering, let us reconnoiter the possibilities. If anybody asks us about our business we'll tell them we are looking for the commissary manager. Come on."