FELIX DZERZHINSKY

PRISON DIARY AND LETTERS

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TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN
BY JOHN GIBBONS

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FOREWORD

Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky, disciple and comrade-in-arms of the great Lenin, valiant son of Poland, was an ardent fighter for communism.

Dzerzhinsky was known as the "Iron Felix." He is spoken and written of as a knight of the Revolution—a knight without fear or reproach. His own liking was to be known as a soldier of the Revolution.

The poet Mayakovsky, addressing the youth of his day, wrote:

To the young man
pondering over
his life,
wondering whom
to take as his model,
I say—
Don't ponder,
model it
on Comrade Dzerzhinsky.

Dzerzhinsky's whole life serves as an inspiring example of struggle for the happiness of the people.

At the age of seventeen Felix solemnly vowed to fight to the last breath against oppression and exploitation. And this vow was sacredly kept.

Nearly a quarter of his life—eleven years—was spent in tsarist gaols, in exile and penal servitude. Shackled,

and immured for years in prison, he always found strength for life and struggle. "The more terrible the hell of our present life, the clearer and louder I hear the eternal hymn of life, the hymn of truth, beauty and happiness.... Life can be joyful even when one is in chains," he wrote on June 2, 1914, after being sentenced to penal servitude.

Dzerzhinsky's prison diary and the letters to his relatives published in this volume show how the will of the revolutionary was steeled by severe trials, how his courage grew in the struggle to emancipate the people from exploitation and slavery.

Dzerzhinsky's diary and letters are not a chronicle of his life. On the other hand, their every line is evidence of the great mind and ideological probity of their writer, who had a deep love for the working man and a boundless hatred for the oppressors.

The diary and letters reveal the integrity of Dzerzhinsky, a man thoroughly devoted to the Party, a man whose faith in the people and the future triumph of communism was unshakeable. They reveal those traits of character which made him a true servant of the people, and an embodiment of the finest qualities of a Communist.

The diary entries were made during his imprisonment in the Warsaw Citadel, a notorious tsarist prison in which the autocracy detained the more dangerous revolutionaries. The first entry was made on April 30, 1908, the last on August 8, 1909. This was the time when, after the defeat of the 1905 Revolution, reaction was on the rampage throughout Russia.

Many pages in the diary are devoted to the bloody terror unloosed by the tsarist authorities—the humiliations to which prisoners were subjected, the torture and hangings. All the foulness of the tsarist regime and its stooges—gendarmes, spies, agents-provocateurs and

traitors—is laid bare. At the same time not a few pages tell about the heroes who courageously withstood the sufferings imposed by prison life and who went to the gallows with heads unbowed.

Dzerzhinsky's diary was first printed in Polish in 1909-10 in the journal *Przegląd Socjal-demokratyczny (Social-Democratic Review)*, an underground publication of the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania—a Marxist party. A brief foreword pointed out that the diary, in addition to being a moving human document, was of no little importance for the history of the Revolution.

The diary and most of the letters cover the period spent by Dzerzhinsky in prison, exile, penal servitude and, partly, abroad, that is, when contrary to his will, he was cut off from direct participation in the revolutionary struggle. For this reason they do not reflect the tireless and multifarious activity of the revolutionary fighter. But they do show that even during the hard times of enforced inactivity Felix Dzerzhinsky lived with but one thought, one desire—to further the cause of the Revolution.

Despite prison bars, he, in his diary, reacted to the social developments of those days.

Since there was always the danger that the diary might fall into the hands of his gaolers, Dzerzhinsky could not openly express his views on Party matters or on the current developments in the working-class movement. This is particularly true of the letters. He was restricted to writing about personal and family affairs. His correspondence was censored either by the prison authorities or by the gendarmes, at times it was subjected to chemical analysis. Only on rare occasions was he able to get a letter smuggled out. And even then he was never sure that it wouldn't fall into the hands of

the police. So that even in the smuggled letters there are many allegoric and agreed expressions.

The letters express concern for his fellow comrades, for his friends and relatives, and especially for the children. He was passionately fond of children, seeing in them the men and women of the morrow for which he fought.

In the letters to his sister he writes in the most tender vein about the upbringing of her children, and advises her how to inculcate in them a healthy and strong spirit, to teach them to be truthful and sincere, not egoists, but people capable of living and fighting for others. "To be a bright torch for others, to be able to shed light—that is the supreme happiness which man can achieve. He who achieves this fears neither suffering, pain, sorrow nor need. Death no longer holds terrors for him, although it is only then that he learns really to love life." (Letter of June 16, 1913.)

Felix's letters to me were often devoted wholly to our boy. Every line breathes the deepest paternal love. With prison bars between him and his family, Dzerzhinsky never saw his son until he was seven.

But the love he bore his son was subordinated to a basic idea—that of educating the growing generation in the spirit of selfless struggle for the emancipation of the working people.

Here is how he pictured the upbringing of his son:

"Jasiek should not be a hothouse plant.... He should be able to fight for truth, for our idea. He should cherish a broader and stronger feeling than the sacred feeling for his mother or for the loved ones near and dear to him. He should be able to cherish the idea—that which unites him with the masses, that which for him will be a torch throughout life.... This sacred feeling is stronger than all others, stronger by virtue of its moral commandment: 'That is how you should live, that is what you should be.'" (Letter of June 24, 1914.)

With his burning energy, Dzerzhinsky had difficulty at times in attuning himself to the isolation and the senseless vegetative life behind bars. But he drew strength from his clear understanding of the noble aims of the struggle, and he dreamed of the bright future, of communism.

Sometimes he had the feeling that prison was sapping his strength and that after release from the long years of penal servitude he would be unable "to do anything useful." But always came the reassuring thought: "He who has an idea and who is alive cannot but be useful. As long as I have life in me . . . I will wield pick and shovel, perform the most humdrum task and do my very best. . . . I shall do my duty, shall go right on to the end of the road. . . ." (Letter of January 19, 1914.)

In the letters written in 1915 and 1916, he often writes about being reunited shortly with his near ones, expressing thereby his faith in the coming victory of the Revolution.

Liberated by the February Revolution of 1917, Dzerzhinsky immediately found himself in his revolutionary "element." He threw himself into the struggle for the Great October, and afterwards into the fight against the counter-revolutionaries, into the work of rehabilitating the shattered transport system, building the industry of the U.S.S.R., reinforcing the unity and might of the Party.

The letters written between 1918 and 1926 reflect only to a very insignificant degree Dzerzhinsky's tireless activity after the victory of the October Revolution.

The letters written in Moscow during 1918 throw light on his work while holding the difficult and responsible post of Chairman of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage and his faith in the victorious outcome of the struggle to maintain and consolidate Soviet power.

These letters, and also the letter written to his sister in 1919, show that while holding this post, Dzerzhinsky was guided by his desire for justice and the well-being of the people.

The letter dated October 23, 1918, written in Berlin (Dzerzhinsky was there on his way back from Switzerland where he had spent a few days with his family for the first time in eight years), describes the situation in Germany during the first days of the democratic revolution there. It emphasizes the solidarity of the revolutionary workers and their leader, Karl Liebknecht, with the socialist Revolution in Russia.

The letters from Kharkov written in 1920 tell about his work as chief administrator behind the lines of the South-Western Front. At this time in the Ukraine, behind the lines of the Red Army then battling against the whiteguard Poles and Wrangel, bands of counter-revolutionaries were terrorizing the population and ravaging villages. Simultaneously with rooting out banditry and combating profiteering, Dzerzhinsky carried on large-scale political work among the people.

The letters of this period, and the letter dated May 20, 1926 (when he was Chairman of the Supreme Council of the National Economy), reveal a typical Dzerzhinsky characteristic—inability to be an "onlooker," the striving always to be close to the masses, to become acquainted personally with the state of affairs in the localities, to delve deeply into things and to see them through.

The 1920 letters from the Western Front tell of the days when the Red Army, having defeated the invasion of Soviet territory (Ukraine and Byelorussia) by the counter-revolutionary troops of the Polish landlords and capitalists, and pursuing the retreating enemy, entered Polish territory. In Białystok—the first Polish industrial centre liberated from the whiteguard forces—the local

Communists formed a Provisional Revolutionary Committee for Poland—the first worker-peasant government in Polish history. One of its members was Felix Dzerzhinsky.

The Polish workers in the liberated areas, he wrote, were wholly behind the Revolutionary Committee. He also described the terror to which the working class and its Communist Party were subjected by the bourgeois authorities and pointed to the perfidious role of the Right-wing leaders of the Polish Socialist Party (PSP)—a petty-bourgeois, chauvinist party.

Writing on August 25, 1920, he underlined the dignified behaviour and the revolutionary role of the Red Army, bringing freedom to the Polish people.

Dzerzhinsky, who deeply loved his native Poland, and who was one of the leaders of its first Marxist party—the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania—one of the leaders in the fight against tsarism and the bourgeoisie, was pained by the fact that in 1920 the Polish working class had not succeeded in overthrowing the landlords and capitalists and in establishing worker-peasant rule.

He had, however, the unshakeable belief that the day would come when the Polish workers and peasants would smash the chains of landlord-capitalist slavery and take the road of building socialism.

This dream was realized twenty-four years later when the Soviet Army and Polish troops liberated the long-suffering Poland from the Hitler tyranny. It was then that a free, independent people's Poland came into being, which is now building socialism in fraternal cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.

Dzerzhinsky's letters from Siberia, written in 1922, describe his work there as People's Commissar for Railways.

In the summer of 1921 the young Soviet Republic, which had just begun to recover from the effects of the imperialist war and the Civil War, suffered another calamity. An unprecedented crop failure, followed by famine, was experienced in the Volga area—the granary of Russia. Industrial centres were threatened with hunger; threatened, too, was the spring sowing in the famine-stricken areas; the very existence of the newly-born Republic of Soviets hung in the balance.

At the beginning of January 1922, Dzerzhinsky set out for Siberia in his capacity of special representative of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of Labour and Defence of the R.S.F.S.R. He was empowered to take extraordinary measures to ensure the dispatch of grain to Moscow, Petrograd and the famine-stricken districts along the Volga. This, a most difficult and responsible assignment, was fulfilled with honour.

His Siberian letters acquaint us with the difficulties which he encountered, with his energy, flexibility and determination to overcome all obstacles. They show his powers of self-criticism, his ability to learn the difficult job of economic management, then new to the Communists, and his deep sense of responsibility for the work assigned to him.

Dzerzhinsky's diary and the letters to his relatives clearly illuminate his splendid life. In a way they reflect the immense work carried out by the Bolshevik Party, its struggle to consolidate Soviet power, and the difficulties which had to be overcome by the first socialist country during the Civil War and intervention, at the time of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and during the rehabilitation.

Zosia Dzerzhinska

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I was born in 1877. I attended school in Vilno. In 1894, then a seventh-form pupil, I joined a Social-Democratic self-education circle; in the following year I joined the Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party and began to teach Marxism to the apprentices working in factories and handicraft shops. The apprentices christened me Jasiek. I left school of my own accord in 1896, holding that I should practise what I believed in, and that it was necessary to be among the masses and to learn from them. So I requested my comrades to assign me to mass work and not to restrict me to the training classes. At this time there was a conflict in the organization between the intellectuals and the workers; the latter insisted that the intellectuals should teach them to read and write, impart general knowledge and so on, but should not mix in their affairs or go among the masses. Despite this I managed to become an agitator and introduced people to politics for the first time. I did this by attending social evenings, visiting the taverns and all the places where workers congregated.

At the beginning of 1897 I was assigned by the Party, as agitator and organizer, to Kovno—an industrial centre where there was as yet no branch of the Social-Democratic Party and where the Polish Socialist Party

organization had recently collapsed. Here I found myself right in the heart of the factory workers and came face to face with frightful poverty and exploitation, especially of female labour. It was here that I really learned how to organize strikes.

In the second half of 1897 I was arrested in the street, having been betrayed by a young fellow who accepted the ten-ruble reward promised by the gendarmes. Having no desire to tell the gendarmes my address, I told them my name was Żebrowski. In 1898 I was exiled for three years to the Vyatka Gubernia—where I lived first at Nolinsk and afterwards (as punishment for being incorrigible and causing trouble for the police and also because I had found work in a tobacco factory) in Kaigorodskoye, a village five hundred kilometres farther north. The place was unendurably lonely, so much so that in 1899 I fled from it and made my way back to Vilno. My arrival coincided with unity talks between the Lithuanian Social-Democrats and the Polish Socialist Party. I was the avowed enemy of nationalism and held that the Lithuanian Social-Democrats had committed a deadly sin when in 1898, at the time I was in prison, they failed to join forces with the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. I had said as much in a letter which I sent from prison to Dr. Domaszewicz, the Lithuanian Social-Democratic leader. In Vilno I learned that my old comrades had been exiled. The leadership was now in the hands of students. I was not allowed to mix with the workers and the comrades hastened to get me out of the country. I made the acquaintance of smugglers who took me in a travelling Jewish show-waggon along the Wielkomierz Highway in the direction of the frontier. A young fellow passenger in the waggon undertook for ten rubles to procure a passport for me in one of the wayside townships. Then, with the passport

in my pocket, I boarded a train for Warsaw where I had the address of a member of the Bund.*

There was no Social-Democratic organization in Warsaw at the time—only the PSP and the Bund. The Social-Democratic Party had been smashed. I made contact with the workers and managed to rebuild our organization—at first with the shoemakers and afterwards with the woodworkers, metalworkers and bakers who had left the PSP. A desperate struggle with the PSP ensued, which ultimately ended in our victory despite the fact that we had no money, no literature and no intellectuals in our ranks. The Warsaw workers nicknamed me the Astronomer and Frank.

Arrested at a meeting in February 1900, I was detained first in No. 10 Block in the Warsaw Citadel and afterwards in the Siedlce Prison.

In the year 1902 I was exiled for five years to Eastern Siberia. In the summer of that year, while on the way to Viluisk Prison, I escaped by boat accompanied by the Socialist-Revolutionary, Sladkopevtsev.

This time I went abroad, the arrangements being made by friends, members of the Bund. In August, shortly after my arrival in Berlin a conference of our Party—Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania—was held. The conference decided to launch the newspaper *Czerwony Sztandar*.**

I settled in Cracow for the purpose of maintaining contact with the Party and helping it from the other

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* Bund—General Jewish Social-Democratic Alliance, an opportunist petty-bourgeois nationalist party.

** *Czerwony Sztandar* (*Red Flag*), organ of the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania, was founded on the initiative of Felix Dzerzhinsky at the Berlin Conference of the party in August 1902. It continued until 1918; in all, 195 numbers appeared.

side of the frontier. From this time on I became known as Josef.

Up to January 1905 I travelled from time to time to Russian Poland* for underground work. In January I took up residence there as a member of the Board of the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania. A few months later, in July, I was arrested at a secret meeting but was released under the October amnesty.** In 1906 I was sent as a delegate to the Unity Congress in Stockholm. As the representative of the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania I became a member of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. From August to October I worked in St. Petersburg. At the end of the year I was arrested in Warsaw and released on bail in June 1907.

Arrest again followed in April 1908. This time I was tried on the old and new charges and sentenced to exile on each charge. At the end of 1909 I again found myself in Siberia, in Taseyevo. I fled from there after seven days, making my way first to Warsaw and thence abroad. I resumed residence in Cracow from where I used to travel to Russian Poland.

The year 1912 found me in Warsaw but not for long. I was arrested on September 1, charged with absconding from exile and sentenced to three years penal servitude. After the outbreak of war in 1914 I was taken to Orel where I served my sentence. I was transferred to Moscow in 1916 and charged with Party activity during the 1910-12 period. This earned for me another six-

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* That part of Poland which then belonged to Russia.

** The October amnesty followed the tsar's manifesto of October 17, 1905.

year penal servitude sentence. The February Revolution, however, released me from the Moscow Central Prison.*

In Moscow I worked until August when I was sent as a delegate to the Party Congress** which elected me to the Central Committee. After the Congress I remained in Petrograd.

I took part in the October Revolution as a member of the Military Revolutionary Committee and afterwards, when the committee was dissolved, I was instructed to organize a body to combat counter-revolution—the Cheka—(7/12/17). I was appointed Chairman of this body.

I was made People's Commissar for Internal Affairs and, on April 14, 1921, also People's Commissar for Railways.

1921 *Felix Dzerzhinsky*

EDITOR'S NOTE

Felix Dzerzhinsky was elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1917. In 1924 he became a candidate member of its Political Bureau. In that year he was appointed Chairman of the Supreme Council of the National Economy of the U.S.S.R. He simultaneously continued to lead the OGPU.

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* In pre-revolutionary Russia the Moscow Central Transit Prison. It was also known as the Butyrki Prison. On March 1, 1917, the insurgent workers and the Moscow garrison which sided with them seized the prison and freed the political prisoners.

** The reference is to the VI Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) which opened on July 26 and ended on August 3 (8-16 August, New Style), 1917.

On July 20, 1926, Dzerzhinsky died from heart failure, after delivering an impassioned speech at a plenary meeting of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the C.P.S.U.(B.) against the Trotsky-Zinovyev opposition.

PAGES FROM A PRISON DIARY*

1908-09

APRIL 30, 1908

These two weeks during which I have been cut off from the outside world have dragged like centuries. My mind has been at work, going over the past with its exciting activity and searching for the real meaning of life. I am calm enough, yet the strange tranquillity is utterly at variance with these walls and with the things from which they have separated me. The point is that everyday life has been replaced by a vegetative existence, activity by introspection.

Today I received a notebook, pen and ink. I want to keep a diary, to converse with myself, to reflect on life so as to learn as much as I can for my own benefit and, perhaps, a little for those friends who think about me and who are pained for me, and in this way maintain my strength until I am released.

Tomorrow is the First of May. In the office of the secret police one of the officers, smiling sweetly, said to me, "Do you know that we are rounding up lots of your people before your celebration?" Today I was approached by the gendarme, Colonel Ivanenko, who want-

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* The diary was kept by Dzerzhinsky during his imprisonment in the Warsaw Citadel. It was first published in Nos. 16 and 17-18 of the *Social-Democratic Review* for 1909 and in No. 19 for 1910. This edition is slightly abridged.

ed to know if I was a confirmed Social-Democrat and if I would be willing to work for him. "Maybe you've become disappointed?" he queried. I asked him if he had ever heard the voice of conscience, whether he had ever had the feeling that he was serving an evil cause....

There is a traitor in one of the cells in my corridor—Michał Wolgemut, a fitter by trade and ex-member of the PSP military organization. Wolgemut was arrested at Sokołów after an armed attack on a post-office when six or seven soldiers were killed. When the gendarmes intercepted a letter to his comrades urging them to rescue him, the chief security officer Zavarzin* had a ten-hour talk with him, promising liberty as a reward for acting as informer. Wolgemut agreed. Twenty-seven people have been arrested in connection with the case, among them seventeen-year-old boys and girls. I see Wolgemut during exercise, he looks the picture of abject misery and, as far as I have been able to observe, never talks with anyone, nor does he tap any messages.

What is the way out of the present hellish life with its wolfish exploitation, oppression and violence? The outlet lies in an idea of life based on harmony, a full life, embracing society as a whole, all humanity; in the idea of socialism, in the idea of solidarity of the working people. This idea is now nearing realization, the people are ready to accept it with open hearts. The time is now ripe for this. The ranks of the advocates of this idea should be united, the banner unfurled, so that the people can see it and follow it. And in our times this is the task of tasks for the Social-Democrats, for the handful still at large.

Socialism should cease to be merely a scientific preview of the future; it should be the torch kindling in the hearts of people indomitable faith and energy.

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* Zavarzin—chief of the secret police in Warsaw.—*Ed.*

A small but ideologically strong handful of people, uniting the masses around their banner, can give them that which they lack, that which would enliven them, give them renewed hope, disperse the fearful atmosphere of unbelief and the thirst for revenge which boomerangs against the people.

No government of murderers can maintain order or divert life into the old channels. The blood of the guiltless people, the hunger and suffering of the masses, the tears of the children and the despair of the mothers—the sacrifices which the people must make in order to overcome the enemy and achieve victory—will not be in vain.

It is late. Here in this place I intend to maintain a regime that will enable me to conserve my strength. And I feel that I have the strength which, I think, will enable me to hold out and return. But even if I should not return, this diary will, perhaps, reach my friends and they will have at least a particle of "me" and they will know that I was calm and that I called to them in the moments of silence, in the moments of sad thoughts and gay and that I am as well as it is possible to be in this solitude, alone with thoughts of spring, nature and of friends—here where the silence is such that one can visualize the smiles of friends.

MAY 2

Both yesterday and today I have experienced a strange unease, trembling and alarm.... Why, I don't know. Unable to concentrate, my thoughts fly in all directions, like leaves chased by the wind.

I had another visit from the colonel today. I trembled all over when I saw him, I felt as if a disgustingly slimy creature were creeping over my body. He politely informed me that my case had been transferred to the military court and that the indictment had already been

sent to me. He expressed regret that the case had been taken from the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice* and assured me that the military court very often delivered juster verdicts and less severe sentences than the Court of Justice. He inquired if I had books, asked about the food and added that it would not be a bad idea to have a theatre in the prison. When I again asked him if he had ever had a conscience, he replied in a sympathetic and mournful voice saying that I wasn't quite myself.

Throughout this not very long conversation I had the feeling of a snake creeping over me, circling my body and clinging to me. I had no fear, I knew that I would come out of the trial all right. But I was physically repelled and felt that I wanted to vomit. I returned to my cell conscious that I no longer had the strength to maintain my usual peace of mind. I had the feeling that I was covered with dirt, human dirt.... Evil, like red-hot tongs, seizes and roasts the body of the living man and blinds him. It darkens the whole world, filling every particle, every breath and every atom with pain, excruciating pain. Andreyev** has described war as being insane and monstrous; but life is a hundred times worse; and not only the life here in the dungeons, but life generally.

Prisoners are put in irons every day. When I was taken to my cell—the same cell in which I was placed seven years ago—the first sound I heard was the jangling of the chains. It accompanies every movement of the man in fetters. The cold, heartless iron on the human body. These irons—eternally greedy for heat and never

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* Court of Justice in pre-revolutionary Russia was a collegiate court which tried civil and criminal cases. It was the second link of the general system of justice. The supreme court was the Senate (Supreme Court of Appeal).—*Ed.*

** Leonid Andreyev, Russian writer and playwright (1871-1919), who described the horrors of war in a story written in 1904.—*Ed.*

knowing it—are always associated with prison. Most of the prisoners in my corridor are now in shackles—seven out of thirteen. When they are taken out for exercise the silence which enshrouds the prison is broken by the monotonous jangling which penetrates the depths of the soul and becomes overriding. And the prisoners move, gazing at the blue of the sky, at the trees now budding into leaf, without seeing the beauty or hearing the hymn of life, without feeling the warmth of the sun. They are shackled for the purpose of depriving them of everything, leaving only this funeral knell. There isn't the slightest danger of anyone breaking out of this place; no one has ever escaped or been rescued from these walls; each prisoner is watched by a soldier armed with a rifle, by a gendarme; everywhere there are gendarmes, soldiers, iron bars and walls. The prisoners are put in irons for the sake of revenge, for the sake of blood and the desire to please those at the top who know what they want but who get others to do the shackling for them, just as they get others to act the role of executioners. The role of executioner devolves on these soldiers and gendarmes—the people for whom the shackled have committed their "crimes." The gendarmes have not volunteered for the service, they are "pressed" men, levies. So that those who do the shackling have no idea of what they are doing. They are used to it and have no understanding of what they deprive the prisoner; the conditions of their own lives blind them to the beauty of the world.

Today I saw a young fellow taken away from the blacksmith's shop after being put in irons. It was obvious from his face that everything had congealed within him; he tried to smile but the smile merely contorted his face. Bowed, he held the chain in his hands to keep it from trailing along the ground, and with superhuman strength followed, almost running, behind the hurrying

gendarme who, apparently, had to put several more in irons. The gendarme, aware of the prisoner's suffering, stopped for a moment and, smiling, said, "Oh, I forgot to give you the strap (with which to hold the irons)."

MAY 7

I had a visit from my lawyer today. I have now spent three weeks in strict solitary confinement. The effects are already making themselves felt. I couldn't speak freely, though no one was present during our talk; I had forgotten such a simple word as, for example, "notebook," my voice trembled, and I felt a shudder run down my body. My thoughts were in a muddle, but I felt quite calm. This had nothing to do with nerves. I am segregated and the sudden break with the solitude knocked me off my balance, so much so that in the matter of a few minutes I was unable to right myself and regain balance.

The lawyer looked at me and said, "Your nerves are on edge." I returned to the cell angry with myself; I had not said all that I had wanted to say and, in general, spoke as one does in sleep.

And so I shall be tried by the Court of Justice. How is one to understand them? Possibly Ivanenko wanted to frighten me or to see how I reacted to the news. Or it may be, and this is much more likely, that he spoke the truth when he said that a decision had been taken but that the case had not yet reached the Court of Justice. It may be that there will be two investigations—one in the Court of Justice, the other in the military court. But that doesn't matter very much. Still I must be prepared for a sentence of several years and learn to be patient.

I read from morning till night, burying myself in literature. And after days of this I go about feeling as though I had seen in my sleep different eras, people,

nature, princes and paupers, the pinnacles of fame and the depths of infamy. And I have difficulty in tearing myself away from my books to eat the prison fare; I swallow what there is and return to my reading to follow the events and the destiny of the characters—follow them every bit as avidly as only recently I plunged into the whirlpool of my own little world of trifling things, fired by a noble idea and filled with enthusiasm. And only for a time is this sleep interrupted and replaced by the nightmarish reality.

A moment ago a woman in a nearby cell fought with a gendarme. She shrieked hysterically, screaming for help as if she were about to be murdered. For a long time, a terribly long time, her screaming resounded throughout the building. The inmates of some of the cells began to bang on their doors. The gendarme in our corridor in a frightened and pleading voice wailed, "Please, don't bang on the doors, I haven't sworn at anyone, I haven't offended anybody." When one of the prisoners requested him to summon the Governor, declaring that he would complain about the beating up of a prisoner, the gendarme meekly replied, "All right, complain." The soldier on sentry duty outside threateningly ordered the banging on the cell doors to stop and called loudly for the corporal of the guard. My neighbour, a seventeen-year-old student, who is charged with having taken part in an armed attack on a post-office near Sokołów, plus another four offences, tapped on my wall, asking, "What is this? A demonstration?" The man in the cell above also tapped out: "What are these savages doing?"

Things settled down in a little while, the deathly silence returned, to be broken only by the distant whistling of the locomotives.

At night, lying awake in the silence, the mind registers every movement and the slightest sound indi-

cates their place of origin—beyond the paling there the prisoners are being taken to be shackled. At such moments I get up, and the more attentively I listen, the more distinctly I hear, despite the care and secrecy, the sounds of sawing and hammering. It dawns on me that they are erecting a gallows, of this there is no longer any doubt. I return to my pallet and cover my head with the blanket. But there is no relief. I have the firm conviction that somebody will be hanged today. The victim knows about it. They fall upon him in his cell, bind him and gag him to smother his cries. Maybe he has not offered any resistance, has allowed himself to be bound and dressed in the death shirt. And they take him away and watch how the hangman seizes him, watch his death agony and, with cynical words, throw him into the grave as if he were carrion.

Is it possible that these same gendarmes who keep watch over us, that this chief warder always kind and with languorous eyes, or the obliging Governor who whenever he approaches me always doffs his hat, is it possible that these people whom I see, can be present at this spectacle and take part in it? They are used to it. But how does the man feel who is being led to the gallows? His whole being revolts. Is there to be no salvation? To be deprived of life in a moment, to cease to exist, to walk to one's death, to see with one's eyes all the preparations and to feel the clammy touch of the hangman. The feeling of revolt is parried by the cold, inexorable necessity and cannot become reconciled to it, cannot come to terms with it. In the end the doomed man walks calmly to his death, to get it over, to end his torment.

I came upon a few words written on the wall of the cell by a previous inmate: "I, Josef Kunicki, arrested together with my wife on June 6, 1907, while walking in the street in Vilno, was sentenced to death in Suwałki

by the military court for killing an informer and belonging to the military organization of the Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party. On February 19, 1908, I was taken to Warsaw for execution. I am writing this on March 3, 1908." Nearly three months lay between the sentence and the day on which the foregoing words were written. And in all probability he spent the whole of the time alone, tormented by his longing for life.

Not far away from me the young fellow of whom I have already written tapped out a message saying he wasn't a coward, but that he didn't want to die for money. From his messages I can appreciate what is taking place in his mind. It is quite possible that he will be discharged.

All the prisoners in my vicinity are victims of informers. Four of those who took part in the attempt on Skalon* turned traitors; the man who killed the cavalry captain in Radom turned traitor and then disappeared. Sokołów and Włocławek are traitors.

I have been told that one of the prominent leaders of the PSP turned traitor and betrayed large numbers of people in Warsaw, Sosnowiec, Lublin and other places.

MAY 9

Reading makes the time pass surprisingly quickly; it is already late but I have no desire to go to sleep and keep putting it off. I hardly realize that my cell door is locked and I am oblivious to the terrors that surround me. I give no thought to the future nor to what is taking place beyond these walls. The onset of spring has not greatly affected me. I see it unfolding, the trees becoming green, the grass growing, and I breathe the balmy air. Today I heard the first thunder and now I see beyond the window the gentle spring showers and hear

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* Skalon—Governor-General of Warsaw.—*Ed.*

the patter of the raindrops. I am weary.... At the moment I have no desire to get caught up in the whirl of things, and I am satisfied and derive calm from my reflections on life, either mentally or by reading about the days of long ago.... I am no longer aglow, but deep down in me there is being accumulated that which will burst into flame when the moment comes. And who can say when it will come? Today, tomorrow, or perhaps a year from now. Will the flame be kindled and envelop me while still fretting here or will it find me already in action as a builder of life?

Let my will be dormant for the present and let warmer feelings repose until I succeed in breaking out of this sensation of death.

The indictment was handed to me yesterday. One of the members of the Court of Justice kindly explained that three days would be allowed for me to name witnesses, that the case would not be heard before August in the Court of Justice and that Senate—or did he say Minister of Justice?—instructions to transfer cases such as mine to the military court were not yet applicable to my case and that my trial could not be held before August since trips had to be made to Siedlce, Radom and other places, after which there would be a recess. For these reasons it has been found necessary to postpone the trial until autumn. He added that the Court of Justice had decreed that I, together with the comrades granted bail, be held in detention. This means that one of us will have waited twenty-three months and two others twenty months before being brought to trial.

In my case the indictment offers no proof whatever of my guilt, and if the matter had depended not on the arbitrary action and prejudice of the judge, but on juridical proof, I would now be free. In passing let me say that I have no hope at all of being released. In all likelihood they will frame another charge against me in

the military court, and if for some reason or other they are not doing so now, it will be done in the event of the Court of Justice acquitting me. The documents found on me, although they cannot be regarded as proof of my Party membership, will be used as a pretext for a charge.

MAY 10

For the past two days the cell next door has been occupied by an eighteen-year-old girl who was arrested four months ago. She sings, and her singing is not prohibited. It was she who clashed with the gendarme. After the scene she was taken to this cell. She is young, almost child-like. The loneliness is driving her crazy. She taps out messages to me, asking me to send her a rope so that she can hang herself. The rope, she insists, must be made of sugar so that her death should be a sweet one. She is so impatient and so nervous when tapping that it is almost impossible to make out her messages. And yet she keeps on knocking, unable, evidently, to adapt herself to prison life. Only a little while ago she tapped out: "What should I do to banish my sadness. Please advise me."

Every day there are conflicts between her and the gendarmes. As lively as a child, she simply cannot stand the regime. As I write these lines she is again at loggerheads with the guards. She stopped singing, called for the warder and went to the toilet. On the way she knocked at the door of my cell and upon returning she coughed and stopped outside her cell, requesting the gendarme to open the door for her, pleading a sore hand (rumour has it that during a scene, when she struck a gendarme with a jug, the latter brought his sabre down on her hand). The rules and custom of this place lay down that the prisoner, not the gendarme, should open the door. The reason for this is the fear that the prisoner might attack the gendarme while he is unlocking the

door: the supposition is that every prisoner is a blood-thirsty murderer, and for this reason the gendarme-warder is never allowed to enter the cell. The gendarme, in keeping with the rules, insisted on her opening the door. "But my hand is paining me," she said, "I cannot open the door and I won't open it. I shall stay here." The gendarme threatened to summon the Governor, saying that matters would be worse for her.

"What do I care," she retorted. And when the gendarme, hesitating to take brutal measures and with the intention of frightening her, went over to the bell, she turned to the door of the cell opposite which contains a young army officer and another prisoner and began to talk with them. The infuriated gendarme noisily opened the door and shouted, "Come along now, I've opened it for you." For a long time afterwards he kept muttering, "Swine." I rushed to the door, began to bang on it and shouted, "Hi, gendarme." He came only after I had shouted for the third time. All my pent-up anger broke loose. At first he tried to tell me that it was none of my business, but when I said that I had heard him use the word "swine," he began to justify himself, saying he would have opened the door but she always made scenes, that whenever anyone stooped to unlock the door she always slapped his face.

This girl—she is half child, half mad—will cause a lot of trouble one of these days. This time she upset everybody with her weeping and the quarrel with the gendarme. When she visits the toilet she rushes to the window and shouts to the comrades on exercise, and when the gendarme remonstrates she makes a fuss.

While on exercise on May 1st she shouted, "Long live the Revolution" and other slogans, and began to sing the *Red Flag*. This upset the other prisoners who deliberated whether to join with her in the singing and slo-

gan shouting. No one wanted to act the coward, but not everyone can pluck up the courage to sing in public. In any case a demonstration, an aimless venture, could not evoke a response. Silence reigned in the prison.

Later, someone on the floor above tapped out the message: "This evening we shall demonstrate by singing." But the tapping was done with extra caution and ceased at times for fear the gendarme should hear it. The singing did not take place.

Sometimes the girl makes us angry. Her laughter, singing and the clashes with the gendarmes bring into our life something strange and alien and, withal something precious and desirable, but not in this place. What does she want, why does she go out of her way to make trouble? One's first reaction is to be angry with her. But then you begin to think about her plight: "Is it her fault that she, a mere child, finds herself behind bars when she should still be under her mother's care, when she should be enjoying herself with playmates, like all children?" Maybe she has lost her mother and has had to fight for a crust of bread? After all, she is a working-class girl. The monstrous system has forced her to take an active part in the Revolution. And they are now taking revenge on her. How many there are like her, doomed from childhood to a miserable, inhuman existence! How many there are whose feelings are distorted, who are doomed never, not even in their sleep, to see real happiness or experience the joy of living? And it is in the nature of man to feel and experience happiness! A handful of people have deprived millions of this and, by doing so, have corrupted and twisted their own nature; all that remains is "madness and horror," "horror and madness," or luxury and pleasure, for which they have recourse to alcohol, power and religious mysticism.

Life wouldn't be worth living were it not for the light shown to humanity by the star of socialism, the star of

the future. Because the "ego" cannot live in isolation from the rest of the world and from people. Such is the "ego."

MAY 13

We had a thunder-storm an hour ago. Everything shook from the thunder, including our wretched building. The lightning flashes illumined the gloom and their rosy reflections penetrated my cell; it rained cats and dogs, the howling wind bent the tree beyond the window and hurled itself against the wall. Calm has set in, a pale moon, indifferent to all the pother, looks down, the measured tread of gendarme or sentry is no longer heard, there is no singing or clanging of chains. Nothing save the dripping of raindrops on the window-sill and the faint whistle of a distant locomotive. Sadness takes hold of one. But this is not the melancholy of the prisoner. I have experienced the gradual onset of the same feeling while at liberty—the sadness of life, the longing for something indefinable and yet as essential to life as air, as love.

Two prisoners were put in irons today. They were taken past our windows from the blacksmith's shop. Hanka, my neighbour, hailed each of them with the cry: "Long live the Revolution." They, encouraged, responded with the same slogan. I think they received the death sentence today. On my way to exercise I noticed a bustle in one of the corridors—the corridor of the doomed. I have often walked through this corridor when being taken to the Governor's office and, although totally ignorant of its purpose, I have, nevertheless, detected the whiff of death. There is nothing dark or gloomy about it—it has three large windows. It contains six cells, from No. 45 to No. 50; the doors of these cells are not unlike our own—yellow, with blotches of rust; still, they are different. On one of the doors I noticed a

completely rusty padlock, a big hole in another—an unmistakable sign that a mortal struggle had taken place with a prisoner who had resisted to the last.

Two days ago, I was told, my neighbour received a visit from the Governor-General, the captain of the secret police and the chief of the gendarmerie; they intimidated her, saying that the gallows awaited her and her brother, but she could save herself by turning informer and betraying her friends and their arsenal. She, they said, had been betrayed by others, she could cheat the gallows only by following suit.

The other day I read on one of the walls: "Teodor Jabłónski, sentenced to death. Cell No. 48 (the death cell). The prison doctor has just been. The execution takes place today. Good-bye to life! Comrades, farewell! Long live the Revolution!" Alongside was another message: "The death sentence has been commuted to ten years penal servitude. He now faces another charge—that of killing an informer in Płock Prison. 13/5/08."

MAY 14

The death cells are never empty. A few minutes ago while on exercise I caught a glimpse of a man at the window of No. 50. He was a young man, pale, with the appearance of a worker. The ventilation pane in the window was closed. He came to the window at intervals, pressing his face against the frosted glass of the lower part. Only the upper panes afford a glimpse of the sky through the netted wire which is so dense that there is hardly room for a matchstick. In order to look into the yard the prisoner must stand on the table or on the rail of his iron bedstead. But since the gendarme patrolling the corridor frequently looks through the peephole, the prisoner cannot remain at the window for more than a moment. No. 50 is a "solitary" cell. It is completely isolated, and its inmate is deprived of the comfort of

even tapping a message to a neighbour. There is nothing to take his eye, nothing to soothe his frayed nerves; the cold stone floor is filthy, the door is filthy, the window-frame and table are a garish yellow, the dark, dust-covered walls are mottled with blue and white stains, the ceiling resembles a coffin lid, there is the treacherous peephole in the door, and the ghastly, pale daylight. And on the other side of the door the hushed tread of the gendarme who every now and then raises the flap of the peephole to make sure that the victim has not cheated the hangman.

MAY 14, EVENING

Today my neighbour Hanka tapped out this message: "They put me in a cell with another woman named Ovcharek. We were together for a fortnight. Ovcharek told me that she had had a visit from her lawyer. I, in confidence, gave Ovcharek my mother's address and asked her to tell the lawyer to call on my mother and suggest that she should go away. Ovcharek agreed to do so. She was then summoned to the office where she met an agent of the secret police and told everything. She returned from the office with a parcel for me. It contained all kinds of delicacies, including caviare. She said it had been sent to me by the Party. I was in pain at the time, caused by the beating up. You can imagine how I felt. My mother was ill in bed, recovering from an operation undergone three weeks earlier. Suddenly the police arrived and, telling her what I had said to Ovcharek, ordered her to accompany them. She was taken to security headquarters and thence to the Pawiak.* The shock was such that she died there within three weeks. My father, too, is in gaol. Two months ago

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* The Pawiak was a preliminary investigation prison in Warsaw.—*Ed.*

he was sentenced to twenty years penal servitude. My brother and I are held in custody. So the whole family is now in gaol. I now have another prisoner—S.—for company. When they brought her to my cell she, Judas like, kissed me and said, 'Thanks, officer, for putting me in a cell with a friend.' Yet this was the one and only time I had ever seen her. I made a scene and insisted that she be taken away. Yesterday one of the secret police came to my cell and said that this S. had sworn that I was the main supplier of arms purchased abroad, that I was the leader of an armed group in Warsaw, that my brother was also a member of the group in which he was known as 'Iskorka.' She told them the most fantastic things about me."

There are many women prisoners here. I see them at exercise and their voices come to me from the corridors. They quarrel with the gendarmes, and laugh and talk loudly. Their conditions are worse than ours, though it seems the gendarmes act with more restraint and don't interfere when they close the peephole. But it would be wrong to attribute their restraint to kindness. The simple explanation is that they want to avoid trouble. Evidently they are anxious not to upset the women, since this might bring the male prisoners to their aid; nor do they concentrate them in particular corridors, because one female prisoner causing a scene would give them more trouble than all the males. And if this were to happen the gaolers could be unable to cope with them.

Of the nine women who take their exercise in the part of the yard facing my window only three behave normally. Two girls, both of them Poles, walk hand in hand during exercise. The third, also young, a Jewess, is serious and calm. The others break into unnatural laughter, are noisy, and talk with Hanka, who simply cannot become reconciled to the regime. Her unruliness

was the cause of another unpleasant scene today. Hanka climbed on to her table, began to talk, or, to be more precise, to shout at two women in the exercise yard. They responded and began to talk with her. The gaoler warned them a couple of times to stop talking, but they paid no heed to him. In a rage he rushed to Hanka's window, opened it and began to swear at her. But his efforts were of no avail—the women completely ignored him. Shortly afterwards I tapped a message to Hanka saying that I was cross with her because she had allowed herself to be humiliated for nothing at all. She promised that she wouldn't let it happen again, but within an hour she had forgotten all about her promise. This is understandable, for she is still a child and cannot live cooped up in a cell, without any impressions whatever, when even older people who have had more than one experience of solitary confinement sometimes lose their equanimity.

Either last night or early this morning another big contingent of prisoners arrived. I saw them at exercise—two lines of ten, then of seven and finally of six. Presumably the military court was trying their case. Some of them were in irons, ragged and badly clothed, with a fur hat showing here and there. They walked in groups, talking quietly; some, gloomy and downcast, walked singly. They are factory workers, railwaymen, a soldier and, it seems, peasants, while some of them, judging by their faces, are either workers or intellectuals. The distance and the netted wire make it hard to decide. Hanka thinks they are bandits, but I think they belong to the "factionalists"* and that they are innocent; and if they really are bandits they must have belonged to the Party at one time. Where will the gaolers put them?

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* "Factionalists"—members of the Right-wing nationalist Polish Socialist Party—the so-called Revolutionary Faction of the PSP who believed in individual terror.—*Ed.*

F. E. Dzerzhinsky. 1896

F. E. Dzerzhinsky in Kovno Prison. 1898

There are no large cells in this prison. Maybe they will put them in dozens in the death cells where there is accommodation only for two. At any rate they have taken them along the death-cell corridor.

MAY 16

Spring is now at its height. The fruit trees are a riot of leaves and blossom. The days are becoming longer, the breath of summer is in the air, the yard is becoming warmer and the cells stuffier and stuffier.

Hanka is suffering terribly; she no longer sings and she has become docile. She has learned that her brother was sentenced to death yesterday. In the evening she tapped to me: "Maybe they will hang him today, but I do not know whether or not they will let me take farewell of him. I shall be left all alone. Perhaps they will carry out their threat and hang me too. He is so young, only twenty-one." What could I say to her? I tapped back, saying she was an unfortunate child, that I shared her sorrow, and that we must bear up. She replied saying that she felt life was no longer worth living. When death—remorseless death—takes away one of our dear ones it is impossible to get rid of this thought, to get away from it, to forget; it returns again and again, and you stand on the brink of something dreadful, powerless, helpless and deprived of reason.

For the past week or ten days the cell above mine has had another occupant, who it is I don't know. He doesn't tap, nor does he answer my messages. Soon, I don't know why, but I began to have the impression that it was W.,* and day by day the conviction grew on me. I tapped out his name, but failed to elicit a response.

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* Dzerzhinsky had in mind the worker Warden, member of the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania who was subsequently sentenced to six years penal servitude and who died in prison.—*Ed.*

I hit the ceiling with my boot, but this, too, had no effect. Whoever it was he hardly moved. For days I did no reading, watching all the time at the window to see if he would appear at exercise. But he never left his cell, and I was unable to see and make sure that it was he. Something took place in his cell today. He knocked on the door. After that I heard the familiar scraping of the key being turned in the lock and the bolt being drawn.

After a brief silence I again heard the sound of the key, this time locking the door. The knocking began again, rhythmically and calmly, with short intervals. The door opened and closed twice, followed by more knocking, at first with hands, afterwards with feet and even with a mug. This went on for the best part of an hour. What took place I never knew, nor do I know now. Somebody twice entered his cell after this, and that was the end of the noise. Everything above me quietened down, silence reigned, just as if no one had ever been there.

Such is the daily round. Only at intervals does one of the cells become animated, and when this happens all the inmates of the silent cells rush to the doors, anticipating an outbreak and wondering whether they too should join in breaking the silence. For a long time afterwards they find it difficult to settle down, to return to the dead letters of their books. At such moments each is conscious of where he is and what he is. The supposition that W. occupied the cell above me was, I think, the manifestation of the unhealthy imagination which is inseparable from prison life.

MAY 21

In the evening while reading by lamplight I heard the heavy tread of a soldier. He came up to my window and pressed his face against the glass. He did so quite boldly, either from curiosity or interest.

"Hello, brother," I said in a friendly tone, "you can't see anything."

He showed no sign of wanting to go away.

"Yes," I heard him say. He inhaled a deep breath and a moment later asked, "Are you lonely? They have locked you up (a string of oaths followed) and keep you here!" Steps were heard in the yard and the soldier went away.

These coarse but sympathetic words evoked in me a wave of feeling and thought. In this accursed building to hear from the lips of those the very sight of whom makes one angry, nervous and evokes hatred, words bringing to mind the noble idea, testifying to its vitality in our prison surroundings and to the contact which we, the prisoners, maintain with those who at the present time are forced to kill us! What immense work has already been done by the Revolution! It has spread everywhere, awakening minds and hearts, firing them with hope and pointing to the goal. None can get away from this! And should we at present, seeing the spread of evil and how cynically, for the sake of paltry gain, people kill one another, fall into despair, this would be a terrible mistake. In such cases we do not see beyond our nose, remain oblivious to the process of raising the dead. The war with Japan revealed the degree of disorganization and collapse in the Russian army, while the Revolution merely laid bare the evil that is corroding society. But this evil has to be exposed in order to exorcise it. And so it will be! But in order to accelerate this, it is necessary to instil in the masses the conviction of its inevitable bankruptcy, so that they should not have the slightest doubt about their ability to do the job in serried ranks, fully prepared for the struggle. This is the job of the theoreticians, while the job of the others is to lay bare and uncover this evil, expose the suffering and torment of the masses and of

the individual revolutionaries torn from our ranks by the enemy, and impart to them that significance which is really theirs and which gives them the heart to emerge from the ordeal with flying colours. Only in this way can we inspire in the masses the courage and moral consciousness of the necessity of struggle. We need both those who influence the mind and those who instil in the soul and in the heart confidence in victory. We need scholars and poets, teachers and agitators. I recall the tremendous influence exerted by the book *From the Battlefield*, published by the *Proletariat* Party*, which describes the suffering endured by the people and their staunchness and courage. I would dearly like to see more books of this nature. True, it is more difficult now to compile and compare the facts, because they are much more significant and numerous. But our forces are greater now. If somebody would undertake to do this work, or even to guide it, we could have such a book in the space of a year or two. It would reflect not only our torments and our teaching, but also that longing for the really full life for which man is ready to fight regardless of the suffering and the cost.

The brief words spoken by the soldier set me thinking. We have many of these soldier-guards and gendarme-warders.** But we are deprived of the opportunity of getting to their hearts and minds. Conversation with them is forbidden. And in any case on what footing to talk with them! We meet the gendarmes as enemies and

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* *Proletariat*—the first revolutionary workers' party in Poland, formed in the first half of the 'eighties of the last century—*Ed.*

** Among the gendarme-warders were privates drawn from the peasantry. These were conscripts who, having no choice in the matter, were directed to the gendarmerie. Dzerzhinsky succeeded in establishing good relations with some of them; it was these who smuggled out part of this diary and delivered it to the required address.—*Ed.*

we only see the soldiers. In the corridor the three gendarmes are relieved every four hours. Each returns to the same corridor once in ten or fifteen days. This makes it difficult to know if any of them is friendly and approachable. Moreover, they are kept busy—they escort us singly to the lavatory, to the exercise ground, to the office, unlock the cell when the soldier-orderly fetches meals, sweeps the cell and takes away the reading lamps. The gendarmes who escort us to exercise are then sent to other work. The result is that they are often vulgar and bad tempered, regard us as enemies, try to shorten the exercise time and return us to our cells. I should say though that those who on their own initiative herd us back to our cells are few. They often look at us through the peepholes, make us wait a long time before they unlock the door when we knock. Some of them are just tired; one feels that they are in terror of their superiors, and discipline is rigid. I have known instances when some of them even sympathized with us. Once when I asked one of them to change books for me he immediately turned to a fellow gendarme who happened to be passing along the corridor and said, "Be sure you tell them in the office." On another occasion while on exercise I had the feeling that the gendarme was about to cut short my walk and take me back to the cell; when I drew his attention to the fact that there was still a minute to go (there was a clock in a glass case on the wall), he was most indignant that I should suspect him of wanting to cut a minute off the walk. He said as much in such a friendly tone that, in confusion, I replied:

"Your people do all kinds of things."

In this "House of the Dead" it is exceedingly difficult to engage in conversation with a gendarme. It is characteristic in the highest degree that whenever prisoners meet accidentally they are unable to speak with one

another. On one occasion the gendarme forgot that the lavatory was engaged and brought along another prisoner. When the latter saw this he immediately turned about and went back to his cell. This prisoner occupied the cell opposite mine and I heard him say to the gendarme, "There was somebody in there, why did you take me?" On another occasion, upon meeting an imprisoned army officer, I shouted, "Hello, comrade!" but he, taken aback by the unexpected salute, could only gaze at me in astonishment.

One loses the ability to engage in conversation in this place. In the corridors the gendarmes talk with one another and with the orderlies exclusively in whispers. When a gendarme comes to somebody's cell with one of his superiors, he closes the door so that the other prisoners should not hear the conversation and the voices. The gendarmes are forbidden to enter into conversation with the prisoners or to go into their cells; the soldiers who act as orderlies are closely watched by the gendarme-warders to make sure that no words are exchanged with the prisoners. If I need something from the orderly I must make the request not to him directly but through the gendarme. There is a mat in the corridor for the purpose of deadening footsteps. Sometimes the only sound penetrating the cell is the whispering of the warders and the scraping of the keys in the locks.

The slightest sound from without, coming through the window, merely intensifies the mysterious graveyard silence. This silence presses on everyone and affects all of us, both prisoners and gaolers. On one occasion I told the gendarme that he should not waken me for exercise as he had done this morning, adding that if he did I would make a scene. I was quite calm, but even during this brief exchange of words I felt myself trembling. I noticed that the gaoler, too, could not explain

himself freely. And when one of us, taking a grip of himself, manages to blurt out a few words to the gendarme, or sings or laughs, it seems as if we have seen a ray of light. And the gendarmes feel this too.

In speaking about this sepulchral silence I should point out that we no longer have any prisoners in irons in my corridor, and in my part of the yard only one man in chains takes his exercise (some of those brought in irons from the provinces have had the chains removed, the remainder have been transferred). Thanks to the absence of the clanging of the fetters the silence is no longer so painful to the brain, but it still acts strongly on the spirit.

Only echoes of life penetrate to us from the outside; the day is full of noise in which it is difficult to distinguish the separate sounds—this is the breath of life—sunshine, rain, the sounds of the town, of the cabs and marching soldiers. In this noise of life there are brought to us at times the merry voices of children, the loud laughter, the joking and swearing of gendarmes and soldiers; we hear military music, the singing of soldiers and, occasionally, the monotonous sound of an accordion. At weekends we hear raucous singing to the accompaniment of the accordion. At night-time we hear the whistle of locomotives and the rumble of trains. And when the gentle breeze rustles the leaves, the impression is of the soft whisper of the forest or the gurgling of a stream. Alas, the sounds but intensify the internal silence and frequently evoke anger and even frenzy, the constant remembrance that you are not dead, that they penetrate the bars and windows through which the living, outside world is seen only in the shape of a blur. Yet if these sound impressions were completely absent, things would, of course, be much worse.

MAY 22

Today in the upper corridor but not directly above me there was another scene. This time one of the prisoners didn't merely knock, he banged on the door with his stool, shouting, "You cannot do this!" I don't know what took place. The noise continued for ten minutes and was followed by deadly silence.

MAY 23

Today for the first time I have had a visit. My brother's wife and little Wanda* came to see me. The girl played with the netted wire,** showed me her doll and said, "Come here, Uncle." I am very glad that I have seen them. I am very fond of them. They brought me flowers which now stand on my table. My sister-in-law was delighted to find me looking so well and I assured her that I was in good fettle and happy. I told her that in all probability I would be sentenced to penal servitude.

I paid two visits to the office today (saw my visitors and my lawyer) and each time I passed the corridor with the death cells. Apparently two of them were occupied; I saw the orderly pass along with two dinners. I am sure that the prisoners there have been sentenced to death because in addition to the gendarme a soldier with a rifle was on duty.

From the outside world people dear to me send me greetings and despite the oppressive life are boldly marching forward performing their duty. I can see them. And they are many. Some are placed as I am, some are

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* Dzerzhinsky's niece.—*Ed.*

** The visit took place in the presence of the captain of the gendarmes. Visitors were separated from the prisoner by two rows of wire netting separated by a considerable distance.—*Ed.*

still active, while others are far away,* but in mind, heart and in deeds they are here. I see, moreover, those who are dear to the heart, those who radiate happiness, filling life with energy and staunchness.

Today my neighbour Hanka is quiet and sad; I managed to get a white flower (narcissus) smuggled to her; she tapped out a message saying that she loved me and hoped that I would not be cross with her for using this word. I realize how difficult it must be for her, deprived of the company of people, of liberty and flowers; how she would like to cling to somebody, to hear a tender voice and not to be so terribly alone. "Now I am absolutely alone in the world," she tapped to me. I am attached to this child and I feel for her as if she were my own.

MAY 28

For a week past Hanka has been spitting blood. Today she was visited by the doctor who found her in a bad state and suggested that she be transferred to the hospital. But she refused to go. When I argued with her, saying that she should go, that it would be better for her there, she replied that she would be completely alone and that when she recovered her cell would be occupied and for this reason she had no desire to go to the hospital. So she remained.

Hanka has been very weak all day. From time to time she tapped lightly on the wall to reassure herself that I was near; when I responded she tapped out: "I love you very much." What a dear child. Separated from you by the dead wall I am conscious of each of your movements, of every step and every beat of your pulse. Surely this girl is not fated to die all alone, without anyone to tend her, to smile at her? I haven't the courage to

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* Evidently in exile.—*Ed.*

convince her to go to the hospital where she would not have anyone near her. Maybe she will not die, maybe the bleeding will stop, she is so young and strong and full of life. Here everyone loves her. Passing her cell they say, "Hello, Hanka," or "Good-night, Hanka." The gendarmes do not shout at her; some of them even do things for her. Not long ago one of them chatted with her and said that he was sorry that she was so lonely. A few days ago when they wanted to take her to a bigger cell and put another woman prisoner with her she refused to go.

In this corridor only two of our cells neighbour each other and the same is the case on the floor above. The upper cells are occupied but no messages are tapped. There are two people in the cell above Hanka, and they, as if for spite, kept running about all day in their heavy boots. She shouted to them that they shouldn't make a noise, that every step hurt her head, but they, apparently, did not hear her and continued to run. The soldier on sentry duty was cross with her for shouting and asked the gendarme the reason why. Hanka burst into tears, feeling herself utterly helpless. Only towards evening did the occupants of the cell above stop their running. Evidently the warder told them not to do so.

Hanka has been singing a revolutionary song; she herself thought out the tune which was sad, quiet and complaining. But after singing for a little while she began to cough. The blood, evidently, began to flow in her throat again.

MAY 31

Yesterday and today, it seems, they tried the people charged with the attack on the post-office near Sokołów. Fifteen men and one woman were sentenced to death, two women to fifteen years penal servitude, while two others were found not guilty.

Hanka received her indictment yesterday. She is charged on eight counts, with leadership of an armed unit, with the attack at Rogów, with an attempt on the life of Skalon, etc. They say that she is sure to be hanged. Skalon said that the death sentence would not be changed: "She has lived too long as it is."

The student from Siedlce who occupies the cell next to mine was sentenced with them, and so, too, was the traitor Wolgemut.

JUNE 3

Another eight people were sentenced to death yesterday.

Today Hanka was summoned to the office whence she soon returned excited and gay. The Governor presented her with the choice: Either turn informer, in which case the sentence will be commuted to penal servitude for life, or be hanged. He told her that she was young and beautiful. She replied by laughing in his face and chose death.

Now she counts the days, calculating how long she has to live, sleeping as little as possible and often spends the night walking up and down her cell.

At other times, exhausted and reduced to despair, she cries out, "Why do they drink our blood all the time! I have consoled myself by thinking that all this will soon come to an end and yet they still continue to kill.... The young people no longer hasten to us." But such words are not heard from her very often. She is now singing again, making scenes with the gendarmes and shouting, "Even when I suffer torments I will try not to let them know. They will get no pleasure out of it."

At times one feels from her words that she drifts between the desire to live and the thought of inevitable death at their hands, that she is contemplating suicide, but that the ray of hope keeps her going. And when she

taps messages to me saying that she will not bow her head, that she will not tremble on the way to the gallows, I feel that she is speaking the truth, that this is the real Hanka. She longs to have at her side someone she holds dear, to see him, to feel his attachment, to speak freely with him, and then she curses the wall separating us. That is how we live alongside each other, almost as if we were near and dear friends in a strange fairy-tale. And I curse myself over and over again that it is not me that stands in the shadow of death.

JUNE 4

Yesterday they executed the people sentenced for the attack in the vicinity of Sokołów. The prisoner in the same cell as one of the sentenced men, paying no attention to the gendarme, shouted to Hanka while taking exercise, "They have hanged him!" Today during exercise we saw only one of the men who had been sentenced to death—the Siedlce student who previously occupied the cell next to mine. He told us that he had been brought back from the place of execution. Tomorrow fifty-one people will be tried in connection with the killing of a cavalry captain in Radom.

Hanka is not singing today: she rebukes herself saying that yesterday she was singing while people were being hanged. She asked me where the corridor with the death cells was located; the sooner she is there, she said, the better. On the way to the gallows she would sing the *Red Flag*.

The gendarmes in the yard outside our windows are very noisy in the evenings, talking, shouting, laughing and clapping their hands. Today in addition to the applause and the laughter there were cries of encore. Afterwards, when they left for the corridors to relieve the others, they peered through the peepholes to make sure that the prisoners were not tapping messages, and

every time a prisoner visited the lavatory they carefully searched it for letters. At night-time they take the doomed men to the place of execution.

A woman prisoner, I don't know who she is, is in the cell above mine.

JUNE 5

Half an hour ago (it is now about 11 p.m.) two Radom men were brought from the court to our corridor. Both have been sentenced to death. When Hanka shouted to them from her cell, "We shall meet soon! Good-bye!" they replied, "We can take it, we are not downhearted!" The gendarme stopped them and whispered, "Enough, enough!" An hour ago one of the prisoners, a woman in the side corridor, swore at the gendarme and for about half an hour banged furiously on the door; the prisoner in the adjoining cell also banged with his fists. Then everything became quiet; what happened I don't know. Hanka acts strangely, is excited, cannot find any relaxation in reading and hopes only that the end will come as quickly as possible. Not that her spirit is broken. On the contrary, she thinks of how she will behave in the court so that her sentence should not be commuted. With the gendarmes she acts freely, haughtily, without paying the slightest attention to their cries of "Silence," "Move away from the window." "He who fights is bound to perish," she said to me. I, too, feel as calm as she does. He who lives must die, and he who is able so to love life is also able to die without poisoning his last moments with despair. If it were possible to find somebody who could describe all the horrors of this house of the dead—the struggle, the rise and fall of the spirits of those entombed here in order to be hanged, who could reproduce all that takes place in the mind of the imprisoned heroes and equally of the vile and usual types, in the mind of those sentenced to death—then the life

of this place and its inmates would be a mighty weapon and a torch in the struggle; for this reason it is necessary to collect and to give people not only a simple chronicle of the sentenced and the victims but to give a picture of their lives, of their spiritual state, their noble impulses and their baseness, their sorrow and their joy—notwithstanding the torment; to re-create the truth, the entire truth, infectious when it is splendid and powerful, and evoking scorn and disgust when, shattered, it stoops to vileness. This can be done only by someone who himself has suffered much and loved much. It is he alone who can disclose this pulsation and the struggle of the soul, not those who write obituaries.

JUNE 6

I had visitors today. They brought greetings from the outside world, wonderful flowers, fruit and chocolate. Stasia* and Wanda came to see me. During the visit my mind was in a whirl—I couldn't take possession of myself nor concentrate. All I heard was the words: "How well you look," and I remember that I said, "It is terrible here." I also asked them to send me books and linen for which I have no use whatever. When I returned to my cell I felt very strange indeed—no pain, no sensation, only the irksome feeling that one has before vomiting. And the wonderful flowers seemed to speak to me. I felt this without understanding a word.

Then somebody was brought back from the court and from the corridor there came to me a quiet and firm voice saying, "The gallows," and the hoarse exclamation of the gendarme: "No talking." In the morning, during exercise, I saw soldiers removing bundles of straw from the death cells. Apparently so many were held for execu-

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* Dzerzhinsky's sister-in-law.—*Ed.*

tion that there were not enough planks and pallets in the cells. They are now getting them ready for the eight Radom people sentenced yesterday.

Today Hanka has been docile and sad. I requested the chief warder, who is regarded as a good fellow, to take some flowers to her. But he refused.

The strange feeling which came over me after the visit has passed. Hanka drove it away. Somewhere on the floor above a newly-born infant is crying. The comrades in Hanka's corridor who are awaiting trial and execution, warmly declare their love for her. This makes her cross. She said that she did not know them sufficiently well for them to take the liberty of saying such things.

JUNE 7

Hanka had a visit from her lawyer today. Her case will be heard next Thursday. He told her that she could not hope to escape the gallows. She is nervous, longs for the day to come and finds it impossible to kill time. She has not sung at all today and is upset by the delay—another four days to wait. I managed to get the flowers to her after all, and she tapped to me that she would take them with her to the gallows.

The gendarmes were noisier than ever in the yard this evening. "How naive and stupid I am," Hanka tapped to me, "after all, this is their only recreation. But the laughter and the music irritate me so, and I think they do it deliberately in order to wear us out."

JUNE 12

All the Radom people have had the death sentences commuted to penal servitude. I have been assured that Hanka's sentence will also be commuted. A few days ago another woman prisoner was brought to her cell. Ever since laughter and singing have resounded in the

corridor. Hanka is angry with me for not tapping to her more frequently. The point is that I am beginning to dislike her. I admit that if I knew her better, if I didn't have the feeling that she was merely an "abstraction," she would certainly be aware of my coldness.

All this week, notwithstanding the visit and the books, I have had a strange feeling, as if death were near, that I had come to the end and that everything had been left behind....

JUNE 28

I haven't written anything for a long time. Hanka has been transferred to the cell opposite mine. On Thursday, the 18th, she was tried for the attempt on Skalon. For two days she was sure that she would be hanged. Her lawyer promised to visit her in the event of the death sentence being commuted, but he did not come. The sentence, however, has been commuted to penal servitude for life. A couple of days ago the lawyer informed her that Skalon had commuted the sentence merely because it was not convenient for him to send her to the gallows since the case concerned him personally, but that he would confirm the death sentence for another charge. Tomorrow they will hear the case of the bombing in Marki. In addition to this charge she has to face six more.

The cell next to mine is now occupied by a comrade from Kielce. He was tried on Thursday and his death sentence has now been commuted to fifteen years penal servitude; in a fortnight's time he is due to answer the charge of having taken part in the killing of two guards. Previously this cell had been occupied by a comrade from Lublin who was told that he had been recognized by the provocateur Tarantowicz. The latter testified against him, saying that he was responsible for the

death of a postman and five soldiers. It is certain that he will be sentenced to death. They say that this provocateur betrayed an entire branch of the Polish Socialist Party, that he is so busy denouncing people that the investigators have to queue to examine him. The Radom people, already tried on two charges, have twice been sentenced to death and each time the sentence has been commuted to penal servitude.

JULY 2

They took Hanka away from us on June 29. I only managed to catch a fleeting glimpse of her through the ventilator window when she was taking exercise. Her trial took place on the 30th. Judging by the sign that she made to me in putting her hand to her neck she has received the death sentence. She was removed from our corridor, and a group of prisoners were given three days in the punishment cells for sending a sharply worded complaint to the Prosecutor denouncing the gendarmes for their attitude to the women prisoners, and demanding that the latter be transferred to the women's prison. Some of those who complained were taken to the punishment cells, others were placed in different cells so that they should no longer have any contact with one another.

The cell next to mine is now empty. The Kielce man has been taken to another cell. Although only twenty-one he faces seventeen charges. When they come to him to read the indictment he refuses to listen, saying that he has had enough and that he will find his way to the other world without having to listen to it. He regrets merely that he cannot live for another twenty years, and asks how many charges they would bring against him in the event of him living to forty. Another batch of prisoners in irons has arrived. I hear and see them only when they go out for exercise. Some are mere boys, beardless, pale

and hardly more than fifteen or sixteen years. One of them can hardly move. Evidently there is something wrong with his legs. At exercise he sits on a bench. Another does not hold the strap of his irons and they clang all the time. The others, on the contrary, walk proudly in their fetters, jangle them and step out boldly and erect.

I experienced a bit of amusement the other day: I was in the lavatory and the gendarme forgetting about this brought in a comrade from Radom. Both of us were astonished. He has already had three death sentences commuted to twenty years penal servitude, and awaits another two of fifteen years for taking part in digging a tunnel under the prison and for belonging to the Left Polish Socialist Party.* These sentences have been imposed despite the fact that he had no part whatever in the killing of the gendarme captain and others. At the time these acts were committed he was no longer a member of the movement. Another prisoner, occupying the same cell and likewise sentenced to death, is a genuine Left and in principle is wholly opposed to individual terror. The gendarme realized that he had made a blunder but did not separate us and smiled as he brought me back to my cell.

Our corridor is now very depressed without Hanka, without her songs and her jokes, but we get to know

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* Under the impact of the 1905 Revolution in Russia the Polish Socialist Party split in two at the end of 1906: the Left PSP and the Right, chauvinist, so-called revolutionary faction of the PSP (factionalists). The Left PSP, which never wholly rid itself of nationalism, was opposed to terrorist methods of struggle. In tactical questions it was close to the Russian Menshevik Liquidators. During the First World War, part of the Left adopted an internationalist standpoint and drew close to the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania; in December 1918 they merged. The united party became known as the Communist Party of Poland.—*Ed.*

about her from her singing which comes to us from the distance, faint, it is true, but still loud enough to be heard.

JULY 3

Today after dinner they opened the window in my cell. I am now allowed to keep it open from 4 to 5 p.m. (during exercise the windows looking out on to the yard are closed). I can now see the leaves, quite a large segment of the sky and am able to breathe fresh air. I stood for a long time beside the window holding on to the bars. The fresh air intoxicated me, and what with recollection, yearning and the knowledge that I am deprived of freedom, I felt depressed. Here, in the heart of Warsaw they hold me in prison, in their fortress, whence their rule derives. A soldier who looks like a Kalmyk, armed with a rifle, keeps guard over me and watches me attentively. Away in the distance I can hear the whistle of a locomotive, the rumble of a train in which free people are travelling. They are many, very many, whereas here we are but a handful. And again my good spirits revive although alone in this cell and in this building I feel depressed.

JULY 6

Hanka was removed today. When passing my cell she shouted, "Good-bye! They are taking me away for ever!" The gendarme rasped out: "Silence, no talking," and they proceeded on their way. Another three prisoners have arrived in my corridor including the Anarchist Vaterlos, who is kept in chains. Vaterlos has already been sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude and is still to be tried on another charge. A foreigner, judging by his name and pronunciation, he spent three days in the punishment cell for complaining to the Prosecutor. With him in his cell is a Jew from Ostrowiec. The charge

against the latter, I don't know his name, is that, during the arrest of workers, he threw a bomb into a factory. The cell next to mine is occupied by a woman. Who she is I don't know, she only arrived today and taps badly. Then there are the two from Radom, the army officer Belokopytov from Zambrów, young and rosy-cheeked like a girl, an artillery man arrested for not informing on his comrade who, allegedly, belonged to the All-Russian Officers Union. With him in the cell is a worker who has been imprisoned since November 1, 1907, charged with belonging to the military organization of the PSP (he has been denounced by a certain "Sztubak"). There are two workers concerning whom I know nothing at all, and lastly, the traitor Wolgemut, who, they say, has already sent thirty people to the gallows. In the cell with him is a Jew from Białystók who, apparently, is also a traitor, for, although repeatedly warned about Wolgemut, he remains with him in the same cell.

JULY 7

This has been a gruesome day. In the morning in one of the branch corridors somebody banged on the cell door and shouted for the gendarme, but this did not last very long. Shortly afterwards Vaterlos began to bang on his door, calling for the Governor. He was told that the Governor would come shortly, but he failed to turn up. Vaterlos banged at intervals throughout the whole of the day. Finally, at 9 o'clock in the evening, he went out into the corridor and declared that he would remain there. The place was crowded with gendarmes and soldiers who threatened him and insisted that he return to the cell. But Vaterlos refused to budge. The matter ended in them picking him up and throwing him into the cell, whereupon he shouted, "Comrades!" All the prisoners began to bang on the doors. Only then

did the Governor appear. They spoke quietly, in German. All I could make out was that Vaterlos wanted them to remove his companion (before being taken to the punishment cell he had Dr. Sachs as cell-mate. Sachs, too, has had a taste of the punishment cell and is now in solitary confinement) and that they should punish the soldiers for their brutality. Vaterlos was taken immediately to another cell. During this incident the soldiers were running about beneath the cell windows threatening to kill Vaterlos. Afterwards, however, they themselves asked what had taken place and expressed sympathy with him. I myself heard one of the gendarmes inciting the soldiers against us, but they listened to him in silence. Hanka is still here—I saw her taking exercise.

According to the prison grapevine, my neighbour's father was hanged, her mother died in prison and a brother has been exiled. The Jew whom Vaterlos did not want in his cell received a three-year sentence yesterday; another man got eight years penal servitude, despite the fact that he is absolutely innocent.

Muszalski, one of the Radom prisoners, has been sent to the punishment cell for making a complaint. Instead of saying they were taking him there, he was told that he was being taken to the office. Vaterlos, who refused to go to the punishment cell voluntarily and lay on his bed, was carried there on his mattress.

JULY 9

Two of the Radom prisoners (Muszalski and Garbowski) and the Jew from Ostrowiec have been taken from here. One of the cells is now empty. Two new prisoners have arrived—Borucki and a man named Majewski from Radom. Immediately after leaving the punishment cell Vaterlos wrote a second complaint to the Prosecutor and the latter, on the pretext that he had been insulted, ordered him to be taken back to the punishment cell for

another seven days. But he is still here. The punishment cells, apparently, are filled.

The cell above mine is occupied by a woman prisoner. Her name, I have learned, is Grycendler. She was first sentenced to exile, then released on a bail of two thousand rubles and afterwards re-arrested. She conducted a twenty-three days' hunger strike in the Piotrków Prison. They say that the conditions there are terrible for the women.

JULY 23

Yesterday fourteen prisoners were put in irons; on the way to the blacksmith's shop one of them bitterly smiled and said, "My last free steps." Today the shackles were removed from five of them. These, it seems, have been brought from the provinces to stand trial. My neighbour Sulima is most unhappy, yet she says she feels good and sings for days on end. Her father was hanged, her mother died in prison, one brother is held in the Siedlce Prison, another is detained in No. 4 Block in the Citadel, while a third brother, fourteen years old, has been released. She shares the cell with another woman. The latter is charged with having participated in digging the tunnel under the Radom Prison. She spends her whole day in prayer. She is due to be tried tomorrow.

After his week in the punishment cell Vaterlos was taken to another cell, but I don't know which. On the floor above, the prisoners in cell No. 20 were on hunger strike for several days in protest against the bad food; they ended their strike yesterday. Until recently the food had been reasonably good (a diet of 37 kopeks being allowed for each prisoner). Last September things changed; the political prisoners continue to receive the 37 kopeks' fare, but the ration for criminal offenders has been reduced to 11 kopeks. It should be said that the criminals include those whom the authorities regard as

such. For example, the two Radom men—Muszalski and Garbowski—are now listed as criminals. After four days' hunger strike their ration was improved, but only in a small measure. Ruchkin, an ex-soldier from Zambrów who occupies a cell in our corridor, is considered a criminal too. The only charge against him is that he belonged to the Party. Not only is the food bad, the portion is small and these prisoners are hungry all the time.

JULY 26

Two men were put in irons today, Sunday. Evidently they will be sent to exile tomorrow. Five of the people charged with digging the tunnel have been found not guilty. One of them, Wierzbicki, is still here. The soldier from Zambrów has had his ration increased to 37 kopeks.

Hanka now shares a cell with Ovcharek, whom she had accused of treachery. I think she must have been lying. I now incline to the belief that all her stories were exaggerated. But there was no question about her believing what she said. There are now three of them in the cell. For the first two days Hanka was excited and gay during exercise, now she is lonely and depressed.

Today I succeeded in counting the number of prisoners on exercise; there were 60 in our part of the yard, which means that the total must be in the region of 120. Of the sixty, ten were women, four artillery officers (Belokopytov, Krakowiecki, Zapolski and Pankov) and a cavalry officer named Kalinin. The women's names are: Marczewska, Niewiadomska, Ovcharek, Sulima, Haweł-ka, Rudnicka, Pranchil from Ostrowiec, Grycendler, Rosa Kagan (Social-Democrat) and Smierdzińska. There are six prisoners in each of two cells, five in one, four in another and three in each of two cells.

On the upper floor the offices formerly used for investigation purposes are being turned into cells. According to the grapevine, they house not only those who are

being investigated but also many who are serving their sentences. Rumour has it that those sentenced to less than eight years penal servitude will no longer be sent to Siberia, because the prisons there are overcrowded; they will be sent instead to prisons in European Russia and in the Kingdom of Poland.

JULY 29

All the cell windows were closed and sealed today. The cells, now sealed, are like tombs—neither sky, trees nor swallows can be seen. Even fresh air has been taken away from us. According to rumour this has been done because the prisoners were exchanging notes with one another, dropping them with twine from window to window. It is said that a new Governor has arrived (his predecessor was here only for a short time) and that he refused to take over the block unless the windows were nailed down. Yesterday they allowed the windows to be opened, today they have sealed them tightly.

Four new prisoners have arrived in our corridor during the past few days. The prisoner who shared the cell with my neighbour has been transferred to Radom. Her place has been taken by a woman named Kaljat from Piotrków. This has been one of our bad days. Somebody has the idea of protesting, of fighting back; it is quite possible that this may lead to a clash—but nothing can help now, they will not open the windows.

AUGUST 7

A man named Katz arrived in our corridor a few days ago. Arrested in Berlin on the 25th of June, the day after he had attended a meeting, he was held there for two weeks, kept under strict observation and not allowed to inform anyone of his arrest. At the end of the two weeks he was taken on an express train to Wierzbołowo and handed over to the Russian authorities. He was bound

hand and foot all the way to Kovno. They say that the Minister for Foreign Affairs cabled the Berlin police requesting that he be sent to the Warsaw Citadel. After one day in Kovno he was taken here. He is charged with belonging to a group of anarchists.

We have had two other new arrivals—a bandit named Malewski and a worker named Stanisławski from Pabianice; the latter is charged with belonging to the PSP faction and will be tried tomorrow.

AUGUST 16

We have heard that Stanisławski has been found not guilty. Malewski was tried on Friday. He and two others were sentenced to be hanged, while another man received twenty years penal servitude. Malewski went about all day like a man out of his mind; after the trial he told us that he was innocent. The gendarme on duty informed him that the Governor-General had commuted his death sentence to fifteen years penal servitude, but when imparting the news the gendarme had smiled so cynically that Malewski found it impossible to believe him. The judge informed Malewski that he had twenty-four hours in which to lodge an appeal. He, however, did not know what to do—whether to wait for his lawyer or do something about it himself. Since time was passing he sent a telegram to his mother asking her to come and do something to get the death sentence commuted. Today he has been quite calm. The sentence, evidently, has been mitigated.

A few weeks ago several members of one of the PSP armed units were put on trial. Everyone was astonished at the mildness of the sentence. Only one, Montwill, received a fifteen-year sentence; five were set free, while three (Zipko, Jastrzębski and Piotrowski) were sentenced to eight years in prison. One, sentenced to two years and eight months penal servitude, had his sentence

reduced to six months. Rumour has it that the sentence of exile passed on Mańkowski has been reduced to one month's imprisonment. The accused woman, too, got off lightly. This has amazed everyone, and some think that the period of repressions has come to an end.

Arising from the closing of the windows one of the women prisoners suggested that we should break all the glass. But the suggestion was not taken up. Somebody else suggested going on hunger strike until all the prisoners were allowed the 37 kopeks' fare, but this suggestion, too, failed to meet with support. Hardly any gains have accrued from the hunger strikes. Last September when Vaterlos went on hunger strike twice—for fifteen and eight days respectively, he was assured that his demands would be granted, but the promise was not honoured. Kilaczycki, too, refused food on two occasions, demanding that his fetters be removed. On the sixth day of his strike they actually removed the fetters, but replaced them a week later.

The hunger strikes no longer make any impression. The authorities know that they cannot be continued very long and that not all can participate in them. Only the staunchest can hold out, and even these suffer greatly from the action.

Some say that the new Governor is a "good" fellow. It was he who discovered ways and means of satisfying the wolves, while keeping the sheep alive: the windows are still sealed, but the doors leading on to the corridors are left open during exercise. As to the food the better-off prisoners have received permission not to draw their full ration, so that part of it goes to those on the 11 kopeks' fare. In the course of time this may result in everybody getting less, and in more being pilfered. It should be said that now the gendarmes behave more gently. In recent times we have not heard any swearing even from those of them who hate us and who are

delighted when they can hurt our feelings in any way. Had it not been for this improvement it would have been impossible to have held out and things would have developed into severe clashes. After all, this is a place from which people go either to the gallows or to long years of penal servitude; they still remember the days when they were free and cannot become reconciled to the thought that for them everything is finished either for ever or for many, many years.

That which oppresses most of all, that which the prisoners find most unbearable, is the secrecy which surrounds this building, the mysteriousness of it, and the regime which is designed to ensure that each prisoner knows only about himself and even then not all but as little as possible. And he tries as hard as he can to break through the secrecy; hence the constant exchange of notes, the search for the most artful means of transmitting messages to one another, the coughing in the corridor, and the singing and whistling in the cells. There is a complete system of signals. When the old "letter boxes" for correspondence are discovered, new ones are devised. Those who have brought the means of contact to perfection devote themselves to this and nothing else. They are transferred from cell to cell in the endeavour to break them, but nothing can cool their ardour. And when other means fail, then, during exercise, they make all kinds of signs from the cell windows or from the lavatory to those walking in the yard. The baffled gendarmes shrug their shoulders, hoping that sooner or later the offenders will be removed. The message-transmitters know everything. Often when their information is incomplete they do not hesitate to make it up. Hence the flow of information concocted any old how. All means are used in the effort to lessen the secrecy of this place.

The news has reached us that the secret police have

sent six agents to the prison and that there are provocateurs among the inmates. This, naturally, has made us watchful. And true enough, provocateurs have been found. But suspicion has fallen also on people who in all probability are completely innocent. Not long ago when one of the officer prisoners was walking with a new arrival, a prisoner shouted from the lavatory window, "That man is a police agent!" Hanka, for example, declared to me that Ovcharek and Sm. were downright traitors, yet afterwards, just as if nothing had happened, she lived with Ovcharek in the same cell and walked and chatted with her during exercise. It seems, however, that they have quarrelled again, because they are now in separate cells. Today for some reason or other Hanka was sent to the punishment cell. An atmosphere of mistrust, which is spoiling our collective life, is being created; everyone tries as hard as he can to keep to himself.

True, the agents are numerous. The occupants of the cells are changed so frequently (in most cases there are two to a cell and there are cells which house three or more prisoners) that the purpose is unmistakably clear —to enable the undiscovered agents to learn as much as possible. A few days ago while looking out of the window I saw a man on exercise, an intellectual, who I am absolutely sure is an agent. I shouted to his companion, "Comrade, the man walking with you is a scoundrel, a provocateur." The next day I saw them taking exercise alone.

Now I suspect another. Before my arrest I knew the name of a certain female traitor. I have now learned that the name of one of the women prisoners, one who behaves with the utmost circumspection, is the same as that very traitor; what is more, I accidentally discovered that she is closely acquainted with people with whom the traitor was acquainted and that certain

features of her character coincide with the traitor, and so, against my will, the doubt which at first I suppressed is growing into a firm conviction. It goes without saying that I have not shared my suspicions with anyone and I shall do everything to clear up the matter.

During the past few days my neighbour Sulima has been alone in her cell; her friend Kaljat, who is due to be tried in a few days, has been transferred to another cell. The Radom prisoner, Wierzbicki, has also been taken away.

AUGUST 21

This has been a day of commotion. Mattresses, bedsteads and prisoners are being taken from one cell to another. My neighbour Sulima, our "poor orphan," as we call her, has been transferred to another corridor, to the cell occupied by Ovcharek, despite the fact that she was most reluctant to leave us. Zipko, who occupied a cell on the upper floor (he has received an eight-year sentence) was transferred today to the Arsenal Prison. A man named Mostowski, from Radom, and Kruger, a member of the Left PSP, are in our corridor. Mostowski has been sentenced to penal servitude for life.

The two cell-mates of the spy Wolgemut have been taken to other cells; he, it seems, is no longer here.

The ex-officers Avetisyants and Salamei, both members of the Military Revolutionary Organization, and the former military engineer Weidenbaum and the student Rudenko occupy cells in No. 3 corridor. Avetisyants and Salamei were sentenced to three years' fortress confinement (the sentence expires on August 24, 1909), Weidenbaum was sentenced to one year for insulting the Tsar (his sentence expires on July 7, 1909), while Rudenko, at the request of his mother, has had his sentence reduced from four years penal servitude to one year. They get papers every day but these when read

are taken away to prevent others from reading them. This group was brought here from the guardhouse on July 11 on information supplied by the Pabianice police chief Ionin, who is detained in the guardhouse. He and two other guards shot the prisoner Grizel. Ionin is a scoundrel, one of the "heroes" of the punitive expedition in Latvia. The information supplied by this degenerate is most characteristic. He declared that the guardhouse was the centre of the members of the Military Revolutionary Organization, that its appeals were printed there, that literature was stored in the place and that from there agitation was conducted in the army and so on. Naturally, he achieved his aim—the officers were taken here. The guardhouse, which adjoins No. 10 Block, is a two-storeyed building. The basement contains the cells for soldiers undergoing investigation for criminal and military offences. The first floor houses officers and "noblemen" guilty of disciplinary offences and under temporary detention. Their cells are not locked and the windows are without bars. The second floor is set aside for officers awaiting trial and those sentenced to fortress confinement. The second-floor cells are locked and the windows have bars but are often open for weeks on end. This happens in those cases when the captain of the guard is a decent officer. They get newspapers and have no difficulty in maintaining contact with the outside world.

An officer named Szamanski, who in 1905 refused to take reprisals against workers on strike, spent sixteen months in this place; a Cossack officer named Rubtsov, charged with refusing to shoot workers sentenced to death by court-martial, spent two months here awaiting trial. He was dismissed from the service. A junior officer of the gendarmes charged with allowing ten political prisoners to escape also spent two months in the place. Among the prisoners at present is the Captain of

the Nebogatov Squadron. He was sentenced to ten years' fortress confinement for surrendering his ships to the Japanese. Then there is Second Lieutenant Deneko (of the Ivangorod fortress artillery), a Tolstoian, sentenced in April 1908 to six years in a labour battalion for refusing to serve in the army. The sentence was commuted and he was deprived of his rank.

AUGUST 29

"At one time I endured prison life without difficulty, now that I am old I find it hard. In those days I never gave a thought to the future, but I lived for it, because I was strong; now, seeing no perspective, I often think about the future and find life difficult. I cannot get used to the fact that I am imprisoned, that I cannot exercise my own will. I cannot become reconciled to the ever-recurring thought that the morrow will be every bit as dull, monotonous and empty as today. And the sadness, growing into nostalgia, evokes physical pain and drains the blood. I long for the fields, for the world of colours, sounds and light, for the places where one can hear the murmur of the forest, where the sky merges into the infinite realm of white cloud; I long for the open country where one can breathe pure air, where there is sunlight and the fragrance of flowers, where one hears the gurgling of stream and rivulet and where the sea never ceases to whisper and break upon the shore. And the day, the night, the dawn and the twilight are so entrancing and yield such happiness! I await the death sentence, which in all probability will be commuted to long years of penal servitude. Something has gone wrong with my lungs. I spent three months in hospital, being discharged from there a few days ago. I have a hunch that I will not be very long here. I am not complaining, not cursing my fate, and despite my intense longing to be at liberty, to run away

from here, I am calm. I am writing this because I have no desire to lie. Surely there is nothing to be ashamed of being in love with life, nor should one cloak with falsehood the horrors which poison, befoul and corrupt life. And if I were to succeed in getting out of this place does anyone think I could change my way of life so as not to come back here again?"

This, approximately, is the content of a letter I received from a comrade who was discharged from the sick-bay a few days ago. I met him during exercise and we arranged to exchange letters. He had been kept in irons for months on the pretext that he had escaped from penal servitude, which of course was a brazen falsehood. He became ill and spent three months in the sick-bay. He is charged with having taken part in killing a spy.

The trial of the eleven Radom prisoners charged with belonging to the PSP and with taking part in raids on *monopolki** took place on August 25. Two women were found not guilty, while the other nine, including the traitors Harewicz and Tarantowicz, received the death sentence. The death sentences were afterwards commuted. The death sentence on one of the traitors was commuted to six months' (!) imprisonment, while the other was sentenced to exile; the remainder received sentences ranging from 10 to 20 years penal servitude. This Tarantowicz occupied the cell next to mine for some time and was known as Talewicz. It was he who complained about having to die at such an early age and who declared that if he were forty years there would be against him not seventeen but many more charges. We have another pair of spies here—Sagman (alias Zverev, alias Orlov), who goes about in student's uniform, and Wolgemut.

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* *Monopolki* was the name given in Poland to the wine and spirit shops owned by the tsarist government.—*Ed.*

AUGUST 31

The trial of the 37 Warsaw Social-Democrats took place today. Twelve were sentenced to exile, and twenty-five were found not guilty. Seven Social-Democrats from Lodz were tried on the 25th; according to the grapevine, three were sentenced to four years penal servitude, one was exiled and three were freed. It is said that no evidence of their guilt was offered and that the court based itself exclusively on the testimony of a colonel of the gendarmes.

SEPTEMBER 6

I regret to say that today I have had proof that my suspicions concerning Hanka have been justified. She spent some time in Tworki (an asylum) whence she was freed by Pruszków Social-Democrats. After her arrest she betrayed her liberators. She accompanied the gendarmes to the homes of her comrades and identified them. Here in the prison she is using a false name, carefully concealing her real name (Ostrowska). Why did she turn traitor? Who knows. Maybe they beat her, or it may be she really is insane. For the past few days she has occupied a cell on the upper floor. I have found it necessary to warn the other prisoners about her. Possibly she will deny her treachery. I imagine she will fight for at least a shred of confidence. Be that as it may, the scorn which she deserves is the heaviest cross that anyone can bear.

Sometimes I see other provocateurs taking exercise. Two of them make a terrible impression. They never raise their eyes, their faces are literally the pale masks of out-and-out criminals—hardened and with the mark of Cain on their brows. They remind one of a cowering dog threatened with a stick. One is Wolgemut, the other, Sag. Three others are quite jaunty, swaggering about as if nothing had happened. It is difficult to judge

by their faces what they really are (Tarantowicz and Harewicz were involved in the case of the Radom military organization of the factionalists). Another pair laugh, joke and are always gay; these are professional provocateurs, especially Sagman (alias Zverev and Orlov), who operated as an agent abroad.

Four prisoners were put in chains today including Montwill. He now occupies the cell on the floor above me.

Rumour has it that a mother with two children has been sentenced to exile for 12 years, and that her lodger, who killed a soldier during a raid on the house, escaped together with her husband. The children are in the cell with her. Today while they were walking in the courtyard I saw her slap the elder boy. I saw this from the window and I wanted to shout at her. Here in prison, behind bars, everything becomes strangely exaggerated. The boy, however, continued to play, running about in the yard, chasing the chickens and gathering leaves.

There is a strange emptiness in my head. All kinds of disconnected dreams, separate words, people and objects follow in quick succession, and in the mornings when I get up I dread the thought of the day ahead.

The cell next to mine is occupied by the young army officer B. I exchange notes only with him. He wanted to join me in my cell, even if only for a short time, but somehow I prefer being alone. Beginning with tomorrow we shall take exercise together. This will be enough and it will bring variety into our life. But for how long?

Vaterlos has received the indictment. He is charged with being a member of the Anarchist-Communist Party (eighteen men and six women have been charged in this connection under Article 102, Part Two); he has already received a fifteen-year sentence for robbing a merchant. When one reads of these attacks and killings it is difficult to believe that a man like Vaterlos could take part

in planning and carrying out such acts. He is one of those who simply cannot suffer the slightest violence or any injustice. It may be that this is why people like him become fanatics, blindly follow their ideals and sacrifice their feelings.

OCTOBER 11

Montwill was hanged in the early hours of the 9th. On the 8th they removed his fetters and transferred him to the death cell. On Tuesday, the 6th, he was tried for taking part in an attack on a train near Lap, in which soldiers of the Volhynia Regiment were travelling. He had no illusions and on the 7th, while we were taking exercise, he came to the window and bade us farewell. He was hanged at 1 o'clock in the morning. Yegorka, the hangman, received his usual 50 rubles. From the floor above, the Anarchist K. tapped to me that they "had decided not to sleep for the night"; a gendarme said that the thought of someone being hanged "caused a shudder, making sleep impossible." Montwill's last words were: "Long live independent Poland!"

In the early hours of the morning of the 8th they hanged the aged occupant of cell No. 60. After these nights, after committing such fearful crimes, nothing has changed: the autumn days are as bright as ever, the soldiers and gendarmes are relieved regularly and, as usual, we go out for exercise. Only in the cells is it quieter, there is no singing now and many are awaiting their turn.

The cell next door, No. 53, houses the bandit Kozłowski, who was sentenced to death on September 25. To this day he does not know whether the sentence, which has been sent to the Governor-General of Vilno for confirmation (the crime was committed in the Grodno Gubernia), has been commuted. His lawyer told him that

it would be either confirmed or annuled within eight days.

In cell No. 51 there is a man also sentenced to death for banditry. This is Grzyb from Sosnowiec, who swears that he is innocent and I think he is telling the truth. He was sentenced on September 22 and still does not know whether the sentence has been commuted or annuled. And this despite the fact that he is always asking the prison authorities.

A comrade told me that he had as a cell neighbour a bandit named Ceniuk—also sentenced to death—who for thirteen days was sure that he would be hanged; finally they told him that his death sentence had long been commuted to fifteen years penal servitude.

The artillery Lieutenant B. has shared my cell since September 24. He has been detained here for the past ten months on the charge that he failed to inform on one of his comrades alleged to have been a member of the All-Russian Officers' Union. The charge is based on the grounds that they shared an apartment. This case is being investigated by Lieutenant Colonel Wąsiacki, a notorious scoundrel. Another six officers and about forty soldiers are involved in this case. Ever since May, Wąsiacki has been promising to complete the investigation yet it drags on from week to week. On the last occasion he said that each would receive the indictment by September 14 and that the case would be handed to the Prosecutor. But so far nothing has happened. All the officers were forced to send in their resignations, otherwise they would have been dismissed from the service for misconduct. Wąsiacki informed B. that he would not be released on bail unless he resigned from the service.

Highly characteristic is the conversation that took place in March between Wąsiacki and Uspensky, Chief of No. 10 Block, when the latter was returning from the

courtroom. Wąsiacki asked if everything was in order. The reply was: "Yes, all five have been sentenced to death."

The Anarchist Vaterlos and the officer Kalinin (who occupies cell No. 19) have now been seven days in punishment cells; the Anarchist Katz, also from this cell, has been given four days punishment, while Marczewska-Ostrowska and Malinowska from cell No. 20 have been given three days punishment.

In our cell (No. 52) and in the cell above us we have installed a "telephone" from cell to cell. In other words we have bored holes in the wall. Not long ago these holes were blocked up, but we reopened them the same day. This was discovered the following morning and the holes were blocked again, but at our expense. After this many of us refused to continue with this method of communication. The Anarchists, on the contrary, suggested keeping the holes open demonstratively. But only three cells—18, 19 and 20—fell in with the suggestion. Governor Yolkin ordered Vaterlos to be taken to the punishment cell. Five husky gendarmes headed by a captain hustled him there regardless of the fact that prisoners in the other cells kept banging on the doors. The inmates of cells Nos. 18, 19 and 20 insisted on seeing the Prosecutor although they were advised not to do so since the man is a rotter and would deal even more harshly with them.

The Deputy Prosecutor actually arrived on the scene. Then, a few days later, came the order to put the inmates of the three cells in the punishment chamber. After this the relations between the prisoners became frigid and strained.

The tactic of the Anarchists is to fight for every tiny detail, constantly, without let-up. The tactic of the others is the direct opposite—to take care, above all, to conserve the strength of the prisoners, to avoid conflicts

whenever possible but at the same time to uphold one's rights and one's dignity. Not long ago things almost went as far as a trial over one of the Anarchists who tried to provoke a conflict and to embroil the prisoners in the other corridors by falsely stating that all the prisoners in his corridor had decided to make a demonstration, whereas in reality no one knew anything at all about it.

For several weeks we have had a new chief warder and, by all accounts, he is an out-and-out scoundrel. He was invited here by Wąsiacki. I saw him when I was having visitors. He listened attentively to our conversation and in order to get nearer, insolently sprawled on the table and even interfered in our conversation. What shocking behaviour! The visitors brought me galoshes, but he refused to accept them saying that galoshes were not needed here.

Ever since his arrival it has been impossible to ask for a bath, or for a book from the library; the so-called shopping* which used to take place twice a week now takes place only once. Undoubtedly he has discovered that there were revolutionaries among the local gendarmes. He seized all the Russian books which they had borrowed from the library and burned them; many of the gendarmes have been replaced. Rumour has it that all the "corrupted" ones are to be sent to the "squadron" and that fresh men are to be sent here. The commander of the "squadron" refuses to take these men, pleading with the general not to send them since he fears they will "corrupt" the entire squadron, and those whom he will have to send to the prison in their stead will likewise be "corrupted" by contact with us. One thing is clear, that the army, generally speaking, is "corrupted,"

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* Purchase of food from the prison store. The prisoner paid with his own money.—*Ed.*

that many of the conscripts are "corrupted" and they in turn "corrupt" the others, the fearful conditions of the service "corrupt" them.

The alarm was caused by one of the gendarmes sending an anonymous letter to General Uthof written in block letters demanding that in addition to the 50 kopeks paid to each soldier they should get the "extra" 1 ruble 50 kopeks a month to which they are entitled by virtue of their service in No. 10 Block. Instead of paying out this money the commander puts it into a special fund.

OCTOBER 25

For the past week I have been alone in cell No. 3 in the first corridor. There are only five cells in this corridor. The window looks out into the garden of the prison hospital. It is peaceful here, lonely, and what is more most of the gendarmes are new arrivals. Only the worst of the old contingent have been left. Today my neighbour tapped to me that Vaterlos has been on hunger strike for twelve days demanding better food, writing materials, a bath and interview with the Consul. It is said that he is already unconscious. After spending seven days in the punishment chamber he was taken to cell No. 50, which is completely isolated; formerly it was used as a death cell and is now designed chiefly for bandits. They say that he and Kilaczycki will be kept here for years since they fear that in the event of their being transferred elsewhere they would either make a getaway or be liberated by friends.

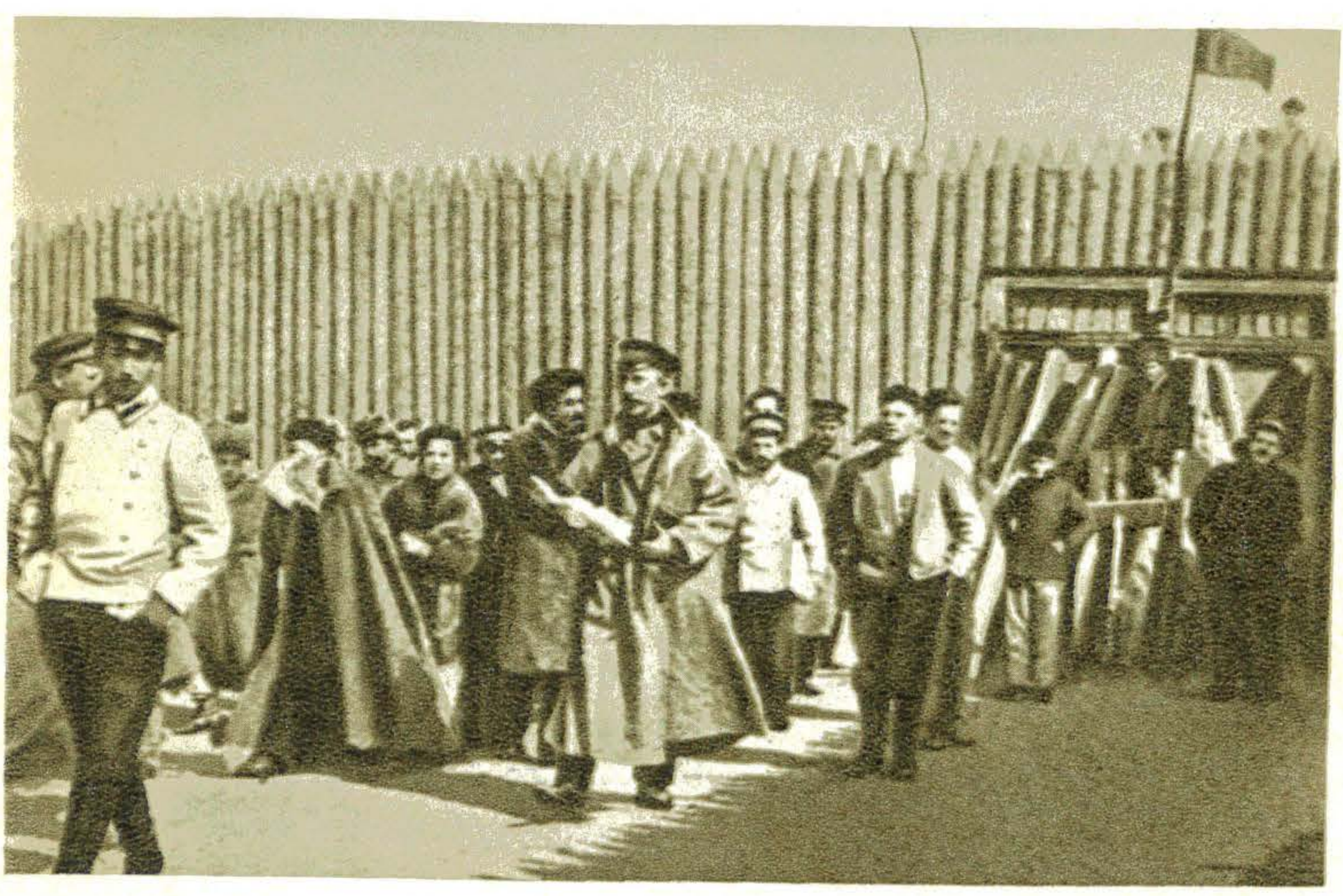
NOVEMBER 12

Three days (7th, 8th and 9th) were taken up with the case of myself and my comrades; for me these three days were quite a break. The trial took place in the Court of Justice. I was taken there in a cart, handcuffed.

I was excited and delighted at being able to see the street traffic, the faces of free people, the shop windows and the advertisements. Meeting my comrades and seeing several friends in the court made me happy. The courtroom had large windows, all kinds of accessories and lastly the bench itself consisting of seven men, the Prosecutor, the experts, priests, witnesses, defence counsel, friends and relatives. Then there was the swearing in of the witnesses, experts and interpreters, the testimony, the Prosecutor's speech demanding the supreme punishment according to Article 126, Part Two, and his statement that we were being punished not in order to correct us but to get rid of us. This was followed by a speech by Rotstadt who defended himself and speeches by the defence lawyers. The sentence was delivered after an interval of more than one hour. I was sentenced to exile, Rotstadt and Ausem to four years penal servitude, and Landau to one year fortress confinement. They found us guilty under Part Two of Article 126 despite the fact that we proved that the Social-Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania never had stores of arms and explosives and that adequate proof of Party membership in relation to Ausem and myself was lacking (prior to this, in May, the Court of Justice in Lublin had sentenced Rotstadt to six years penal servitude; he admitted his membership of the Party but denied that the Party had stores of arms), and despite the fact that in relation to Landau there was no proof whatever that the meeting of the five people which took place in his house was of a Party nature or that he knew anything about it. The sentence was motivated exclusively by the "voice of conscience," and this "conscience" was no less attentive to the demands of the authorities than the "conscience" of the military judges. I was the only one sentenced to exile, and in all probability only because they knew that they could inflict a sentence of pe-

F. E. Dzerzhinsky in the Siedlce Prison. 1901

House in the village of Kaigorodskoye, Slobodskoi Uyezd, Vyatka Gubernia, where F. E. Dzerzhinsky lived in exile from late 1898 till August 28, 1899



Rising of political prisoners in the Alexandrovsky Tsentral Prison. The flag, hoisted by F. E. Dzerzhinsky, bore the word **Freedom.** 1902

nal servitude for the other charge. They say that the gendarmes are bringing a third charge against me. The cases of the Social-Democrats will now be tried by the Court of Justice under Article 102.

During the trial I never gave any thought to the matter that it was we who were being tried and banished for years. I didn't think about this, although I had no illusions whatever about the sentence. I gazed at the judges, at the Prosecutor, at all those present in the court, on the decorated walls, and derived the utmost satisfaction from seeing the fresh paint and colours, from seeing other people and new faces. It was as if I had been present at some kind of celebration, not sad and not terrible, at a celebration which did not concern me in any way. My eyes absorbed the fresh impressions, I was happy and felt that I wanted to say something pleasant to everyone.

There was only one moment when I felt literally as if they had gathered to bury someone. This was when they ordered us into the court to hear the sentence, when we were suddenly surrounded by fifteen or twenty gendarmes brandishing their sabres. But this feeling vanished when the President began to read the sentence: "On behalf of His Imperial Majesty," etc.

Today I am back once more in my cell. I have no doubt at all that I will be sent to penal servitude. Will I be able to hold out? When I begin to think about the long days I shall have to live in prison, day after day, hour after hour, presumably here in this same No. 10 Block, I experience a feeling of horror and from the depths of my soul the words break out: "I cannot endure it!" Still I will find the strength, as others will, just as many more have endured much worse torment and suffering. At times I think that I cannot understand how it is possible to hold out, but I recognize that it

can be done and I become conscious of a proud desire to do so. An ardent longing for life is hidden somewhere deep down, and there remains only the peace of the graveyard. Should I fail to muster the strength, death will come and rid me of the feeling of helplessness and resolve everything. So I am resigned.

At the moment I am absolutely alone. I do not exchange notes with anyone in the corridor and I am cut off from the rest of the block. We now have a new chief warder, the other one, fortunately, has gone. He was an unbearably evil man. His successor, it seems, is not a bad fellow. At the moment, of course, I cannot say this for certain. Generally speaking the new gendarmes try not to irritate us. I have clashed only with one of them. I was reading late at night and every minute he would come to the cell door, brush against it, raise the flap of the peephole, glance in, let the flap fall with a bang and, without leaving the door, raise it again. I requested him not to do this. "If you must look do so but please don't bang and don't brush against the door." A minute later he deliberately began to knock. I protested. He reduced me to such a state of desperation that I was ready to jump at him but the warder on duty came along and ordered him to stop this nonsense.

NOVEMBER 15

I feel that I must write. For the past few days the silence of the grave has reigned in my corridor. There is only myself and somebody in the cell opposite. The other cells are empty. A few days ago all the inmates with the exception of us two were transferred elsewhere. I did not correspond with them, but I was conscious of their presence and I heard them. Now that I am alone, the solitude is most oppressive.

DECEMBER 4

Today I want to return to the matter of our trial.

A week after the sentence was announced I was again taken to the Court of Justice where they read it to me in its final form. It turns out that I have been found guilty not only of belonging to the Party but also of all the things charged against me both in the indictment and in the Prosecutor's speech. For example, the sentence claims as a fact that I was in contact with the Agitation and Propaganda Committee of the Party solely on the basis that in a letter one of the accused referred to this committee, but the letter did not say a single word about my relationship to it. The Court has found that I travelled throughout Poland and Russia on Party business, although there wasn't the slightest proof or even the least indication that I had travelled anywhere. Moreover, the main evidence concerning my Party membership and my activity in Poland were letters written by me in Cracow and sent to Zürich in 1904. In passing, the Prosecutor mentioned these letters as being written in Warsaw; at the same time he emphasized that my activity in 1904 was not covered by the amnesty announced in the Manifesto of October 1905, since the amnesty referred to the first and not to the second part of Article 126. The eloquent speech by my defence counsel who pointed out that the letters had been sent from Cracow and that for this reason alone they did not involve any punishment, that the amnesty did extend to the given offences (at that time the cases against those charged with membership of the Social-Democratic Party and with the affair of its Warsaw printshop were dismissed), remained without an answer on the part of the Prosecutor, since the latter had every confidence in the judges, and the judges did not let him down. It is said that one of the judges replying to somebody who had commented on the severity of the sentence, replied:

"We are no longer afraid of these people!" The necessity of applying Part Two the Prosecutor derived not from the programme and principles of the Party, but from the facts of the murders committed by some organizations of the Party after the publication of the Manifesto; on the same grounds Part Two was applied for alleged Party membership before 1905, that is, at a time when there couldn't even be any talk about military organizations. In a word, defence against these charges was useless. I lodged an appeal. But it goes without saying that the point at issue is not in getting the sentence reduced.

Three days ago I received the indictment in the other case which will be tried under Part Two, Article 102. The mildest sentence under this article is exile. But I shall do all in my power to get Part Two waived in favour of Part One in view of the fact that the court will try a number of cases of this kind. In the event of my efforts being fruitless, this will show that the Court of Justice is motivated solely by revenge.

Presumably the hearing of the second charge against me will take place in two or three months' time. In all trials the Social-Democrats are now tried according to Article 102 and not Article 126 as was the case previously. Article 102 signifies much severer punishment. The instructions for its application came from St. Petersburg—the result, I think, of the insistence of Skalon and Zavarzin. In the first trial I was charged under Article 126 only because the indictment had been compiled a year earlier and because the Military Prosecutor refused to investigate the case. The second case against me was sent to the Court of Justice merely because the evidence was so flimsy that they were not sure how the officers would react to it.

A few days ago the Military Tribunal heard the case of 19 Social-Democrats who were arrested at a meeting.

They have received heavy sentences. Four got six years penal servitude, nine four years, while six were exiled. They were tried under Part One of Article 102. Thirteen members of the Bund from Kolo, Kalissz Gubernia, were tried yesterday. Most of them are fifteen-year-old boys. One was found not guilty, two got four years penal servitude, five got two years eight months and the remainder were exiled.

DECEMBER 15

Four days ago all writing appliances were taken away from me and my fellow prisoner. While we were on exercise the cell was subjected to a minute search. We returned from our walk at the very moment when the chief warder was throwing our things on the floor and, furious and blushing to the roots of his hair, swore at the gendarme for bringing us back too soon. The Governor was just about to enter the cell, but upon seeing us, he quickly turned about. We summoned him through the gendarme, demanding that he should come, but so far he has not deigned to do so and we have no idea as to the reason for the punishment. Two months ago one of my letters was found on somebody arrested outside. At that time the Governor warned me that he would take away all writing materials in the event of this happening again. Since then I have not sent a single letter outside. It is quite clear, however, that the search took place because of me and not through the fault of my comrade. Yesterday was the day when letters are usually written and we were ordered to write them in the presence of the gendarme so that we should not secrete any ink.

The man who occupied cell No. 29 on the floor above us was executed in the early hours of the morning. A week ago two others occupying the same cell were executed. From the window we can hear the soldiers

marching to the place of execution, then we hear people running from the office, hear how the condemned men are taken from the cells to the office and thence with arms bound to the prison tumbril. For days afterwards, whenever we hear soldiers on the march, we have the impression that they are again taking somebody to be executed.

I am now in cell No. 1—alongside the office. I was taken here four weeks ago along with another comrade, despite the fact that I had requested to be alone. Evidently they have done this to restrict my opportunities for talking with the gendarmes. The gendarmes are afraid to speak when there are two prisoners in the cell. True, on the next day, anxious to grant my request, they tried to remove my cell-mate, whereupon we ourselves protested. My cell-mate is a worker charged with belonging to the PSP. Although found not guilty by the Military Tribunal on August 3 he is still detained along with the two others tried in the case—Denel and Dr. Biednarz—and who likewise were found not guilty. The idea is to send them to Siberia for five years administrative exile and they are merely awaiting the decision from St. Petersburg.

The neighbouring cell is occupied by Maria Rudnicka. On Thursday for the second time the Military Court found her not guilty (she is now charged with taking part in killing a guard and with belonging to the Warsaw military organization of the PSP); she was taken to the Town Hall on Saturday. According to the grapevine she is now held in the "Serbia" (a women's prison) awaiting the order from St. Petersburg for administrative exile. Here in the block everybody liked her for her gaiety and her youth, while many fell in love with her, deriving therefrom a new lease of life, and spending their time writing letters to her and seeking ways and means of getting them delivered. Some of them spent

whole days standing on the table waiting to catch a glimpse of her on her way to exercise or returning from it. They were driven to despair when their letters were not answered or when they were unable to deliver them. A thousand times they decided that they would never write to her again and would try to forget her. It reminded me very much of Gorky's story: "Twenty-Six Men and a Girl." For a few days a police agent occupied the same cell as she did. This stooge was sent here by the secret police with a view to enticing prisoners to have a romance with her and in this way extract information from the unsuspecting. She received 15 rubles for her work. But, being a crude type, she gave herself away almost immediately. She passed under the name of Judycka, letters were addressed to her in the name of Zebrowska, while to the gendarmes she was Kondracka. We also had a police spy in No. 2 corridor. He described himself as Dr. Czaplicki from Starachowice, Radom Gubernia, but upon questioning him, we discovered that he knew nothing at all about this locality. Somebody who had kidney trouble approached him for medical advice. The pseudo doctor advised the patient to listen to his kidneys: "If the sound is clear and distinct, then they are quite healthy. If muffled, this is a sign that treatment is needed."

Concerning Ostrowska-Marczewska I have received information that she had nothing whatever to do with the arrest of those who got her out of the asylum in Tworki. I don't know how to reconcile this with her own story about the other Ostrowska at the time when I did not know that she herself was this very person. Incidentally I have informed the comrades of this. She has denied her treachery and has concocted the story that it was the work of another woman who, acting carelessly, mistook a police agent for a lawyer; but if that

is so, why did she tell me something entirely different when I asked her if she knew this Ostrowska.

After his hunger strike Vaterlos spent a long time in the sick-bay where they removed his irons. He is now back in No. 10 Block because they fear that he might escape from the hospital. The doctor is alleged to have said that he will hardly live another month.

The ex-officer Avetisyants, who is serving his sentence here in the fortress, is also very ill, although he himself is not aware of this. He suffers from tuberculosis.

A week or ten days ago they arrested the soldier Lobanov who used to do our "shopping." He is now in No. 2 Cell. As to why he was arrested I do not know. The gendarmes are greatly alarmed and are afraid to talk with us; only by the eyes is it possible to know who sympathizes with us. And the Governor, while gentle, courteous and kind, is, nevertheless, a gendarme to the backbone. He is gradually tightening up the regime, making it more and more strict, sending people more frequently to the punishment cells and choosing more reliable gendarmes. When he fears that he might be "soft" he simply doesn't turn up and sends an order stipulating the punishment. It was he who ordered the searches to be carried out in the cells while the prisoners were on exercise. He, apparently, is conscious both of the baseness of his job and of the advantages deriving therefrom. Last week he ordered the sick Katz to the punishment cell. The prisoners in the No. 4 and 9 corridors protested and insisted on an explanation. The Governor, however, failed to appear and only at two o'clock in the morning did the chief warder lie to the prisoners saying that Katz had been taken back to his own cell. The officer Kalinin was sent to the punishment cell the next day. The officers' group was then broken up and the men sent individually to cells throughout the block despite the fact that only recently, upon the com-

pletion of the investigation of their case, nine of them were placed in adjacent cells and allowed to go on exercise together. Today Zapolski, one of the group, was placed in our cell after giving his word of honour that he would write letters to the outside world only through the office. (They had smuggled letters out and for this reason all writing materials had been taken away from them).

The investigation of their case was completed only a month ago. Wąsiacki managed by sleight of hand to transform the All-Russian officers Union into a military revolutionary organization of Social-Democrats on the grounds that some of the officers had been in contact with Social-Democrats. The chief witness for the prosecution is a certain Hogman, who formerly served as an officer in Brest-Litovsk. He had robbed the pay office, fled, was found and sentenced to 18 months in a punishment battalion. He was brought here by Wąsiacki and placed at different times in cell after cell among the officers involved in the case. They all knew that he was a spy, were cautious of him and never said a word in his presence, while he invented all kinds of fables and testified to all the things with which Wąsiacki had charged the officers. He went even further. He remained in the cell while the others were on exercise and in the absence of one or another of the officers dotted down in the prisoner's books things which implicated him. Against Kalinin, for example, he testified that while he, Hogman, was walking in the yard with two soldiers, Kalinin shouted from the window, "Comrades, that man is a scoundrel, a spy." Actually it was I who shouted this and Hogman saw me because he stared at me for a long time.

No. 2 Cell is now occupied by a man named Kilaczycki—one of nine transferred thither from the "Pawiak" after being handed over to the Russian authorities by

the Swiss. He was charged with the murder of a certain Ivanov, and although the motive of this murder was political, he was condemned as a criminal on February 1st this year and sentenced by the district court to 6 years penal servitude. They are keeping him here because if he had been sent to Siberia they would have to hand him over to the civil authorities on February 1, 1910, and remove his irons as early as February 1, 1909. It seems he will serve his sentence here. Here, too, serving their sentences are Grzecznarowski, Szenia (from Radom), Vaterlos and several others.

DECEMBER 31

This is the last day of 1908—the fifth time that I will have met the New Year in prison (1898, 1901, 1902, 1907); the first time was eleven years ago. In prison I came to manhood in the torments of loneliness, of longing for the world and for life. But never for a moment have I doubted the righteousness of our cause. And now when perhaps for long years all our hopes are buried in the streams of blood, when thousands of fighters for freedom are crucified, languish in dungeons or live as exiles in the snowy wastes of Siberia, I am proud. I visualize the vast masses now coming into action and shattering the old system; masses in the midst of which fresh forces are being prepared for the new struggle. I am proud that I, one of them, see, feel and understand them and that I and they have suffered much. Here in prison it is grim at times, and at times even terrible.... Yet if I had the choice of beginning life anew, I would do exactly as I have done. And not as a matter of duty or of obligation, but because for me this is an organic necessity.

All that prison has done for me is to make our cause something tangible and real, as the child is to the mother who feeds it with her flesh and blood.... Prison has

deprived me of many things, not only of the ordinary conditions of life without which man becomes the most unfortunate of unfortunates, but also of the means of utilizing these conditions, deprived me of the possibility of engaging in fruitful mental labour.... The long years in prison, mostly in solitary confinement, naturally, have left their traces. But when I weigh up what prison has taken from me and what it has given me, then, although I cannot say that I have weighed them objectively as an onlooker would, I do not curse either my fate or the long years behind bars because I know that these are necessary in order to destroy that other vast prison which exists beyond the walls of this monstrous Block. This is not idle speculation nor is it cold calculation; it is the result of an irrepressible striving for freedom and for a full life. And out there, comrades and friends are now drinking to our health, while I, alone in my cell, am with them in thought—let them live, forge arms and be worthy of the cause for which the struggle is being waged.

Today they informed me that my case would be heard within four weeks—on January 15(28), 1909. Penal servitude is now a certainty and I shall be confined here for another 4 or 6 years. Ugh! What a thought! Since yesterday I have been alone in the cell. At his own request my comrade was transferred to a cell in No. 2 corridor, nearer to those with whom he is charged so that he can get to know as much as possible about his case. He was restless all the time. Upon leaving, Maria Rudnicka told us that she had been sentenced to 5 years exile in Yakutsk District on the old charge together with K. (this is not correct; evidently she did not understand what the Governor said when he was sending her away); as for the wife of Denel (Comrade K.), she, upon returning from St. Petersburg, said at first that all the accused would be released and deport-

ed; later she said that she had received a telegram from St. Petersburg to the effect that no decision had yet been taken. The unfortunate man was so upset that he could not read or do anything; he walked up and down the cell, listening to the slightest noise in the corridor. Every knock on the office door whenever anybody went there aroused him, attracted his attention and made him irritable. Thoughts raced through his mind, meaningless thoughts, and he could not get rid of them.

This happens with practically all the prisoners. At times it is impossible to explain what evokes this alarming expectation, something unpleasant, a feeling which recalls waiting for a train somewhere in the countryside on a cold, raw, rainy day in autumn. But here this feeling taxes one's endurance. You run from corner to corner, try to read but fail to understand a single word, throw away the book and resume the walking backwards and forwards in the cell, listening to the knocking on the doors and feel deep down in you that somebody is just about to appear and tell you something very important. This feeling is experienced usually on visiting days, or when the prisoner awaits books, or when he should have an interview with the Governor or something else of that nature. In such cases, although the waiting is extremely hard to bear and the strain in no way corresponds to the anticipated result, one is fortified by the definite aim, and it is this that makes the feeling more bearable. But what is really terrible is the feeling of expectation when there are no grounds whatever for it.

Five people have been executed since my last entry. They were taken to cell No. 29 on the floor below us between 4 and 6 in the afternoon and hanged between midnight and 1 a.m.

Marczewska has been singing for the past two days. She now irritates me. She is in cell No. 20, having been

brought there, apparently, because of the ructions which she made.

They say that another provocateur, a member of the PSP, has been exposed. He has been here since February 1907. A young, beardless boy, he goes by the name of Rom.

Vaterlos has shocked his fellow prisoners. A soldier named Lobanov was arrested because of carelessness on his part. He maintained correspondence with him and did not destroy the letters which were found in his cell during a search. Now in cell No. 50, he is again in irons.

FEBRUARY 18, 1909

A sunny, quiet winter's day. It was wonderful at exercise and the cell is flooded with sunlight. But the prisoners, downhearted, are in the grip of silent despair. All that is left is the recollection of a happy life and, like a twinge of conscience, it constantly torments one. Not long ago I talked with one of the soldiers. He looked sad and downcast while guarding us. I asked him what was the matter and he replied that at home people were hungry and that in his village Cossacks had flogged to death a number of men and women, that conditions in the village were unbearable. On another occasion he said, "We suffer here, while at home our people are starving." The whole of Russia "is starving," and the swish of the lash resounds throughout the country. The groans of all Russia penetrate to us even behind the bars, smothering the groans in the prison. And these humiliated, downtrodden soldiers guard us, concealing deep in their heart a terrible hatred, and escort to the gallows those who fight for them. Each fears for himself and meekly bears the oppression. I feel that now the people have been abandoned in the same way as fields scorched by the burning sun, that it is precisely now they long for the words of love that would unite them

and give strength for action. Can we find those who will go among the people with these words? Where now are the columns of young people, where are those who until recent times marched with us in our ranks? All have scattered, each searching for that elusive personal happiness, mangling his soul and cramping it into narrow and, at times, disgusting limits. Do they hear the voice of the people? Let it reach them and be a terrible curse for them.

Two prisoners in the cell below mine are awaiting execution. They tap out no messages and make no sound. Among those executed last month were two men charged with killing the Deputy Governor-General Markgrafski.... They were executed despite the fact that they were innocent. One of the gendarmes who guarded us has been arrested and six of his fellows transferred to service elsewhere. A soldier named Lobanov has been sentenced to two and a half years in a punishment battalion merely for smuggling out letters. Practically all the soldier orderlies regarded as being unreliable have been replaced. The temporary gallows on the place of execution has been replaced by a permanent one.

The condemned men are now taken from here with their arms bound. They are executed three at a time. When there are more the first three are hanged, while the others are forced to stand by and watch the execution of their comrades.

It is now 11 p.m. There is the usual quiet beneath our cell, but we can hear loud talk coming from the death cell, although we cannot make out what is being said; there is considerable commotion on the stairway, similar to that which takes place on execution days.

We can hear the creaking of the office door, which means that somebody is going to the condemned men.

The victims are being led away. The soldiers are marching beneath the window.... Two prisoners have been taken to the place of execution.

MARCH 4

On February 25 they hanged five of the sixteen bandits and the members of the military organization of the PSP who were condemned to death. One of the condemned men was told the day after the trial that his death sentence would not be commuted. The trial took place on the 22nd, and the execution fixed for the 25th; but he was not taken with the others and only a few days later did the defence lawyer come to him with the news that the death sentence had been reduced to ten years penal servitude.

Among the prisoners here is a man named Gołebiowski. The death sentence passed on him has been changed to ten years hard labour. He found it hard to believe the news. When his parents came to visit him he refused to go out, being under the impression that they were taking him to the death cell. He was taken forcibly to the visit at the request of his relatives.

There are five lunatics among the prisoners. One of them, being violent, has been held for a long time in an empty cell. Its window, glassless, is stuffed with straw. At night-time he is without any light. He screams desperately, groans and bangs on the door and walls. They put him in handcuffs but he succeeded in breaking them.

Six weeks ago they transferred Marczewska to our corridor. She was in a cell along with other women but couldn't get on with them. After this she was alone. A few days ago her neighbour wanted to break with her. She made an extremely bad impression on him and he told her that he had no desire to hear anything about her or from her. After this conversation she sent him a farewell note in which she said that she was absolutely innocent and had swallowed 20 grammes of iodine. They managed to save her life but she suffered much pain. A

few days afterwards they took her away and put her in the cell with Ovcharek.

Avetisyants died two days ago. He had been here since 1905 and had only another month to serve.

MARCH 8

I am now alone. For two weeks before this I had the company of officer B. and for about a week, that of officer Kalinin. B. came to me unexpectedly and I was very glad that he did. He literally fell from the heavens—in the evening the door of my cell was opened with a great deal of fuss, he was bundled in and the door locked once again with the same noise. A few days before their trial the officers were taken to the office where they were ordered to turn out their pockets. Meanwhile their cells were searched. This action was taken on the orders of General Uthof and two captains were sent specially for the job. The search was carried out rather superficially. Several papers were picked at random after which the officers were interrogated and the things found during the search investigated. Apparently all this fuss was created for the purpose of prejudicing the judges against these officers as dangerous elements. After the trial somebody said that the search had influenced the sentence, though no compromising material had been found. Even before the trial, which lasted five days, the "case" had been sensationalized. Altogether there were thirty-six persons in the dock—five officers, twenty-nine soldiers and two students from Biała. One of the officers, released on bail before the trial because of illness, did not appear. All were charged with belonging to the non-party Military-Revolutionary Organization and to the All-Russian Officers Union (Paragraph 102, Part One).

Judge Uversky, one of the bloodiest of judges, acted as President of the Court. They say that whenever he

feels that the accused may escape the gallows, he immediately becomes grumpy, unapproachable and bad tempered, and conversely, when he is sure that the accused will not escape, he rubs his hands in glee, engages in small talk with the lawyer and becomes smug and self-satisfied. Abdulov acted as Prosecutor and the examination was conducted by Wąsiacki—at present chief of the gendarmerie of the Radom Gubernia—a scoundrel notorious for his malpractices in Warsaw and in Latvia. By means of promises reinforced with pledges that he would release them, by means of intimidation and ceaseless interrogation, he managed to get practically all the accused to admit that they had attended meetings and implicated Kalinin, Pankov and others. He even managed to get Kalinin and Pankov to admit things and to say things about themselves that the gendarmes did not know and which greatly influenced the sentence. He played on the officers, saying that they were responsible for the soldiers being in jail, that if they admitted their offences he would release the soldiers. Hogman, the spy of whom I have spoken before, was the chief witness. He testified to all the things that Wąsiacki had ordered him to testify, saying that all of it had been told to him by the accused. The foul methods to which Wąsiacki had recourse were laid bare during the trial. It was proved that he himself had compiled a letter allegedly written by Kalinin and had commanded Kalinin's orderly, who had also been arrested, to deliver a letter to a lawyer in Lublin, an ex-officer, and to say that the letter was from Kalinin and that he, his orderly, had also been arrested but had been released and that Kalinin had requested the lawyer to undertake his defence. The lawyer threw the spy out. Agents had planted the illegal literature of the Military Revolutionary Organization of the Social-Democrats in Krakowecki's house. During the investigation it was

alleged that this literature had been found in his possession, but the protocol drawn up at the time of the search stated that "nothing suspicious had been found." The entire case was based on the testimony of two soldiers (Kaftynev and Serzhantov) who acted as provocateurs. Actually their testimony had been dictated by Wąsiacki. They themselves did not appear in court. The request made by the lawyers that they be summoned was rejected. Wąsiacki was present all the time during the trial and talked with the judges during the intervals.

The charge against Krakowecki was based on the testimony of Hogman and Lieutenant Bocharov of the 14th Olonets Infantry Regiment, and on the literature which had been planted in his house. During the trial Bocharov withdrew his testimony. This was a dramatic moment. Bocharov declared that not Krakowecki but he belonged (he was no longer a member) to the Military-Revolutionary Organization of the Social-Democrats, that upon being threatened by Wąsiacki that he would be arrested and sentenced to penal servitude, he gave false testimony and wrote all the things he had been told to write. At this juncture Judge Uversky interjected, "You are an officer!" Bocharov made no reply and remained with bowed head. This caused a sensation in the court. Wąsiacki rushed from his place, whispered with other gendarmes and ran from the hall in order to consult with the commander of the garrison. A few days later Bocharov was requested to submit his resignation. Krakowecki, despite his innocence, received the maximum sentence—eight years penal servitude. Wąsiacki was convinced that Krakowecki alone among the accused was a genuine revolutionary, an underground worker who never left any traces of his activity. Hence the vindictive sentence.

Kalinin and Pankov, while admitting that they had

taken part in the activity attributed to them, declared that the soldiers in the dock had been picked at random, and that with the same justification it would be possible to arrest the entire companies in which they served, the soldiers, they said, were not guilty and there was no organization among them....

One of the soldiers, a man named Korel, a born orator, spoke eloquently and convincingly for half an hour, saying that his activity had been exclusively of a cultural nature. For this he, too, received eight years penal servitude. The judges do not like soldiers who can speak for themselves.

There were three judges on the bench—General Uversky and two colonels; the latter, who sat like dummies throughout the trial, never uttered a single word.

Krakowecki and the soldier Korel received eight years penal servitude, Kalinin, Pankov, Zapolski and the soldiers Isayev and Sinitsin got six years each, the soldier Chemakov (a male nurse) received seven years, Temkin, Laufman and twelve soldiers were sentenced to exile, three were given one year in a punishment battalion, while one officer and nine soldiers were found not guilty. Skalon reduced the sentences only for Pankov and Sinitsin, exile being substituted for prison. The officers and soldiers were tried under Paragraphs 273 and 274 of the Rules of Military Procedure with the result that the sentences for all those on active service were increased by another two years. It turned out that for those officers who had already sent in their resignations, the court was unable to apply these articles (in keeping with a Senate interpretation), but the defence lawyers were too late in raising the point, they did so after the sentence had been confirmed by Skalon. They submitted an appeal to St. Petersburg. Pankov had his sentence reduced on the grounds that he had been influenced by Kalinin.

The trial had been sensationalized by Wąsiacki who

was thirsting to get his colonel's epaulettes and it should be said that his endeavours were correspondingly rewarded. The accused were drawn from different places in the Kingdom of Poland (from Biała, Kielce, Warsaw, Zambrów). They had nothing in common with one another. The group of soldiers—nobody knew why it was this particular group—was linked with the unreliable officers for the purpose of giving the impression of a vast revolutionary organization of officers and soldiers capable of overthrowing the autocracy. But at this stage along comes the fearless knight Wąsiacki who smashes the conspiracy; and so he merits praise and reward!

My cell-mate B. was released and taken directly to the gates of the Citadel. For two days his sweetheart and aunt had been waiting for him—the aunt, a splendid woman, was ready to travel with him to Siberia. I was sure that he would be let off. He was charged not with sheltering people, but with belonging to the military organization solely on the grounds of letters sent by his sister which referred to his growing revolutionary sentiment. Apparently he had been held in prison for fourteen months only for the purpose of enabling the court to acquit him. "Our military court is not prejudiced, it is not a lackey of the secret police," so said a gendarme colonel to me at the time. Despite this, B., upon returning from the daily sessions of the court, was either animated and full of hope, or depressed, fearing a verdict of guilty. He was particularly convinced of this after the speech made by Prosecutor Abdulov. When he came back after the court had found him not guilty he was so exhausted that he was barely able to say, "You may congratulate me." But even after this he feared that, like many others, he would still be held for a long time in administrative detention. The case against Gorbunov, the police clerk, was dropped, but he has

not been released, although a month has passed. Three prisoners, Klim, Dr. Biednarz and Denel, found not guilty on August 4, are still detained and there are grounds for believing that they will be sent to Yakutsk (the other day Klim and Biednarz were deported beyond the frontier, while Denel awaits exile to Yakutsk; his wife travelled to St. Petersburg to intercede for him with a view to getting his exile substituted by deportation; he was scheduled to depart for exile—he expected the cart every minute—but the secret police ordered him to be detained here some time longer). I calmed him saying that he would be freed, that the police had nothing whatever against him, and advised him to demand from the Governor his immediate release. Although the Governor cannot detain a man after he has received the corresponding information from the court, he showed no desire to release Denel without first receiving permission from Uthof. Uthof, however, who refused to see him on Sunday, arranged to see him on Monday at 2 o'clock; he afterwards switched the time to 4 o'clock. The chief warder, a notorious liar, stated that even today, Monday, the Governor had not been able to see Uthof. Suddenly, at about half past five B. was ordered to pack his things and be ready to leave. "To the Town Hall?"—"No, straight to the gate." The news came as a thunderblast. He simply didn't know what to pack and take with him. I felt my heart missing a beat. What to do? All my calm vanished. I helped him to pack his belongings after which silence set in. I was glad for his sake, but now I find that my cell will again be lonely. These accursed walls.... Why isn't it I that's going out? When will my turn come? "Please do what I told you, don't forget," I said, coldly. He embraced me and we parted.

I am very fond of him. He is so young, pure, and the future lies before him. An hour later they brought Kali-

nin to my cell. He remained with me for one week. After a search of the cell, they parted him from his friend Pankov.

The Governor advised him to submit a written request to Uthof without whose sanction the prison authorities could not permit the two friends to be together. Uthof replied that now he had nothing against this (the trial was over and the comedy was no longer needed). So they are together again. Pankov's father is a retired Cossack colonel, while Kalinin's father is a serving lieutenant-colonel. Kalinin belongs to a purely military family. His parents came here immediately after the trial; they cannot become reconciled to the fact their son, who had such a splendid future (he was about to enter the Academy) is now a convict, a man deprived of rights. At first his mother wept all the time but afterwards managed to keep her tears back and began to calm her son. She just couldn't understand what had taken place. Whence this calamity? How did it happen? She was convinced that Skalon would annul the sentence. And when told that unless the condemned man himself petitioned Skalon to this effect nothing could be done, she came to her son and begged and pleaded with him until he and the others agreed (otherwise Skalon would refuse to act) to write a brief petition: "We request a reduction of the sentence." When Skalon turned down the petition, Kalinin and the others refused to take the matter farther by submitting a request to the Tsar; this, however, was done by their parents. Kalinin's mother was convinced that the Tsar would reduce the sentence. If this failed, then after three months she would intercede once more and would continue to do so all the time. Pankov's sentence was reduced, and the two friends were grieved that they would soon have to part. After the trial Kalinin's parents visited him daily for two and a half hours without being separated by the netted wire.

For him the visits were an ordeal—he felt as if he were attending his own funeral. Young and strong, he tried hard to conceal his suffering. He would not spend six years in prison—this was utterly absurd. It was unthinkable that he, intelligent, young and healthy, should cease to live and be completely cut off from the world. This was intolerable. Moreover he, perhaps unconsciously, believed in his superior intellect, in his will-power and in his ability to perform great and noble deeds. The people would follow him, not he the people. For this reason he was against the Party and Party membership. For him the human will was everything. He, handsome, young and clever, what could he not do? But these senseless walls.... Ugh! He wouldn't look at them. He knew only himself and he would bear the responsibility; he never gave a thought to public opinion; he hated vileness, nothing else. That is "vile," such was the beginning and end of his criticism. He had a single-track mind—what I have done I have done and for this reason I am at one with my conscience. His was the attitude that reflected the strength of youth, something of the poseur and, possibly, considerable doubt in himself. In any case as a type he was both curious and interesting. A man who could rise to very great heights, but who could also descend very low; should he encounter a moment of weakness, then he would say to himself, "This weakness is my weakness, this road is my road." As the proverb has it: "The human heart is a mystery." In the space of a week he had changed beyond recognition; I know him only a little from his own words.

Once again I am alone. I have not had a visit for the past three weeks, while two months have gone by since I've had a letter. Has anything happened? What? Maybe they are confiscating letters and postcards. I imagine all kinds of terrible things. They could happen and I would know nothing at all about them. Just four walls

... how alien I am here, how hateful are these walls! Surely I can leave this place for the whole day, and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. It is monstrous. The neighbouring cell is occupied and I want to tap a message to its inmate saying that I love him and that if it weren't for his presence here I could not live, that even through these walls it is possible to be sincere, to give all of one's self and not to be ashamed of doing so. And those far away. What to write to them? Again about my weariness? I am always with them, this they know, and their memory of me is my happiness.

APRIL 23

Spring has arrived, flooding the cell with sunlight. The weather is warm and we are caressed by the balmy air when on exercise. The buds of the chestnut-trees and the lilac bushes are bursting and the smiling leaves are forcing their way into the sunlight. The blades of grass in the yard, reaching upwards to the sun, are gaily absorbing the air and sunlight which are returning them to life. It is peaceful here. But spring is not for us, we are in prison. The cell doors are locked all the time; beyond them and beyond the windows the armed soldiers never quit their posts for a moment and, as usual, every two hours we hear how they are relieved, how they present arms and the words: "Handing over No. 1 Post" every time the guard is changed; as usual the gendarmes unlock the doors and escort us to exercise. As before, we hear the clanging of irons and the creaking of doors opening and shutting. From early morning columns of soldiers are on the march, singing, and at times we hear military music. The spring, the rattling of the chains, the creaking of the doors and the marching soldiers beneath the windows somehow evoke the thought of nails being driven into a coffin. There are so many of these nails in the living body of the prisoner

that he no longer wants anything, all he wants is to be numb and not feel anything, not to think, not to be tormented between the terrible necessity and the helplessness. All that remains in the heart is this feeling of helplessness, while all around from hour to hour, from day to day is the terrible necessity.

APRIL 27

I want to register a few facts. About a week ago in one of the corridors a revolver and several rounds of ammunition were found in the lavatory. Colonel Ostafyev, who was brought to the scene, summoned the gendarmes, threatened and scolded them saying that they were not looking after us properly, that they maintained contact with us and blustered that he would shoot them all, put them in irons and send them to penal servitude and that for the slightest misdemeanour they would be brought to trial. He even slapped some of their faces. The gendarmes never protested. They were reluctant to speak to us about this, for they felt humiliated. But they have drawn closer to us. Apropos of this one of the prisoners wrote to me: "I recall an event which was described to me by an eyewitness. You no doubt have heard that in 1907 prisoners were dreadfully ill-treated in Forty. Whenever the guards happened to be scoundrels the prisoners were brutally ill-treated. One of the methods used was to prevent them from going to the lavatory for hours on end. You can imagine how they suffered. One of the prisoners, who was unable to hold out, wanted to remove the excrement. When this was observed by the warder the latter swore at the unfortunate man, ordered him to eat what he had just defecated and punched him in the face. This action failed to evoke a murmur of protest among the prisoners, all they did was to make sure that this man left the cell in their company in order to avoid being beaten. When I ex-

pressed my indignation, the eyewitness, replying to my question said, "What could we do? If we had uttered a single word all of us would have been beaten on the pretext that we were mutinying."

In the year 1907 when I was a prisoner in the "Pawiak," the guard struck a prisoner for talking through the window. At this time about 40 men were on exercise. One of them wanted to rush at the soldier but was held back by the others. We insisted that this soldier should be replaced and our protest was backed up by the prison authorities. The captain of the guard, however, refused, and began to threaten us. When one of the prisoners answered back, a soldier lunged at him with his bayonet; he was saved only by the other prisoners coming to his aid. The result was that the prisoners were deprived of exercise. Shortly afterwards, when a soldier shot the prisoner Helwig for looking in one of the windows, Prosecutor Nabokov, who appeared on the scene at our insistence, merely shouted at us saying, "You have behaved outrageously, all of you should be shot." What is one to do in such circumstances? There is always the danger that the protest might lead to a slaughter. In such an atmosphere each is conscious only of his helplessness and bears the humiliation or, in despair, losing his head, deliberately seeks death.

My present cell-mate Michelman, sentenced to exile for belonging to the Social-Democratic Party, was arrested in Sosnowiec in December 1907. He told me about the following incident of which he was an eyewitness. At the end of December a warder accompanied by a soldier came to the prison in Będzin and summoned one of the prisoners to the office—a textile worker named Straszak from Schoen—looked him up and down and went away without saying a word. In the afternoon an investigator arrived, selected six tall prisoners including Straszak and, lining them up, summoned the soldier

and asked him if he recognized among them any who had taken part in the attempt on the life of a detective. The soldier pointed to Straszak. This Straszak had nothing whatever to do with the case and had never belonged to any political party. The soldier who "identified" him was the man who had accompanied the warder in the morning and who had been primed for the job. The prisoners lodged a complaint with the Prosecutor. This frightened the warder; still, he promised the prisoners that he would testify that the soldier was the same man who had come to the prison in the morning. Subsequently, while in prison in Piotrków, Michelman learned that Straszak had been hanged.

MAY 6

May Day has come and gone. It was not celebrated this year. Here in the prison they hanged somebody in the early hours of the morning of the 2nd. It was a wonderful moonlight night and for a long time I was unable to go to sleep. We did not know that a trial had taken place and that an execution was in the offing. Suddenly at 1 a.m. there was a commotion on the stairway leading to the office such as usually happens before an execution. Gendarmes, somebody from the office and a priest arrived; then, beyond the windows, we heard the soldiers marching in step. Everything was as usual. My cellmate was sleeping, so was my neighbour. I asked the gendarme the reason for the commotion. He replied that the Governor was fussing round the prison. I had the feeling that somebody was about to be executed. Later we heard that the victim was a worker, a tailor named Arnold.

That was how May 1st passed with us. It was a visiting day and we were told that there had been no demonstration in the city. The conditions of the masses are even worse —the same old grey, colourless life, the same poverty,

the same grinding labour, and the same dependence. It cannot be otherwise. But this thought and this attitude cannot console anyone except perhaps those for whom the struggle was merely the arena of casual action undertaken for effect. Some say that we should now go over exclusively to legal activity, which, in effect, means abandoning the struggle. Others, faint-hearted, unable to bear the present situation, take their own lives.

Personally I recoil from the idea of suicide. I want to find in myself the strength to endure this hell, and I am glad that I am sharing the suffering with others; I want to return, to continue the struggle and to understand those who this year have not responded to our call.

Once again I am alone. My comrade was taken today to a transit prison en route to exile. A mere boy, he was expelled from college for taking part in a protest action; he has been in prison three times since 1905. On the previous occasion he was held for 17 months, and he has been waiting two months to set out on exile. The place is now overcrowded. Thirteen people from the Dombrow basin were tried yesterday on the charge of belonging to the PSP and with taking part in raids. Three received the death sentence. A few days ago fourteen prisoners were brought here from Piotrków. The charge against them is that they knew about the attempt on the life of Zilberstein, a Lodz factory owner, and did not inform the authorities. Previously Kaznakov* ordered eight people to be shot, without trial, on the same charge. The Military Tribunal in Lodz has sentenced the six innocent ones to terms of penal servitude ranging from 8 to 15 years; this case will now be heard a second time. All the prisoners have been in irons since September 1907.

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* Kaznakov—Governor-General of Lodz, was notorious for his brutality.—*Ed.*

MAY 10

Two prisoners are scheduled for execution today—Grabowski and Potasiński. The latter, who occupies a cell on the floor below mine, is wholly unaware of his fate; he told us that they were sending a priest to hear his confession. He had no idea of what was meant and requested an interview with his lawyer; he is under the impression that his appeal has been sent to St. Petersburg. The two will be led away in an hour's time. One hour ago Frendzel learned that her sentence of four years had been reduced to eight months, while the two Czekajskas and Laskowski have had their hard labour sentence commuted to exile. Frendzel, unaware that executions will take place today, is laughing and chatting in the corridor. The four were tried on Saturday and sentenced to four years hard labour for belonging to the Left Socialist Party. Frendzel's sole guilt was that she had lived in the same house, though occupying a different room, as Grycendler who was exiled to Siberia and fled from there. Illegal literature was found in Grycendler's possession. Today a group from Lublin was tried—it consists of eight or nine prisoners; all, with the exception of one woman, were sentenced to death. She received fifteen years penal servitude.

JUNE 2

Our gendarmes have been in a state of panic for the past few days. Rumours are going around that smuggled letters were found in which somebody spoke about the sympathy displayed for the prisoners by the gendarmes. One of them has been arrested; a detective has arrived wearing the uniform of a captain of the gendarmes. He is looking for the "guilty" ones. All are threatened with dire consequences for the slightest misdemeanour. They are threatened with arrest for having extended the time allotted to the prisoners for exercise. The detective is

continually prying around No. 10 Block trying to catch a gendarme in conversation with a prisoner. A few weeks ago the warders were deprived of their stools so that they could watch us more closely. They are fearfully tired, having to stand four and sometimes twelve hours at a stretch for days in succession.

Vaterlos has had another accident. A few days ago he came to his cell window and held up his manacled hands. About a fortnight ago the Governor looked into his cell through the peephole and saw him hiding a note in his sleeve. The Governor immediately summoned the chief warder and the gendarme on duty and ordered them to seize the paper. Vaterlos broke from them, threw himself on the bed and swallowed the paper; the two men rushed at him, seized him by the throat but failed to retrieve the note. He is now alone in his cell, isolated and under strict surveillance. According to rumours this has been done on Uthof's orders on the pretext that Vaterlos had planned to escape. Laskowski has been taken ill and, fearing that they will poison him, has not eaten anything for a week. He has been transferred to the sick-bay. We are again two in the cell. I am no longer able to sit alone, and I must do something to disperse my thoughts. It is necessary mechanically to seek forgetfulness and drive away the thoughts; to force oneself to follow the trend of others' thoughts and share in them. My cell-mate has been telling me about his hunting adventures in Siberia; both of us enlarge our plans, how we will roam on foot with a gramophone through the villages, woods and hills of Galicia.* We continually return to this project, always adding something and making new combinations.

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* Galicia was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and political émigrés enjoyed the right of asylum there.—*Ed.*

JUNE 3

I simply couldn't get a wink of sleep last night. An hour ago they took our lamp away from us; it is now clear daylight, the birds are in chorus and from time to time I can hear the raucous cawing of a crow. My companion is sleeping fitfully. We have heard that two death sentences have been confirmed. The condemned men were not taken away yesterday, which means that they will be hanged tomorrow. Each of them in all likelihood has parents, friends and a sweetheart. Healthy, strong and yet powerless, they are now living their last minutes. The gaolers will come, bind their arms and take them away to the place of execution. The doomed men will see only the faces of enemies or cowards, will feel only the slimy touch of the hardened hangman, take a last look at the world, don the shrouds and then the end. The quicker it comes the less time there will be to think about it and the less one will feel it; and the parting words—long live the Revolution, farewell, farewell for ever.

But for those who survive the morrow will be just the same. How many have already trodden this path! It seems that the people no longer have any feeling, that they have become so accustomed to these things they make no impression. People? But then, I, too, am one of them. It is not for me to judge them; I judge them by myself. I am tranquil, do not rebel, and suffer no torment such as I did in the not so long ago. Outwardly all is quiet. The news comes and I shudder.... One more drop and peace follows. But beyond consciousness the soul experiences the same dreary process; how many times this has taken place, and the poison is accumulating, and when the day comes it will burn with revenge and will not allow the present hangmen-victors to experience the joy of victory. It may well be that this

seeming indifference conceals a terrible struggle for life and heroism. To live—surely this means having unquenchable faith in victory. Even those who dreamed of murder as a revenge for the crimes feel that this is no longer the answer to the crimes committed every day and that now nothing can erase from the mind the grim memory of these crimes. Such dreaming testifies only to inextinguishable faith in the victory of the people, to the vengeance which the executioners of today are preparing for themselves. Piling up in the hearts of our contemporaries and growing in intensity are the pain and the horrors with which our outward indifference is linked. This will continue until there erupts the terrible vengeance for those who, lacking the strength to be indifferent, deprived themselves of life, for the monsters who encroached on man's noblest instinct—the instinct of life, for all the horrors which the people have had to endure.

JUNE 4

It is now late. Piekarski and Rogov from Radom have been hanged. The soldiers have already returned from the place of execution. That which I wrote about yesterday—the heroism in life—quite possibly is not correct. We live because we want to live in spite of everything. Helplessness kills and putrifies the soul. Man clings to life because he is linked to it by a thousand threads—sadness, hope and endearment.

JUNE 6

Spring has already run its course and the warm weather is here. It is stuffy in the cell. They have not yet removed the winter frames from the windows. After repeated requests they have promised to do so sometime during the week. The frames are nailed down. The ventilator panes are covered with wire netting so dense

that one cannot even push a matchstick through the strands. There is not enough air in the cell. For the past few days our exercise has been extended to 20 minutes. Alas, it will soon be reduced again to 15 because many new arrivals are expected. Not long ago many of the prisoners in irons and all those sentenced to exile were transferred to Lomża. Frendzel and Wanda Czekajska have been taken to the "Serbia." Only very few of the old gendarmes are left now. The newcomers remind one of the Black Hundreds* and have the appearance of being cowardly. At times they knock on the flaps of the peep-holes and look in to see what we are doing in the cells. The complaint which Vaterlos lodged with the Prosecutor about the gendarmes beating him has been ignored.

JUNE 20

Our gendarmes are completely terrorized. The chief warder keeps watch on them all the time and after duty hours tortures them with "training" and exercise so that they do not have a single free minute. They are afraid to speak with us because the Governor has promised the soldiers on guard in the corridor a substantial reward for any information about gendarmes talking with the prisoners. The arrested gendarme is still held in detention. Rumours are going around that the secret police have discovered plans for an escape. The prisoners are circulating all kinds of suppositions about traitors being in their midst.

It turns out that Rogov, executed two weeks ago with Piekarski, was absolutely innocent. He arrived in Radom a few days after the assassination of the gendarme Mikhailov. Despite this, he was arrested and hanged.

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* The Black Hundreds were Monarchist gangs organized by the tsarist police to combat the revolutionary movement. They killed revolutionaries, attacked progressive intellectuals and indulged in Jewish pogroms.—*Ed.*

Piekarski ("Rydz") declared that many absolutely innocent people (Shenk and others) had also been condemned on this charge, that in all probability they would condemn Rogov too, and that he, Piekarski, alone was responsible for Mikhailov's death. Yet they have hanged Rogov. The President of the Court was the notorious scoundrel Kozelkin. Skalon confirmed the sentence. As a result of a request made by the parents and the defence counsel, the St. Petersburg authorities re-examined the case but confirmed the previous sentence. In this connection Kozelkin stated that the court had no doubt whatever about the innocence of Rogov, and, in reality, as the defence counsel were told by the colonels sitting on the bench, the latter had asked Kozelkin to request from Skalon that the sentence should be reduced, since they were not convinced of Rogov's guilt.

We are now in cell No. 11 which is much airier. The Vistula can be seen from the window and on the other side of the fortress walls are woods and low hills. But to see them one has to climb up on to the window. We do this quite frequently, clinging to the bars and looking out until our arms ache. At long last they have taken away the winter window-frames. Despite the promise made by the Governor, we had to remind the authorities of this over and over again. "Yes. Yes," replied the warder on duty as he went away and locked the cell door. After this we had to ask again but all we heard was: "Good, I will submit the request to the Governor." It would have been better not to have asked and not to have worried. Last Wednesday they came to us and suggested that we should return to cell No. 4, in the second corridor, which has no ventilator. We were told that that cell was assigned to the long-term prisoners and for those who were entitled to walk in the yard for half an hour. We refused to go, pointing out that from where we were they could easily take us for

exercise, that the first corridor was near by. So they have left us here and, as before, we continue to have our 20 minutes exercise daily. On Friday when my cell companion was on the way back from the lavatory he observed the Governor peeping into two cells, one of which was occupied by the woman prisoner Glucksohn.

JUNE 25

I have received the following letter from a prisoner from Ostrowiec: "In May 1908 the notorious inquisitor Captain Alexandrov, chief of the Zemstvo guard in the Grójec District, was appointed chief of the secret police for the Ostrowiec District. He began his functions with gusto and almost every other day arrested a number of people. This continued throughout the first half of January this year. Among those arrested and detained for a month was Wincenty Kotwic, a PSP agitator who later became an agent. This provocateur denounced Staniszewski and Boleslaw Luciński as being members of the local committee of the Party. They were arrested and subjected to torture.

"Alexandrov's house is located on the outskirts of the town where he also has his office, while the prison is at the other end of the town. When the guards brought Staniszewski from the prison for interrogation they tied his hands behind his back. One of the guards held the end of the rope while the others surrounded the prisoner, hustled him through the town and beat him with rifle-butts, whips and fists. Finally, when he arrived before Alexandrov the latter persuaded him to admit his membership of the committee since such an admittance would have the effect of reducing his punishment. When Staniszewski replied with silence, Alexandrov ordered his thugs to give him 25 lashes, warning him that if after the 25th blow he did not admit his guilt he would get 250. The brutes threw themselves upon Staniszewski

with a view to stripping him. The latter spurned them, took off his clothes himself and lay down. One of the guards sat on his legs, another on his head. Staniszewski taunted his persecutors saying, 'If I move just once, you can give me not 25 but 100 lashes.' The punishment began, but after the fifth blow Alexandrov ordered them to stop. When the victim had put on his clothes he again was asked to confess; he persisted in his silence whereupon the guards were ordered to 'play blind man's buff' with him. In this 'game' the prisoner is placed in the centre of a ring of guards and is punched from one to the other. When this torture failed to produce results, Alexandrov confronted his victim with the provocateur Kotwic. The latter said, 'Why do you refuse to talk, did I not vote for you?'

"Luciński, subjected to similar torture, confessed that he was a member of the committee. Upon seeing that he offered better material than the other, Alexandrov resorted to different tactics. He expressed sympathy with Luciński's plight, saying that he was innocent and suffering for nothing, that he pitied him being so young and having a young wife, but he, Alexandrov, would show him the way to salvation; if he wanted to evade punishment for a crime that he had not committed he would have to betray those who recruited him to the Party. In the event of his doing so he would be released at once. Luciński, to save his skin, betrayed his comrades. Thanks to him and Kotwic all who had failed to go to cover were arrested. Many of them were people who had returned from exile and even from military service and were now re-arrested on the old charges. In addition to what they did to Staniszewski and Luciński the following took place. They took with us to No. 10 Block a young fellow named Szczęśniak (there were eleven charges against him and he faced a death sentence). He had been betrayed by Kotwic. Szczęśniak had no

desire to confess to the crimes attributed to him. Since Alexandrov's wife was unable to bear the screams of the man who was being flogged, Szczęśniak was taken late at night to a field on the outskirts of the town where he was stripped and beaten until he lost consciousness. Afterwards, while still unconscious, he was taken to the punishment cell and thrown on to the stone floor. The next day, when taken once more to Alexandrov, he persisted in his silence whereupon the flogging was repeated. Many others were subjected to the same torture. Adamski, a member of a local committee, was subjected to such maltreatment that he tried to smash his head against the wall but only succeeded in making his injuries worse. He was punished for this and handcuffed for three weeks...."

Wólczyński was hanged yesterday evening. He and others occupied the cell opposite us. He was a young, handsome boy. We saw him through a crack in the door. He left the cell quietly, asked if he should take his things with him and, without saying farewell to his comrades, was taken to the condemned cell at 9 o'clock. At one in the morning we heard the soldiers marching to the place of execution.

JUNE 26

There is a man named Schwarzenser in a cell in the first corridor. He was arrested five months ago in Hamburg charged with being in possession of Anarchist literature. The German authorities hastened to take him to the Russian border. The prisoner's request that he be deported to Austria was refused. He was sent to Russia as a Russian subject (he is a native of Włocławek). Despite his objections, the literature and two revolvers were sent with him. At the customs shed in Wierzbołowo the German police agent reported about the revolvers to the Russian authorities. So far no

charge has been preferred against Schwarzenser. According to rumour he is being detained because two gendarmes are arguing about him—one suggesting that he be extradited, while the other, equally insistent, wants him sent to the interior of Russia. Katz, deported from Germany a year ago, is still here. He has not been tried, but they are thinking of sending him to administrative exile. On the floor beneath us there is a man named Brozych, a worker from Wola,* who was arrested in Vienna on October 30 and likewise deported to Russia. In the fourth corridor there is a police officer from Lodz who is charged with membership of the Socialist Party, with releasing political prisoners and with having taken part in the killing of a guard in Ostrowiec while serving as a junior officer. His name is Rabukhin.

My cell companion had a visit from the court investigator today. The investigation (he is charged with killing an agent named Kozer) has been completed. Apparently he alone will face the charge, the charge against the others involved in the case having been dropped. Detectives have sworn that they saw him at the scene of the murder a few minutes before it took place. They are lying shamelessly, but he is not in a position to submit an "alibi," and the authorities are now boasting that they always find their man. The Governor-General of Radom said this in his report. Consequently someone has to be condemned and the guilty one is he who falls into their clutches.

The gendarmes continue to be scared of us; besides not speaking, they are ashamed to look us in the face and they scowl as we pass them. Some of them have changed so much that, in their desire to get rid of the feeling of being blind weapons in the hands of others, they try to demonstrate their authority.

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* Wola—a suburb of Warsaw.—*Ed.*

JULY 1

Elaborating on his previous letter my neighbour wrote to me: "The names of Alexandrov's guards are: Prigodich (chief warder), Aksenov, Lukaszuk, Jakimczuk and Freiman (the office clerk). The plain-clothes agents Wincenty Kotwic and Boleslaw Luciński, receive 30 rubles a month in wages and another ten as supplementary payment. Kotwic, arrested on August 16, 1908, was charged with being an agitator of the PSP; he was released, allegedly on bail, on April 30, and on the same day entered the service of the police. Luciński was arrested on January 30, 1909, and charged with being a member of the Ostrowiec committee of the Socialist Party. Released on May 11, he too began to work for the police. Now for some details about their victims. Stanisław Romanowski was arrested in the spring of 1908 and taken to the secret police; one evening the police took him to a field outside the town where they flogged him, his torrnentors insisting the while that he confess to the charges levelled against him. When the flogging failed to produce results, he was bound to a tree and his persecutors, falling back ten or twelve steps, aimed revolvers at him threatening that unless he confessed he would be shot. Romanowski, however, refused to act the traitor, so he was taken to Sandomierz Prison where he remains to this day.

"Orlowski, arrested at the end of November 1908, was also taken to the outskirts of the town and beaten in the same way for refusing to admit to membership of the PSP. He was interrogated the next day but also without result. That evening the beating was repeated and Orlowski reduced to such a state that he was unable to move. The guards carried him back to the cell and threw him on to the floor. After the beatings Orlowski insisted on seeing the doctor. I do not know what the doctor said nor do I know if a protocol was drawn

up. A few days later the Prosecutor of the Radom district court, to whom Orlowski had complained, came to the prison. But apart from saying that he had looked at the victim he offered no comment. It appears, however, that he brought pressure to bear on Alexandrov, because the floggings stopped after his visit. Orlowski, too, is in Sandomierz Prison.

"Pająk, arrested in the autumn of 1908, was charged with the murder of a book-keeper named Chochulski on the Nietulisko estate. The circumstances of this case are as follows: Pająk's mother, a farm worker, went to a field on the estate to gather the tops of beets. She was found there by Chochulski who maltreated her. The woman screamed at her tormentor: 'Wait until my son comes back from America, he will not forgive this.' A few days after her son's return, Chochulski was killed. Pająk was arrested and beaten up by the guards who, in order to stop their victim from shouting, threw sand in his face. Some time later he was released.

"Adamski, arrested on March 9, 1909, was taken bound to Częstoczyce, where he had worked in a sugar refinery. All the way to the town he was whipped and punched and asked to tell the whereabouts of a store of arms. This he could not do, since he knew nothing whatever about the arms. At present he is in Sandomierz Prison.

"Dybiec, arrested in 1908, was taken in February 1909 from the Radom Prison to the house of detention in Ostrowiec on the basis of information supplied by Kotwic; he was charged with having fired at a man in Denków, near Ostrowiec, who was suspected of being a spy. Like the others, Dybiec was taken in the evening to the field and, after the beating, and upon being confronted with witnesses, admitted his guilt.

"Who the witnesses were I cannot say. Dybiec is now in the Radom Prison. Stanisław Bartos, arrested in August or September 1908 on the charge of belonging

to the military organization of the revolutionary faction, after being flogged in the office admitted his membership and, later, betrayed two others—Szczęśniak and Kacprowski. Bartos is detained in No. 10 Block. Szczęśniak and Kacprowski, arrested in the spring of 1908, were taken in November of the same year from Sandomierz Prison to the Ostrowiec house of detention and charged with membership of the military organization of the revolutionary faction. They were subjected to beating until they confessed. Afterwards Kacprowski, evidently anxious to whitewash himself, gave information about Szczęśniak, declaring he had committed eleven offences, while Szczęśniak by way of revenge and anxious to prevent Kacprowski being accepted as a police agent, supplied information about things which Kacprowski had concealed. At the moment both are in No. 10 Block. In the early hours of May 30 the secret police, together with the agents Kotwic and Luciński, arrested four young fellows in Częstoczyce—Banaś, Kowalski, Sitarski and Kwiatkowski. While being escorted to Ostrowiec (one and a half kilometres) they were beaten with batons. Kotwic and Luciński did most of the beating. Six bombs were found on the men—two of them assembled and four in parts. In all cases of people being arrested, the guards Jakimczuk, Lukaszuk and Aksenov did most of the beating, and more recently Kotwic and Luciński. There is no permanent head of the house of detention in Ostrowiec, this function is performed in turn by the guards.

"The functions of permanent orderlies are performed by two guards—Jan Gerada and Karol (I do not know his surname)."

Staniszewski who is in the next cell to ours was taken here three weeks ago. Although we have advised him to lodge a complaint, he has not done so. During these three months he has become grey and bald. A few days

ago he received a visit from Rzepinski, the Ostrowiec investigator, and the Radom Deputy Prosecutor who interrogated him from 12 noon until 9.30 in the evening.

JULY 11

We are again hearing about further death sentences. It is expected that ten will be pronounced this evening in the Włocławek case, which has lasted for ten days. Five of the eleven sentences in the Lublin case have been confirmed. Wulczyński and Sliwiński were executed two weeks ago. There seems to be no end to the executions. We have now become accustomed to news of this kind. And yet we continue to live. The mind is no longer able to grasp the magnitude of the thing, one feels only a kind of disquiet, a weight on the mind, and indifference to everything grips us more and more. One lives because his physical powers are not yet exhausted. And one feels disgust for oneself for such a life.

How many times have I written about the joy of life and its power, about bright spring days, the magic of music and song, the dream of a land of fairy-tale and of the land of reality. Only today I discussed this with my cell-mate, and I wrote about it a few days ago to a comrade who, living abroad in a beautiful country, is sad, desolate and finds everything alien. And now as I write these words the thought, like an evil shadow, comes to mind: "You must die"—this would be the best thing. No! I will live, I will not deprive myself of life; I am attached to it both by the feelings of others and by my work, and maybe also by the longing and the hope that the time of song will return, an unconscious hope, a hope prompted by the longing.

The prison authorities now make a detailed record of the way in which the doomed men behave during execution. Their words are written down and their groans and death agony noted. This is done for "scientific" purposes.

JULY 16

The accused in the Lublin case were tried and executed not here but in Lublin. Six of the men in the Włocławek case have been sentenced to death. Skalon has departed. Uthof has commuted the death sentences to hard labour. Rogov left the following letter: "Dear comrades, only a few hours separate me from death, and among my thoughts are memories of the past which for me is still very recent since it was only yesterday I had hoped to return to you and rejoin your ranks. Now I want to devote my last minutes also to you and to the cause to which I have devoted my life. I fought to the best of my ability, spreading the good word and working as hard as I could. Comrades, I have been condemned for something which is utterly alien to me,* for a thing which I have always opposed and with which I had nothing whatever to do. But does this matter to the government of butchers and hangmen? This is merely a repetition of what one meets at every step in the government practice of present-day Russia. Crime, crime and more crime. And the victims are the proletariat and its most class-conscious sons. This is a time of stagnation in our movement, and at this moment I want to address a few words to you from my tribune—the death cell: To work, comrades! The hour is now—it struck long ago! Let the crimes which they are committing spur you on to intensify the struggle, to fight on to the end.

"Comrades! To all of you resting after long and onerous labour, at home and abroad, surely you will not now be passive. No! With this faith I go to the common grave at the foot of the fortress wall. With ardent faith in our future, with faith in our victory and with the cry:

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* Rogov was sentenced to death for the alleged crime of taking part in a terrorist act.—*Ed.*

'Long live the Revolution! Long live socialism! Farewell, farewell!' "

That was all! But in a notebook I read: "Hersz Rogov in his death agony." They have killed an innocent man. In point of fact Kozelkin has committed yet another murder. Approached twice by Skalon, Kozelkin each time declared that the court had no doubt whatever concerning Rogov's guilt.

The atmosphere in the block is one of tranquillity, melancholy and death. Songs are no longer heard; the exchange of notes has practically ceased; we do not know the names even of the prisoners in the corridor. Many have been transferred to other prisons, new people have arrived, and the older prisoners have become quiet and resigned. The banging on the doors has ceased. Glucksohn, one of the prisoners in our corridor, hardly ever goes out for exercise. The gendarmes are still scared. They never speak to us now, never give us a friendly look; they search for letters; the decent ones destroy the letters when they find them, the others, the more cowardly, take them to the office. They are nervous because they know that agents have been planted among us, and they are worried lest we mention them in letters which might be intercepted. One, a man who previously delighted in talking with us and who asked us to talk with him, escorted me from exercise on one occasion to the office. Upon parting with my comrades I waved my cap to them. He shouted angrily at me for doing so and when I said something in reply he said he would order the soldier to club me with his rifle-butt. This shocked me so much that when I met the Governor I complained to him.... The gendarme became furious and, justifying himself before the Governor, shouted, "It is forbidden to exchange greetings." Previously other gendarmes had said that this one was more stupid than

wicked. For the slightest misdemeanour the gendarmes are sent to the punishment cells or are compelled to stand immovable for two hours with sword in hand. On one occasion I saw how two gendarmes, standing to attention near the fortress wall, under the threat of punishment did not dare move. In the eyes of one I noticed a flash of hatred, in the eyes of the other an animal fear. Yes, we are indeed sad and silent. Only through the window from the fortress wall there come to us the sounds of shooting—soldiers practising with rifles. Sometimes on Saturday evenings and on Sundays we hear military music. We become animated only when on exercise. For the past three months I have been sharing the cell with Warden. We get on fairly well together, yet from time to time something will upset us, impelling us to say something caustic and spiteful to each other. At times even a word, a joke, a slight movement in the cell or even the very presence of the other makes us fret, and then angry words burst out and we are ready to fly at each other. But we manage to keep our tempers, control them and not let them get the upper hand. Possibly we are helped by the fact that we don't thrust ourselves on each other, that each of us can live in his own way without observing the other and that very often we are oblivious even to the presence of the other. What is bad is that at the moment our respective lots are not the same. Mine is somewhat lighter, I have the hope of speedy release, but Warden faces the prospect of long years of hard labour and he simply cannot become reconciled to this. What is more, he is all alone. He gets no letters. And this makes things doubly difficult. Comrades, remember the prisoners! Every manifestation of attention is a ray of sunshine and the hope of resurrection from the dead.

JULY 17

...It turns out that Marczewska had nothing whatever to do with the attempt on Skalon. When sharing the cell with Ovcharek she learned all the details of the attempt and falsely confessed her participation in it, evidently with a view to establishing a reputation for herself as an important revolutionary; in so confessing she had no fear of going to the gallows, because there were so many charges of banditry against her that it was simply impossible for her to evade the death sentence. We have learned about this from unimpeachable sources. She acted her role excellently. It is also indisputable that she betrayed the members of the organization in Pruzsków who arranged her escape. And she betrayed Glucksohn with whom she also shared a cell for a time, charging that Glucksohn had taken part in raids and "hold-ups,"* offences chargeable under Article 279 of the criminal code, and that she had been agitating the gendarmes. Marczewska even betrayed one of the gendarmes, alleging that he had helped the prisoners.

JULY 20

Here is the farewell letter written by Piekarski ("Rydz") who was executed on the 4th: "It is hard to part with life especially when you feel that you still have the strength with which to serve the cause; but if in the lottery of life I have drawn this ticket, I have no complaint. Many have gone before me in this struggle. I have no claims on anyone or anything. I go to the gallows with the faith that the day will come when it will be brighter in our country, and when that day comes my spirit will help gladden the hearts of our brothers.

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* Term used to signify expropriation of government money. —*Ed.*

Farewell all. I sincerely wish you success in the struggle. Good luck."

JULY 23

One of the prisoners—a worker—who has been here for about a year sent me the following note: "I admit to you that after my experiences at liberty I have the feeling that it is only here I breathe deeply and feel happy, that I am able to add to my knowledge by reading. I become so engrossed in reading that the day seems too short and, were it not for the anxiety about my family, I would willingly stay here longer. Eager to compensate for what we were unable to do while at liberty, we read sometimes until daybreak, and although we get up at 7 or 8 in the morning still the day seems too short for our talks and recollections of the past."

I reproduce here extracts from the last letters left by Montwill (Mirecki) to one of the prisoners sentenced to death on October 5 for taking part in the attack on Lap station and who was hanged on the morning of the 9th.

"...3.10.1908. I shall be tried on Tuesday. Plonson will act as the judge, Abdulov as prosecutor. I feel as if I had just received 'extreme unction'....

"4.10. Things are not so bad with me. Maybe this sounds strange to you, but I assure you that even if they hang me, and even though every execution evokes disgust, nevertheless the rope which they will put round my neck will have its own very important positive significance. I say this without any doubt whatever. I regard this as objectively as if the matter did not concern me personally. In our society there are many who say that the members of the military organization send others to face the bullets and the gallows, while they remain in the background and live a life of ease. These tales are spread by the secret police in order to get prisoners to act as traitors. The Russian Government has recognized

me as a member of the military organization; by hanging me, the police will not be able to use this argument. . . .

"I am in good spirits and my health is a little better. I look on this thing as if it did not concern me personally, I judge everything from the standpoint of the revolutionary.

"6.10. They sentenced me to the gallows today solely on the basis of the Prosecutor's speech. By tomorrow evening the sentence will have the force of law and in two or three days time I shall be where so many of our people have gone before me. . . .

"In my last minutes I shall be silent. I dislike scenes; and should a cry be wrung from me, it will be: 'Long live independent Poland!' The idea of independence has always been my guiding thought. Farewell comrades, good luck. . . .

"7.10. The sentence will not be annulled, of this I am sure—they have made up their minds to hang me. The Prosecutor ended his speech with the words: 'The sentence is ready, all you have to do is sign it.' The enclosed cross is not a memento, it is a precious article which even a convict is allowed to wear and which in penal servitude may be turned into money. It may be useful to you, it is no longer any good to me. Farewell."

JULY 25

In two of the cells, as far as I know those occupied by Shapiro and Rzeszotarski, the windows have been opened. Finding the Governor in a good mood they put it to him that the windows should be opened, while they on their part promised not to "misbehave." Next day they opened the window in Rzeszotarski's cell and, by mistake, in Marczewska's, but not in Shapiro's. When Shapiro complained, they opened his window and

then re-nailed Marczewska's. All the windows in the cells which look out on to the yard where we have our walks are closed; I do not know about the windows in the other corridors, but I doubt very much if they have been opened. Two months ago I submitted a request to the Governor that they should open mine. He said that if he did so he would have to open all the others. My reply was that this would be a good thing and that everyone would give an undertaking not to "misbehave." He then said that the request could not be granted. And yet he is fully aware of the importance of open windows. He himself said that Avetisyants was a strong man when he first came here and performed exercises with dumb-bells which other prisoners could raise only with the greatest effort.

Four days ago the warder on duty approached us and asked if we would object to having a third man in the cell—a prisoner who had just left the sick-bay and wanted to be with Warden. We agreed and asked him in return to request permission from the Governor to open the window. However, instead of bringing the man to our cell they put him in a cell with a madman, and our window still remains sealed. Yesterday we learned that the case of Mostowski, and, so rumour said, of Warden, on a charge of murder,* had been dropped. Warden, suspicious of this news, was very anxious and sent a letter to the Governor: "Please inform me," etc., etc. Two days passed without any reply. Yet the Governor is not a bad fellow, he likes to talk and joke with the prisoners, behaves decently and even grants some privileges. But there is a big element of double-dealing in this and many suffer from it.

For more than a week now Warden has been on the

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* Mostowski and Warden were charged with killing a provocateur.—*Ed.*

reduced diet on the grounds that he is charged with murder (the fact that he is charged according to § 102* is ignored). The food ration is so meagre that the prisoner without money of his own is always hungry. True, they feed us a little better than they do in the Pawiak Prison, but the portions are much smaller. For those who have not much money or none at all this is excruciating. It is impossible to get rid of the feeling of hunger. The prisoners spend most of the time in a state of drowsiness, they are irritable and tend to be quarrelsome. They suffer dreadfully. But the chief warders do well out of this. The predecessor of the present chief was a fairly decent fellow who more than once exercised care for the prisoners. Yet, according to rumour, he managed to accumulate something like 10,000 rubles during his six years' service. The present incumbent traded in coal during the winter—the building was heated only every other day and even less frequently. At the moment he is making money out of the milk supply. A curious incident took place with Rzeszotarski who bought milk with his own money. The milk, it turned out, had been diluted. When Rzeszotarski discovered this he summoned the man in charge of the stores who said that the milk was supplied by the chief warder who kept a cow. This gentleman promised to supply better milk provided nothing was said about the discovery. The store-man—an old fellow—has held this post for many years. And although held to be decent enough, this does not prevent him from profiteering on our food and pilfering as much as possible. The officer, Kalinin, has calculated that he makes 11 kopeks on each of the prisoners receiving the improved diet. Kalinin, who had been the quartermaster of his battery, knows all about prices.

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* That is with belonging to the Party.—*Ed.*

Silence has reigned in our cell during the past few days. We hardly ever speak with each other and my neighbour is in a bad way. Obviously I am beginning to get on his nerves and he feels the need for a change. He is still waiting to get the indictment and to stand trial.

AUGUST 8

Three months ago (May 8) the Court of Justice finalized my sentence. It was dispatched to the Tsar for confirmation on June 9 and only the other day did it arrive from St. Petersburg. I think I shall be another three months here. At any rate I shall soon be parting company with No. 10 Block. I have spent sixteen months here and now it seems strange that I shall have to go away or, to be more precise, that I shall be taken away from this dreadful place. Siberia, whither I shall be exiled, seems to me to be a land of freedom, the fairyland of one's dreams.

At the same time I feel pangs of anxiety. I shall go away and the monstrous life here will continue. Strange and puzzling. Certainly it is not the horrors of this bleak house that attract me to it, but the attachment to comrades, friends and unknown neighbours—strangers, it is true, but yet near and dear to me. It was here that we felt and realized how necessary man is to man, what man means for man. It was here that we learned to love not only women and not to be ashamed of our feelings and of our desire to give people happiness. And I think if there are so many traitors, it may be because they are friendless and alone, nobody with whom they can embrace and speak words of tenderness. I think that the relations between people are complex, that feelings, even though inherent in man, have become the privilege only of the chosen. And if here we long for flowers, it is also here that we learned to love peo-

ple as we love flowers. It is precisely here where there is no desperate struggle for a crust of bread, there springs to the surface that which, of necessity, is concealed in the depths of the human soul. We love this place of our martyrdom because it was here we established for ourselves that the struggle which brought us hither is also a struggle for personal happiness and for emancipation from the coercion and the chains imposed on us.

LETTERS TO RELATIVES

1898-1902*

To A. E. Bułhak**

[Kovno Prison]***
January 25 (13), 1898

Dear Aldona,

Thanks for writing to me. Really, when you have hardly anything to do, when you are completely isolated from life and work, receiving and sending letters can be a definite source of satisfaction. I am confined all the time to my "apartment" with the result that new impressions, so to speak, are totally absent, variety is non-existent. Consequently it is extremely important for me now to get letters bringing some kind of new impressions. But enough. You call me "an unfortunate." But you are profoundly mistaken. True, I cannot say that I am happy and contented, but this is not because I am confined in prison. I can assure you that I am far happier than those who live an aimless life in freedom. And if I were faced with the choice: prison or a life of liberty without purpose, I would choose the former, otherwise life would simply not be worth living. And so even in prison I have not lost heart. Prison is good

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* For continuation of letters see p. 175.
** Aldona E. Bułhak, Dzerzhinsky's sister.—*Ed.*
*** Dzerzhinsky was arrested in Kovno on July 29(17), 1897.—*Ed.*

in the sense that one has sufficient time critically to examine the past and I find this useful.... Prison is torture only for those with faint hearts....

It looks as if I shall have to spend another year here, which means that your wishes concerning 1898 will hardly be realized.

...Don't imagine for a moment that prison is unbearable. It isn't. Stan* is so good and looks after me very well; I have books and I am studying, learning German and have everything I need, even more than I had at liberty....

How is your little Rudolf? He must be quite big now. Is he walking and talking? See that you bring him up in a way so that he places honesty above everything; such people will always be happy no matter what the circumstances may be. Of this I assure you. I read somewhere in a book that rocking a child to sleep is almost similar to the effect of opium, harms him physically and mentally and affects his moral growth. Forcing a child to sleep against his will, rocking him—these are artificial methods which directly affect the brain and, consequently, the entire organism. Cradle-rocking arose in olden times, not for the benefit of the child but for the convenience of the parents. In order not to waste time the mother span while rocking the cradle with her foot. Believe me, this is exceedingly injurious.

You ask about my health, well, it is so-so. My eye trouble is a little better.

I wish you all the best, be happy and contented. A hug for all three.

Your loving brother *Felix*.

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* Dzerzhinsky's brother Stanisław.—*Ed.*

To A. E. Bułhak

[Nolinsk]*
September 19 (7), 1898

Dear Aldona,

I promised to write to you immediately after being released but kept putting it off until now.... I was released only on August 14. The journey was an exceedingly pleasant one, that is, if we can call the company of fleas, bugs, lice, etc., pleasant. Actually I spent more time in prisons than I did on the road. We travelled by steamer on the rivers Oka, Volga, Kama and Vyatka. This was an extremely arduous way of travelling because we were herded in a so-called "hold" like herrings in a barrel.

The lack of light, air and ventilation made the place so stuffy that although we were in nature's garb we felt as if we were in a steam path. We had plenty of other "conveniences" of a like nature. But enough of them. They are not worth thinking about because in view of my present situation I myself cannot find a way out. I was set free in the town of Vyatka and allowed to travel at my own expense to the district town of Nolinsk. In Vyatka, where they are building a new railway, there is a certain Zavisha. A friend of his loaned me 20 rubles and provided me with an outfit of clothing all of which, of course, must be repaid. All in all it cost 60 rubles. I am now in Nolinsk, where I am supposed to remain three years unless I am conscripted and sent to Siberia, to the Chinese border, on the River Amur or somewhere else. It is impossible to find work here, apart from the local tobacco factory where the wages are seven rubles a month. The population of the town is in the vicinity of five thousand.

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* In the summer of 1898, after one year of preliminary detention, Dzerzhinsky was exiled for a period of three years to the district town of Nolinsk in the Vyatka Gubernia.—*Ed.*

There are a few exiles from Moscow and St. Petersburg, which means that at least there are people with whom one can gossip. The trouble is, however, that I dislike gossiping, and would much prefer to be doing something useful. I am trying to be useful indirectly, that is, I am studying. There are some books here and there is a Zemstvo library. I am making the acquaintance of the functions of the Zemstvo, which, as you know, we,* as yet, do not have. I go for walks and forget about prison, to be precise, I have already forgotten it. Alas, I cannot forget the lack of freedom because in this place, too, I am not free. However, the day will come when I shall be free and then they will pay for everything. But I mustn't bore you.

I wrote these lines yesterday evening, that is, on September 6. Today upon reading over what I wrote, I sense that you will not be satisfied since I have written little about my life here. I have rented a room and take meals with a fellow exile, but I think I will have to give this up, since it entails going to his place every day and in autumn the mud is so deep that it is possible to get drowned in it. Food is relatively cheap, but manufactured goods, because of the distance from the railroad, are almost twice as dear as at home. There is a plan for building a railway from Vyatka through Nolinsk to Kazan and it seems that the plan will be shortly confirmed by the government. Let them build railways, and let the railways bring with them the development of capitalism, let them be good for their purses! But together with the railways there will come also the cry of freedom, as a spectre, as a curse terrible for them, the cry "bread and light!" and then we shall measure our forces. In the building of railways and the factory construction accompanying it, many here see

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* That is, in Poland.—*Ed.*

only the negative aspects. They declare that the development will lead simply to centralization of wealth in the hands of rich people and to misery for the majority, that is, for the peasants and handicraftsmen. But there are two sides to this development. True, the factory building will contribute to the spread of misery (it exists already), but, on the other hand, it will unite the people and enable the worker to fight, will impart strength to him and bring him the light with which to change his downtrodden life. Let them build the railways, they need them, let them go ahead with the exploitation because by doing so they are digging their own graves! And we, the exiles, should now gather strength physically, mentally and morally in order to be ready when the day comes. True, not many will envy us, but we who see the bright future, who see and recognize its grandeur, who are aware that life has chosen us as fighters, we, in fighting for this future will never, never forsake our work for the Philistine comforts. The harsher aspects of life will certainly not make us downhearted, because our life consists in battling for a cause which transcends the humdrum details of everyday life. Ours is a young cause, but its development will be boundless because it is immortal. But why, you may ask, write to you about this? Don't be cross with me. Somehow the flow of my thoughts involuntarily travelled in this direction. Whenever I write to any of our family the thought always comes into my head: why is it that as yet I alone of our family have taken this path? How good it would be if all of us were to do the same thing! Then nothing would ever prevent us from living like brothers, of being even better and closer than brothers.... And now good-bye, don't be angry with me for my thoughts, I am outspoken and for this reason it is difficult to be angry with me.

Yours, *Felix.*

To A. E. Bułhak

[Nolinsk]
November 17 (5), 1898

Yesterday and the day before yesterday I received letters from you. I see that you are very angry with me, the reason being that you simply do not understand and do not know me. You knew me as a child and as an adolescent, but now I think I can describe myself as a grown-up with fixed ideas, and life can but destroy me in the same way as the tempest uproots the centuries' old oak—but it cannot change me. I cannot change nor can I be changed. For me a return to the past is impossible. The conditions of life have given me such a direction that the tide in which I have been caught up has but left me high and dry for the time being on a barren shore* so that afterwards it will carry me farther and farther with renewed strength, until such time as I am not completely used up by the struggle, which means that for me the end of the struggle can be only the grave.

But to get back to the matter at hand. I have said that you do not know me. You say: "You do not recognize the family, your feelings for people in general are stronger than they are for the individuals who constitute the family." And so according to you I do not recognize the family. Let me say at once you are profoundly mistaken. I speak only of the family in its present form, a form which often brings exceedingly bad results. For nearly all classes in society the family as constituted today signifies suffering, not comfort and happiness. First of all, an example from the life of the working class. I know a family—and there are thousands like it—in which the father and mother work in a tobacco factory (here in Nolinsk) from 6 in the morning till 8 in the evening. What can the children get

* Dzerzhinsky has in mind his imprisonment and exile.—*Ed.*

from a family placed in such conditions? They eat badly and there is no one to look after them; and the moment they grow a little they will go to work before they learn to read and write. I ask you, what can the family give these children?

Take another social group—the peasantry. Here the family has still partly preserved the soil under its feet, but as time goes on the ground slips away more and more from it. The majority of the peasantry is now forced to find work on the side, because in most cases the land cannot provide enough food and in the future the work on the side will feature more and more in their budget. The peasant must help the family, support it instead of the family helping him; clearly, in such conditions the peasant family, too, will gradually disintegrate.

Let us turn now to the wealthy classes. Here the thing that strikes the eye is that the family is based solely on a commercial basis; secondly, the woman who transgresses in the family is shamed in the most humiliating way, whereas the husband transgressor is the usual thing. The man can do everything, whereas the woman has no say at all. How is it possible to regard as models those families in which the woman slave is at the mercy of the despot husband, where commercial aims play the dominant role. And in these circumstances what can be the attitude of the children to the parents? Here a warmer relationship is possible, since the parents maintain their children, educate them, look after them and provide for them. But one cannot say that their views coincide completely. Life marches on, it changes and it is changing very rapidly at present. The children grow up in an entirely different atmosphere from that in which their parents grew up, with the result that they have other convictions, ideas, and so on, and this is the reason for the antagonisms between fathers and sons.

As constituted at present the family can satisfy and partly does satisfy only the propertied classes. For this reason they cannot nor do they want to understand any criticism of the family from the standpoint of the non-propertied. They live well, and they do so because others live badly. Their families can exist only by destroying others, namely, the workers' families.

So you see, Aldona, that my fight is not against the family in general, but against its present form. Life destroys the family, takes away from it all its positive sides and for the vast majority of humanity leaves only the negative features. The family of the wealthy classes with its prostitution is a disgusting phenomenon. But the point is not the family as such—what interests me is the welfare of the exploited classes on which the family, ethics, mental development, etc., are based. And with regard to feelings, I can tell you this. Our life is such that it demands we overcome our feelings and subordinate them to cold judgement. Life is such that it rules out sentiment, and woe to the man who lacks the strength to overcome his feelings. You say that our feelings largely concern humanity as a whole rather than man as an individual. Never believe that this is possible. Only hypocrites speak like that, and they deceive themselves and others. It is impossible to have feelings only for people in general. People in general is an abstract thing, the concrete is the sum of individual people. In reality feeling can be generated only in relation to something concrete, never in relation to an abstraction. One can sympathize with social misfortune only if he sympathizes with the misfortune suffered by each individual....

The society in which we live today is divided into different classes with opposed interests. The result is that happiness for one signifies misfortune for another. Take, for example, the famine which follows crop failure.

For the masses of the people this is misfortune. But there are those who utilize this misfortune in order to stuff their pockets with money (grain merchants). Or take the superfluous labour. For the worker this is a misfortune, since he is forced to yield and agree to work for low wages. But for the capitalist and the landlord this is a godsend, etc.

I have seen and see now that practically all workers suffer, and this suffering evokes in me a response which compels me to cast aside everything which was a hindrance to me and to fight together with the workers for their emancipation.

I have heard that arrests have taken place in Vilno in connection with the erection of the monument to the "hangman."* Write and tell me all you know about this. Kisses for all four.

Felix.

To A. E. Bułhak

[Kaigorodskoye]**

January 13 (1), 1899

Dear Aldona,

...I had been (up to my departure from Nolinsk—*Ed.*) without a penny, or rather with only a penny in my pocket, but I didn't go hungry. My eyes, now real-

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* This refers to the arrests which followed the protest against erecting a monument to Governor-General Muravyov who brutally suppressed the uprising in Lithuania in 1863, for which action he became known as the "hangman."—*Ed.*

** Dzerzhinsky was deported to the village of Kaigorodskoye after four month's residence in Nolinsk. In the police archives it is stated that he behaved most unfavourably politically and during the brief period managed "to influence a number of people who formerly were quite reliable." Dzerzhinsky has given this reason: "For being unco-operative and causing scenes with the police, and also because I had become a worker in a tobacco factory they sent me 400 kilometres farther north."—*Ed.*

ly bad,* are being treated because I want to live and one cannot live without sight.

I received your last letter in hospital where I had been for some time and I would have been there longer, I think, if it had not been for a recent event. Before this I lived in Nolinsk, a town with a relatively big population and not too remote. However, it entered into the Governor's head (probably he was pleased with himself after dinner and faced the prospect of a comfortable snooze) that it wasn't good for me to stay here any longer. I am wholly unaware as to the reason for his interest in my welfare. He has transferred me four hundred kilometres to the north, a region of forests and swamps, to a village 250 kilometres from the nearest district town. The same thing happened to one of my comrades. At least I have the good fortune to have somebody with whom I can converse. Kaigorodskoye is a fairly large place. Fifty years ago it was an administrative centre. It has 100 households and about 700 peasant inhabitants. Located on the bank of the River Kama, on the fringe of the Perm and Vologda gubernias, it is surrounded by forest. The place abounds in bears, reindeer, elk, wolves and game. In summertime the swarms of mosquitoes make it impossible to go anywhere without nets or to open windows. There are frosts of 40° in winter and 40° heat in summer. Apartments are hard to come by, and they are expensive. I am living with another exile. White bread is never seen here, and in autumn we eat frozen meat. The cost of living is, if anything, dearer than in the district town. Sugar, tea, tobacco, matches, flour and cereals are very expensive in view of transportation costs. We prepare our own meals and we have bought a samovar. Good hunting is to be had and it is possible to

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* During his exile Dzerzhinsky contracted trachoma.—*Ed.*

make some money from it. Soon we hope to get guns and do some hunting. We have ordered skis and we have bought sheepskin coats.

Not long ago the Governor sent me the sum of 49 rubles 68 kopeks, whose money it is, I don't know. At first I thought that the government had remitted my allowance,* and I signed the receipt. But I was mistaken, the sum was too big. Evidently it is money taken from some of our relatives. I completely forgot to warn you about one thing. I am sure that my letters will now be censured locally. They have tried to do this but we threatened them with court proceedings because without instructions from the Ministry of the Interior they are not empowered to do this. So at the moment we are waging a struggle with the local authorities who have refused to accept our letters.

I have received money from Stan and now have ample for my needs. That, it seems, is all there is to say. Just one thing more. Here in Kaigorodskoye there is a hospital with a doctor so one can boldly be ill and pour into oneself all kinds of mixtures and powders. Generally speaking I feel better now. According to the doctor my eyes will be all right after eighteen months' treatment.

Yours,
Felix.

To A. E. Bułhak

[Kaigorodskoye]
March 13 (1), 1899

I have had two letters from you. Thanks for sending me the fifty rubles through the Governor. But you shouldn't do this. My letters are now being opened and for this reason I have not written for some time and will not write very often. A few days ago I returned

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* Prisoners serving a term of administrative exile were entitled to a small government allowance.—*Ed.*

from the district town whither I had been summoned with regard to military service. Owing to the state of my lungs, however, I have been rejected for ever. It is impossible to get treatment here although there is a doctor. But only young doctors, those without a practice, come here. The climate is too grim. I have applied for a transfer to another place but I doubt very much if anything will come of it. I am studying pretty hard. How are the children? Hug them for me and tell little Rudolf that thanks to us life will be better for him, he will be able to breathe more freely, provided he endeavours to see that no one oppresses another or lives at his expense, to overturn the golden calf and put an end to the bartering of conscience and the darkness which weigh so heavily on mankind; in the future he will not have to conceal his work like a thief, since no one will persecute him. But, should this not find a response in his heart, should he live solely for himself and think in terms only of his own well-being, then woe to him. Don't be angry with me for wishing him that which I hold to be the greatest of happiness and which for me is sacred.*

Felix.

To A. E. Bułhak [No. 10 Block, Warsaw Citadel]
March 21 (8), 1900

I feel fairly good.... Life has developed in me, if it is possible to say so, a fatalistic feeling. After the accomplished fact** I am not bewailing my lot. Despair is a stranger to me.

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* In August 1899 Dzerzhinsky escaped from exile and arrived in Warsaw in September.—*Ed.*

** That is, his second arrest in Warsaw on February 4 (January 23), 1900.—*Ed.*

In Kaigorodskoye I spent the whole summer hunting. From morning till late at night sometimes walking and sometimes in a boat, I hunted game. I let nothing stand in my way. The forest thickets crippled my body. In the marshes I was often waist deep in water chasing swans. The mosquitoes and midges played havoc with my face and arms; at night-time, sleeping on the river-bank, the smoke burned my eyes. I shivered with cold and my teeth chattered in the chill of the evenings when breast-high in the water we hauled in the nets, or in autumn when I followed the bears in the forest. What, you ask, drove me to leave home? It was the longing for my native land, a longing which has cut so deep into my spirit that nothing can wrest it unless they wrest out my heart.

You think that this hunting life has soothed me somewhat? Not a bit! The longing to return became overpowering. I saw in my mind's eyes images of the past and a still clearer picture of the future, but I felt in myself a terrible emptiness which became more and more pronounced. I could hardly speak calmly with anybody. The life in Kaigorodskoye had poisoned me. . . . I gathered my last strength and fled. I lived, not very long, it is true, but I lived.*

Felix Dzerzhinsky

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* In these words Dzerzhinsky characterizes his tempestuous revolutionary activity in Warsaw at the end of 1899 and the beginning of 1900.—*Ed.*

To A. E. Bułhak

[Siedlce Prison]*
July 16 (3), 1901

Dear Aldona,

I want to write you a few words but to tell the truth I don't know what to write. My life is so monotonous, there are so few new, fresh impressions that I cannot even think, and to live with one and the same thoughts all the time is boredom at its worst. I am forbidden to write about the things I would like to tell you. I have read your two letters and I see from them that you imagine me as some kind of unfortunate, such as I have never been and am not now. Materially speaking I am even too well off, and as to the fact that I have neither freedom nor books and that I am in solitary confinement and that my dignity as a prisoner is subjected to all kinds of humiliations ... you should remember, my dear Aldona, that these sufferings are compensated a thousand times by the moral feeling that I am doing my duty. It is necessary to have this feeling in order to understand that we prisoners are happier than most of those at liberty because even though our bodies are fettered our spirits are free, whereas theirs are the spirits of slaves. Don't take this for an empty phrase or beautiful words. You will remember that after my first arrest and imprisonment I never abandoned my duty as I understood it and as I understand it now. But in order to reach the goal which people like myself have set, it is necessary to relinquish personal comforts and a life for oneself. I am saying this, dear Aldona, solely for the purpose that you should not regard me as a "sufferer" and you must not write to me in this strain.

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* Dzerzhinsky had been transferred from the Warsaw Citadel to Siedlce Prison.—*Ed.*

You want to know how I look. Well, let me give you as exact a description as possible: I have become so much the man that many take me for 26, although as yet I have neither moustache nor beard; as usual I look somewhat grim and relax only during conversation, but when I forget things and when I begin to argue, and argue hotly for my views, then my eyes flash so that my opponents are unable to look me in the face; my features have become somewhat roughened so that now I am much more like a worker than the student of the recent past, generally speaking I look worse. I have three deep furrows on my brow; I walk as I have always done, with a stoop, with lips compressed, and I have become very nervous....

Your "*incorrigible.*"

To A. E. Bułhak

[Siedlce Prison]
October 21 (8), 1901

Dear Aldona,

I received your letter a couple of days ago. I am delighted that at last there is a chance of you getting work. I perfectly understand your position—inability to find a place in life and having such wonderful children, which obliges their parents to work for them.

I am much younger than you, but I think that in the course of my brief life I have acquired such a multitude of impressions that any veteran would boast of them. In reality, he who lives as I do, cannot live very long. I can neither hate nor love by halves. I simply cannot give only half of my spirit. I either give all or nothing. I have drunk from the cup of life not only all the bitterness, but also all the sweetness, and if somebody should say to me—look at the furrows on your brow, at your emaciated body, at your present life, look and you will see that life has broken you, I should reply in

these words: No, life has not broken me, it is I who have broken life, it is not life that has taken everything from me, it is I who have taken everything, literally everything, from it. Yes, people have created riches for themselves, and these riches, these inanimate things, have fettered their creators so that people live for riches, not riches for people.

Dear Aldona, our paths in life have parted to a considerable degree but the memory of the precious and innocent days of my childhood, the memory of our mother—these are the things that, willy-nilly, have impelled me, and impel me now, not to break the threads which unite us, no matter how slender they may be. So don't be cross with me over my convictions, there is no place in them for hatred of people. I have hated wealth because I have loved people, because I see and feel with all my heart that today people worship the golden calf which has turned the human spirit into something animal-like, chasing all love from the heart. Remember that in the soul of such as myself there is a sacred flame which gives happiness even at the stake.

The tragedy of life is the suffering of children. I have seen children, puny, weak, and with the eyes and speech of aged people. And what a terrible sight this is! Poverty, no family warmth, motherless, brought up solely on the street, in the beerhouse--these are the things that martyrize the children; the poison, seeping into the young, small body, ruins it. I am passionately fond of children.... And when I see on the one hand fearful poverty, and on the other the excess of wealth which spoils and deforms the little ones, then I am glad for your children's sake that you are neither rich nor poor, that throughout their childhood they will become conscious of the need to work for a living, which means that they will become real people. After all, the

children are the future. They should be strong in spirit and they should be acquainted with the facts of life from their earliest years....

When your health improves you absolutely must write to me about the children. I want to know how they are growing, about their abilities, the things that interest them, the questions they ask, how you are bringing them up, whether you are giving them sufficient freedom or are strict with them, whether they are beautiful, with whom they play, whether they are noisy and quarrelsome—in a word, the very moment you feel like it, write to me about them. I am so anxious to know how their young minds are developing, minds which as yet know neither good nor evil.

As for me I hope that in about two months I will be sent to Yakutsk in Eastern Siberia. My health is not as good as it might be—my lungs are really beginning to cause me anxiety. Bouts of depression are followed by a feeling of being on top of the world. The solitary confinement has left its mark. But my mental strength will last me at least a thousand years.... Even here in prison I can see how the inextinguishable flame burns —the flame that is my heart and the heart of all my comrades now suffering here. I am powerless to do anything about my health in this place, because here it is the responsibility of others. They feed us just enough to keep us alive. They spend seven-and-a-half kopeks a day on our diet, but as for water we have barrels of it....

With regard to money I must say that, in general, I need it, because "I" am thousands and millions. But where to find the gold with which to feed so many? Such a miracle can be created only by the heart which takes millions into its love. So please don't send me any money whatever because you already reward me with your whole heart, you never forget me and write

me affectionate letters, though I am sure there is much you do not like about me.

Perhaps I shall soon have a visit from my friend from Vilno. As you see, I am alive, and people have not forgotten me. But believe me, to be in prison with heaps of gold but with no one to love you and think about you is a hundred times worse than being in prison without a penny. The main thing is the knowledge that in the outside world there are people who have not forgotten you.... That is why I am so grateful for your letters, for your kind heart and your memory of me.

You say in your letter that Jadwiga* has a "heart of gold." You must never write such things to me. A heart of gold means not having a real heart, and it is only with a real heart that one can feel the throb and pulse of life; gold is but the symbol of one who stinks.

I hug you and your splendid children.

Yours,

Felix.

To A. E. and G. A. Bułhak**

[Siedlce Prison]
Beginning of Nov. 1901

Dear Gedymin and Aldona,

Your letter and the photos of the children have arrived. I am greatly touched by the warmth of your words —the more so because for some time past our relations have suffered from misunderstanding. To be frank, I was displeased when I learned that you regard me as a "sheep that has returned to the fold"; you seem to think that my life, my thoughts and my actions will now take the "right road," that the "evil" will disappear and that henceforth "God will show me the way".... No!! As I have been in the past, so I am now;

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* Dzerzhinsky's sister.—*Ed.*

** G. A. Bułhak—Aldona's husband.—*Ed.*

that which embittered me then, embitters me now; the things I loved then, I love now; all that delighted me in the past years, continues to delight me; as I did then, so I do now; I think the same today as I thought yesterday; the sorrow and suffering which I experienced in the past will scarcely pass me by in the future; my way is the old way; just as I hated evil yesterday, so do I hate it today; as of old I loathe with every fibre all injustice, crime, drunkenness, depravity, excess, extravagance, brothels in which people sell their bodies or souls, or both; I detest oppression, fratricidal strife and national discord.... I want to see humanity surrounded with love, to warm it and cleanse it of the filth of modern life.... Why, then, do you speak to me about changing my way? You must never write to me about this. I want to love you as I have always loved you. But you, reluctant to understand me, try to tempt me, to get me to renounce my ideals, want my love for you to become a crime!...

I would like to write more about the power of love, but not today. Today I shall confine myself to answering your letter. I hope that its sharp tone will not offend you, because where there is faith in one's cause, there is always strength and sharpness, and no sloppiness. Of all evils, the worst, in my view, is falseness. It is much better to write what one really thinks and feels, unpleasant though it may be, than to write something pleasant but false....

As for my lungs, they are not as bad as you think. I no longer have a cough, and the fact that I have chest trouble—well, who can be in perfect health after nearly two years in a prison cell. I expect my sentence possibly within the next three months and, if I may say so, I dread the frost of Yakutsk less than a cold, egoistical spirit; consequently I prefer Siberia to spiritual slavery. And I hope that, in spite of everything, I shall

still see you and your children. But if fate decrees that I should not see you, the failure will not give me a headache, nor should it cause you any upset. Life is long, and since death is short there's nothing to fear.

Now for a few words about your children. Like all children, they are charming, innocent even when they are naughty, act in accordance with their desires and do as they like; as yet there is nothing false in them. The rod, excessive strictness and blind discipline are the bane of the child's life. The rod and excessive strictness tend to make him false, to be a hypocrite, to feel and desire one thing and, from fear, to say and do something entirely different. The rod can but cause the child pain, and if he is a sensitive child, if the pain compels him to act contrary to his wishes, then the rod will merely make him a slave of his own weakness, will be a millstone round his neck, always pressing on him; the result can only be a spiritless child, a child without a conscience and incapable of enduring any hardships. And his future life, since it will not be wanting in trials much more severe than the pain caused by the rod, will be a constant conflict between conscience and suffering, a conflict in which conscience will always give way. Look at yourself, at the life of the people whom you meet every day; you cannot fail to see the ceaseless conflict between conscience and life, compelling man to act contrary to his conscience, in which conflict conscience is mostly the loser. Why is this so? It is because the parents and teachers, while moulding the minds of the children and teaching them how to live, how to distinguish between good and evil, fail to inculcate the spiritual strength needed in order to do good, thrash them with the rod or slap them, shout at them and punish them in other ways; in this manner they sap the strength of the adults of tomorrow and, instead of building conscience, do the

F. E. Dzerzhinsky. 1905

No. 10 Block of the Warsaw Citadel where F. E. Dzerzhinsky was imprisoned. 1908-1909

House in the village of Taseyevka, Kansky Uyezd, Yenisei Gubernia, where F. E. Dzerzhinsky lived in exile. 1909

very opposite. The rod, excessive strictness and corporal punishment can never touch the heart and conscience of the child in the desired way, because in the child's mind they are symbolical of coercion on the part of the stronger and lead to either stubbornness, even when the child knows that he has done wrong, or to cowardice and falseness.... The sound corrective measures are those which compel the child who has misbehaved to admit his guilt, to say that he has done wrong, that it is necessary to live and behave differently.

He will then try to avoid evil; the rod is effective only for a brief period; and when the child grows up and is no longer afraid of it, conscience disappears together with the fear; the child, spoiled, becomes a liar, and every encounter makes him more and more depraved, now that he no longer fears the rod and corporal punishment, while his conscience is silent. I repeat, the rod and corporal punishment are the curse of humanity. Fear makes the child mean and vicious, turns him into a hypocrite, coward and careerist. Fear cannot teach the child to distinguish between good and evil; he who fears pain will always stoop to evil. Aldona, I am sure that you have not forgotten my stubbornness when I was a child. It was thanks to this and also to the fact that I never was thrashed, that I now have the strength with which, in spite of everything, to combat evil. Never beat your children. Let your love for them restrain you from doing so, and remember that, though it is easier to use the rod than to display the care needed for their proper upbringing when they are still small and defenceless, if you do use it you will deny yourself their joy and love when they grow up, because the corporal punishment and the excessive strictness will have crippled them spiritually. Never, never hit them, because the child's mind and heart are

so impressionable and sensitive that even the slightest injury leaves its trace. And if it should happen that in a moment of irritation or in a fit of temper you lose control of yourself and punish them, shout at them or cuff them, you should immediately beg their forgiveness, express regret, take them in your arms, let them feel your maternal love in their little hearts, comfort them and soothe their pain in order to remove every trace of your anger which they feel so much. After all it is the mother that moulds the spirit of her children, not the reverse; they, naturally, being children, cannot understand you, and for this reason you should never be angry with them. I myself can recall how Mother once slapped me—her nerves were on edge with the burden of managing the house and looking after all of us;* neither you nor Jadwiga was at home at the time (I think you were both in Vilno, though I cannot be sure); I had played some prank or other and Mother became so angry that she slapped my face; I screamed and cried bitterly, and after crying my fill I crept into a corner under the flower stand and remained there until it became dark; I distinctly remember how Mamma found me in the corner, picked me up and pressed me to her bosom, hugged and caressed me. I began to cry again, but this time the tears came quietly, they were pleasant tears, tears of happiness, soothing and joyful. I was in a transport of delight! Then I was given a bun and a lump of sugar, and my joy knew no bounds. I have forgotten how old I was—either six or seven. We were staying in Dzierżynowo at the time.

From this you will see, my dear, how love and punishment affect the child. Love penetrates into the spirit, makes it stronger, good and responsive, whereas fear, pain and shame cripple it. Love creates everything

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* There were eight children in the family.—*Ed.*

good, lofty, strong, warm and bright. The child does not know, does not understand what is good and what is bad, he must be taught to distinguish between the two. As yet he does not possess the necessary will-power, consequently he should be forgiven his lapses, and his mother should not be cross with him. It is not enough to say, "Do this, don't do that," nor is it wise to punish him when he is disobedient. In the latter case only pain and fear are his conscience, and he will never learn to distinguish between good and evil. The child responds to the one who loves him. . . . And love is essential to his upbringing. Conscious of the love of his parents, the child tries to be obedient in order not to disappoint them. And should his vitality and liveliness lead him into pranks and mischief, he himself will be sorry for his misdemeanour. Then, as his will-power becomes stronger, and as he learns to behave better, his guide will be his own conscience, not the bad environment or the external conditions which so often lead to moral degradation. The child shares the sorrow of those who love him. His young mind is influenced by every, even the slightest, detail. Consequently, in the presence of children it is necessary to refrain from dissoluteness, angry scenes, quarrelling, swearing, gossiping and, worst of all, from not living up to one's words; the child is observant, and even if he does not remember everything he sees and hears, some traces remain, and it is from these traces and these impressions that his mind, conscience and moral fibre are moulded. Will-power, too, should be inculcated. Spoilt and pampered children, whose every whim is gratified by parents, grow up into degenerate, weak-willed egoists. Parental affection should not be blind. Nothing spoils the child more than giving in to his every desire, than pampering him with sweets and other dainties—this is the surest way to spoil him.

From the standpoint of upbringing, rational love and affection are a hundred times better than blind love. Take, for example, the case of a sick child who asks for a slice of bread, or the healthy one who insists on having sweet after sweet, who cries and screams and who until he gets his way refuses to listen to his mother. Tell me, whose love is greater—the mother who gives and satisfies the caprice of the child, or she who refuses? Again, tenderness is the required quality. And, if it at first fails to soothe, the child should be left alone to cry until he stops, until he quietens down a little; then he can be approached and told in a comforting way why he cannot get everything he asks for, and that his crying causes pain to his father and mother.... Your job, Aldona, that of moulding the character of your children, is not an easy one. It calls for the greatest care! For the merit of the children depends in large measure on the parents. I would like to write a lot more about children, but I am not sure how you will take my advice, maybe you will think I am meddling in things which do not concern me. Be that as it may, you can be sure that I am motivated only by love of your children. Give them a hug for me.... I hope they will grow up healthy and happy, filled with love for their parents and other people. I hope they will be courageous and strong in mind and in body, that they will never sell their conscience. I hope that they will have more happiness than we have had, and that they will live to see the triumph of freedom, brotherhood and love. I am tired, so I must finish....

As to my strength of mind, it is, doubtlessly, fair enough, but not as strong, Aldona dear, as you imagine it. In my letters and here in prison I seem to be one-sided and very strong, but I have my defects, which, of course, cannot be known from letters.... I

F. E. Dzerzhinsky. Cracow. 1911