

IN BOLSHEVIK PRISONS—The True Story of a Fugitive

Two Weeks of Living Death—Princess Kourakine Is Given Revolting Tasks—Brutal Treatment By Red Soldiers.

CHAPTER IV. SENT AS A HOSTAGE TO MOSCOW.

The concentration camp to which I was sent was situated in another quarter of Kiev. After the Ve-Tche-Ka, it seemed to me almost a luxurious establishment, with a large courtyard, high ceilings and spacious cells, but the conditions were those of a real prison; grated windows, a long corridor with uniform cells, heavy doors with ever-clicking locks. The women were in separate cells from the men, but the prisoners met in the courtyard, and I was allowed to converse with my son, which was a great consolation.

Fresh surprises, however, awaited me here. No one was obliged to do any work at the Ve-Tche-Ka; it was a temporary camp for prisoners. Here everyone was made to work, both men and women.

My son was sent to dig a canal for water pipes outside the gates. He was young and strong and fond of physical exercise. Soon it was noticed that he worked better and quicker than anyone else at the camp. The prison authorities, who were composed of "democrats," proletarians," so-called "hard working men with toil-worn hands," were profoundly astonished. What that young prince, a mother's pet and darling, an offspring of that rotten aristocracy, on which the Socialists and democrats poured out torrents of abuse, that boy worked better and quicker than anyone else at the camp! It was a great moral support to me to see how bravely, almost gallily, my son bore his captivity. Always calm and in good spirits, he was a general favorite, and made many friends among the prisoners.

As for me, I was in no fit condition for hard work. The lung disease from which I had only recently recovered had left its mark, and I suffered from a severe pain in my side. But it was chiefly all I was going through that affected my nerves and my whole constitution. I was not able to eat anything, although Andrew's old nurse brought us daily all kinds of nice food. I had lost a pound, which is about forty Russian pounds, and had grown very thin.

Given Heaviest Work. I was obliged to sweep and tidy the prison office daily. This was comparatively easy, but besides this we were sent to do all sorts of dirty work. I tried to get out of it by referring to my illness, but did not succeed. The commandant, a former peasant of the village, shouted at me like the real boor he was, promising to send such "bourgeois" as I was to do the heaviest work.

After two weeks at the concentration camp, my son was sent to the Russian works in the south, and I was sent to the Greter Works. Parting with my son was painful, as we had been allowed to see each other daily at the concentration camp.

In Kiev, during our imprisonment, we were fed and cared for by our relatives and friends. My aunt, the Countess Nierod, the former steward of our estate, and others who served us there, had done what they could to make life bearable for us while we were in prison. Andrew's old nurse had brought me a mattress and bribed the guards to let me have all kinds of necessary but forbidden things. I was able to change my

clothes as often as I liked and send them out to be washed. The days of our imprisonment in Kiev were, in fact, days of comparative luxury.

Transferred to Iron Works. I was transferred to the Greter works on July 12. Forty men and ten women were sent there besides myself. All of the women were Polish students, very nice girls, and it was a pleasure to find myself among a small number of clean and well-behaved people. My life at the Greter works was paradise in comparison to the Ve-Tche-Ka and the concentration camp. We were put into a spacious house, where the women had a room to themselves with plenty of light and air. The house was surrounded by green lawns with gigantic old shade trees.

The men were employed at the house work. I was appointed scullery maid, and very glad I was of it, as this is much easier work than scrubbing floors. The fact that I was out in the open air, as the kitchen had been established in the yard, was sufficient to make me feel satisfied. My duties were cleaning potatoes, washing dishes and kitchen utensils, and cleaning up the kitchen each evening. Our cook was a nice Polish land-proprietor, with whom I always conversed in French, to the intense displeasure of our guard.

This kitchen-lidyl soon came to an end. One day, the commandant of the concentration camp, Serokin, arrived on an inspection of the Greter works, and found me working in the kitchen.

"What," he cried, "Kourakine cleaning potatoes? Didn't I say you were to be given the heaviest work to do? Send her at once to wash floors and send someone else to the kitchen."

I was then appointed to clean the enormous room where our guards slept. It was disgusting to wash and tidy that room, but still more disgusting to see the guards lying around on the beds and listen to their insulting remarks. But even this did not last long.

On August 4 an order was unexpectedly given to take us back to the concentration camp. We were not informed, of course, of the cause of this change, but we knew something evil was being plotted against us. We knew that the Whites were already quite near to Kiev and that the Bolsheviks were on the eve of catastrophe.

We reached the concentration camp toward evening and were horrified by what we found there. The camp was packed with thousands of prisoners. A new commandant had been sent from Moscow, a savage beast who was never seen without a revolver in his hand. Notices were hung up everywhere, warning the prisoners that no interviews, no packages from town would be allowed.

Sixty-Two in One Cell. We were immediately locked up in our cells, and I will never forget what went on there. Instead of twenty people as before, sixty-two people, men and women, were put into one cell. It was utterly impossible to lie down; it was very hot and even with the open window it was difficult to breathe. Suddenly the rumor spread that we were to be taken to Moscow as hostages. It was a bolt from the blue.

August 6 they woke us up at 3:30 a.m. and told us to be ready in twenty minutes and to take our belongings with us. But they did not let us know our destination. At this news many of the prisoners wept and gloom reigned in the cell. We were all led out of the building and drawn up into line in the courtyard like soldiers. I saw Andrew standing there with his bundle, ready to go to the train.

They marched us off under strong armed guards to the railroad station in Kiev. The commandant, Ougartoff, accompanied us in person and fired his revolver in the air from time to time, thinking to intimidate us. We were two hundred hostages in all, and were loaded into several cattle cars. There were twenty-three women and we had a car to ourselves, but it was not clean and was horribly dirty.

The train did not leave until 1 p.m. The people in town had heard of the train of hostages being sent to Moscow and our friends and relatives came to the train to see us. Only a sister of Andrew's, the president of the Polish Red Cross, were allowed on the platform. Our poor nurse, who had come to the station, had to

stand fifty feet away from the train. I shall never forget that awful morning. There was nothing more to hope for. It would have been easier if only Andrew had been left behind in Kiev; it was horrible to think of my boy, at that age, being sent as a hostage.

Six Days in Cattle Car. Our journey lasted six days. Traveling in a cattle car, sleeping on a hard board in a cramped space, is not as comfortable as traveling in a sleeping car. On the whole, I stood the journey pretty well, though the prisoners were very badly treated.

We reached Moscow on the sixth day after our departure from Kiev. I had never cared for Moscow, now less than ever, of course. We were first taken to the Kojukhovskiy camp, where we remained for nine days. We were all lodged in one hundred of us, men and women—in one enormous wooden barrack, with two rows of narrow beds, and with no other furniture. This method of living was, of course, aboriginal, and our manners and ways involuntarily became primitive.

It was in Moscow that I took my first lesson in natural history, and became acquainted with vermin. Installed in Monastery. We had been informed beforehand that we were to be temporarily quartered in the camp. After nine days there we were sent to our real destination, the monastery, which had

been turned into a concentration camp. The monastery was situated some eight miles from the camp, and we reached it in the night. We stepped through the gates of the monastery, and though thoroughly tired out by our long march, had to go through all the usual formalities.

The women were put into a separate building, formerly the archbishop's house. There was no electricity, lamps or candles. We groped our way in the dark, like blind people, feeling for the walls, the doors, the nary. I hastened, as usual, to settle down in the corner of the latter, as one always feels a little more at home in a corner, having a neighbor on one side only. It was cold, and the stone house, uninhabited for some time, was so damp that when I crept into my place on the nary, I could feel that the boards were quite wet.

It was very picturesque in the monastery, and in happier times I might have enjoyed seclusion there.

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As a price for assisting my son in his flight Tarabykin had charged Andrew to tell me that he begged me to give him a letter of introduction to my cousin, Baron Wrangel, under whom he would like to serve. This was a risky step to take.



PRINCESS TATIANA KOURAKINE.

In court costume. In this picture she wears some of the pearls whose possession she retained to the last, despite the sacking of her estate, and the sale of which eventually supplied the funds for her escape to Poland.

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Another month passed and my son, now an official in the service of the Bolsheviks, left for his destination at Gomel. I shall never forget the day when Andrew came to see me for the last time. As he left, I watched his receding figure through the haze of a blizzard and a mist of tears. I did not see him again for a year and a half. Anxiety for the happy issue of his flight and a longing for him night and day gave me no peace in the long months that followed.

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Six Days' Travel In Filthy Cattle Cars—Sent As Hostage To Moscow—Her Son Gets His Freedom.

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sion for the Affairs of Young Criminals. I ought to have been overjoyed at his release, but the circumstances were such that there was really nothing to rejoice at, as this freedom was far from being real. Kiev had been occupied by the Whites and we were entirely cut off from it. Andrew had no place to go. He was released from prison but his liberty was as bitter as any detention; he was literally thrown out into the street, only half clothed, hungry and without a penny in his pocket. Such were the conditions in which my son, a youth of sixteen, brought up in luxury and in the happiest surroundings, was now beginning his independent existence.

After his release Andrew was allowed to spend a few nights at the office of the commission. The chairman of the Commission of Affairs for Young Criminals, Tarabykin, took an interest in him and offered to take him in temporarily. He proved to be a fine man, gave my son shelter and food and showed him many kindnesses.

Son Prepares For Kiev. One day when Andrew had been allowed to visit me at the camp, he told me that Tarabykin was not a Bolshevik at all, but had been an officer in the Russian army, hated the government of the Soviets and longed to join the Whites. He offered to arrange a flight to Kiev for Andrew. His plan was to obtain an appointment for my son in the fuel supply at Gomel. Once there, Andrew would be sent to different places to purchase wood and on reaching some point not far from Kiev he could make his way to that city.

Although my heart stood still at the dreadful risk my son would be running, at the days of anxiety and torture I would live through, in utter ignorance of his fate, I gave my consent to his flight. His complete isolation in Moscow made me doubly anxious.

As a price for assisting my son in his flight Tarabykin had charged Andrew to tell me that he begged me to give him a letter of introduction to my cousin, Baron Wrangel, under whom he would like to serve. This was a risky step to take.

Neither Andrew nor I had ever set eyes on Tarabykin before; we knew nothing whatever about him. Who could guarantee that he was not a Bolshevik after all, that all this plot was not a trap? After long meditation, I wrote the letter and gave it to Andrew to be handed to Tarabykin. I realized I was running a dreadful risk; if Andrew were caught in his flight, he would have to pay a heavy penalty for it; and if Tarabykin were caught with my letter to Wrangel I would have to pay the price for it. However, my decision was made and the letter was written. I was deeply grateful to Tarabykin because the shelter and food he had given my son had cost a huge sum at this time, and the feeling of obligation overcame my fears. I could hardly refuse to do what he asked of me after his kindness.

Another month passed and my son, now an official in the service of the Bolsheviks, left for his destination at Gomel. I shall never forget the day when Andrew came to see me for the last time. As he left, I watched his receding figure through the haze of a blizzard and a mist of tears. I did not see him again for a year and a half. Anxiety for the happy issue of his flight and a longing for him night and day gave me no peace in the long months that followed.

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