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lighted the evils of the labour-camp system. But at the same time, he has also revealed himself as a Russian chauvinist and a man who made the transition from marxist to capitalist by adopting some of the more unsavoury features of the anti-Soviet camp. This is hardly surprising, considering his treatment, but it has inevitably caused a reaction against him, particularly among non-Russian Soviet exiles and those in favour of U.S.-Soviet detente.

Second, the West has grown somewhat bored with Soviet dissidents (or those from Soviet satellite countries). They are no longer newsworthy and many argue that the treatment they receive is now better than it was in Stalin's time. Yawns are barely stifled. Even Sakharov is no longer front-page news.

So why should a relatively obscure dissident like Danylo Shumuk be any different? He is after all one among thousands. And indeed, it must be said, his is not a great writer.

The character of Shumuk - and this comes through in his book - possesses a spiritual current which, while not unique, is unusual in the cynical 1980's. It shines through in his

## A life sentence

by David Marples

*Of one thing I am certain. My narrative will not gain any sympathy or favour from either the Communists, Nationalists, Poles, Germans, or Russians. However, I cannot justify telling it any differently. Let any faction stone me if they will, I cannot and will not align myself with any one of them, either politically or any other way. In my lifetime I have taken many wrong turns, and made many mistakes, but I always proceeded with the full power of my convictions, my conscience, and my intelligence, paying no heed to obstacles or impediments, corporal punishment or suffering. I stand accused by both Communists and Nationalists of revisionism and non-alignment, when in actual fact all that I have ever done is to aspire and dedicate myself to the seeking out of truth.*

- Danylo Shumuk

Imagine for a moment German-occupied Eastern Europe. A village is burned down in retaliation for the actions of Soviet partisans. A man, formerly a communist, but now disillusioned with Soviet-style communism, decides to throw in his lot with Ukrainian guerrillas, first against the Nazis, later against the Soviets. He finds certain facets of that guerrilla movement objectionable. It possesses a security service that metes out its own justice, for example. Before long, however, even this cause is well-nigh hopeless. The Red Army is on its march westward. The man wanders from village to village with his companions and is eventually captured by Soviet troops. He has killed no one, and unlike many of his contemporaries, he has retained his reason and faith in humanity despite the slaughter of the war years.

It is now 1984. That same man has been incarcerated within the Soviet labour-camp system, with two brief breaks, since 1945. He is now in exile in Mordovia, a thankless existence. He is dying. The Canadian government has twice offered him immigration status. His nephew in Vancouver has continued to protest his treatment at the hands of the Soviets. He is informed that his uncle is a "war criminal" and a collaborator with the Nazi occupation regime.

Fortunately for the man - and we will now introduce him as Danylo Shumuk - his memoirs have reached the West, and first English-language edition is soon to be published by the University of Alberta's Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the book is that it illustrates poignantly the dilemma of a man caught between two great totalitarian systems of government: Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The systems are larger than the individuals that comprise them. One mercifully was vanquished (largely by the other). But the Soviet system remains and seeks to silence those voices of protest that sing out in the vast darkness of the camp system. In truth, totalitarianism is winning. At least it operates today from a position of strength.

There are two (and possibly more) reasons for this state of affairs. First, the representatives of what we might call "dissidents" have not always helped their own cause. The most renowned among them, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, has with his *Gulag Archipelago* high-

writing. When beaten by the Soviet security police, Solzhenitsyn suggested that the only escape route was to play dead, to make it appear that all life had left one, to become a vacant void of a human. But Shumuk embodies passive resistance. He is beaten by the Nazis, sentenced to death by the Soviets (a sentence later commuted to life imprisonment) and yet emerges, head held high, indomitable, like a Huguenot before the Spanish Inquisition.

According to a former fellow prisoner now living in Munich, Edward Kusnetsov, Shumuk will give his friends "the shirt of his back," he is a Ukrainian though not a nationalist, a Christian without the dogma and ant-Soviet without the hate. In short, he is a "prisoner of conscience" and the Soviets know not what to do with him.

After an account of the war years, Shumuk describes camp life in the Norilsk area, his fleeting return to his daughter in Ukraine, and his second lengthy period of incarceration in 1957. He played a major role in the huge prisoners' strike that enveloped this region (concerning which, according to Solzhenitsyn, there is no information available).

But in the final analysis, Shumuk's story is about humanity and its ability to survive all onslaughts. Essentially this is a book about the survival of a man condemned to death from his youth (even the Poles arrested him as a communist in the 1920's). Shumuk believes that one should be judged by one's treatment of one's fellow man. He has no enemies, although there are many who abhor such views.

The man is no saint. But his life, now almost over, represents an oasis in the vast political wasteland in which humanity staggers, amidst weapons of destruction and presided over by a giant TV screen.

*Life Sentence: the Memoirs of a Ukrainian Political Prisoner* by Danylo Shumuk will be available in November (\$19.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper) from the University of Toronto Press.

