

NINETEEN FIFTY-FOUR

Taken from the journal of an ex-slave labourer in Soviet Russia,
by N. Vito

Translated from the Russian by
O. V. Pudymaitis

CHAPTER 7

"Do Not Ever Forget That"

On the 5th of August, 1952, the "Volunteers" including myself, left the Sverdlovsk camp of death. On the evening prior to our departure, I went to visit some of my friends who remained there. Neither flower nor cross adorned the grave of my 4800 countrymen. Young grass was already covering the earth. In a few weeks even we would not be able to find the place where our brothers had been buried. "How many such graves lay scattered across the steppes and tundras of the Stalin Empire?" thought I. "Will the world ever know of their death?"

Next morning we left Sverdlovsk. The train took us into the depths of the Ural Mountains. We stopped in a little town, Itzet, and disembarked. Then they led us into the woods, several kilometers from the town. "Well, this is where we are going to stay for a while," said our commanding officer when he reached a little clearing in the woods.

We received good tents and put them up. We spent that night almost in a cosy atmosphere. And thus began our new "free life." Apart from our commanding officer (who, we knew was a member of the MVD) there were no guards. Our work consisted of collecting mushrooms and berries which were delivered to the local co-operative store. In return, we received bread, fish and vegetables. After all that we had experienced, a better life did not seem possible and we tried not to think of the future.

About two weeks passed. One day I was ordered to carry some mushrooms to the co-op store. Just before I was leaving, the C.O. beckoned me and I went into his tent. There he gave me a huge parcel, all covered with wax seals.

"You will take this to the camp after we return," he said. "You will not tell about this parcel to anybody. This is a military secret." I left his tent in a very excited state. The camp to which I had to deliver the parcel had a very bad reputation. Halfway between the town and our tents stood a few barracks, hidden from sight by a high wooden fence. What was going on behind this fence nobody knew. The town people whispered something about it being a camp of punishment.

It can be easily imagined how I felt while approaching the spot. Heaven knows what that heavily sealed parcel contained? Have I incurred the displeasure of the C.O.? Perhaps I am leading myself back behind the barbed wire? These thoughts tortured me as I was nearing the barracks? It was dusk when I reached them.

The sentry took the parcel and scrutinized its wax seals. Then he opened the gate and let me in. The premises seemed empty. "Could it be that the prisoners are still at work?" I mused; "or perhaps they are having supper within the barracks. I approached the building to which the sentry had pointed. A sign hung above the door; it read "The C.O." I opened the door and went in. In front of me I saw a long corridor and a man in the MVD uniform was walking along it in my direction. With a professional glance he surveyed my strange uniform, took the parcel and told me to wait at the door. My anxiety became unbearable. I was shivering as if in a delirium. "Well, now he has read the letter within the parcel," I thought. "Now he'll return to arrest me." I was about ready to start running out of the building without knowing why or where. But at that moment I saw the MVD man facing me.

"Here is the receipt," he said in a dry voice, giving me a slip of paper. "And here is the pass to let you out of the camp."
I did not walk. It seemed to me I was flying on wings. And thus, turning a corner I encountered... A GROUP OF SMALL CHILDREN, sitting on the ground! At first I could not believe my own eyes. Children in a punishment camp! But what shocked me more than anything else was the condition of these children. Never before in my whole life did I see such thin, ashen faces, such thin arms and legs, such huge protruding eyes. And I had such so much in life. "Perhaps those were shadows," thought I.

The first to break the silence was the oldest child in the group—a boy about 10 years old.

"Uncle," he asked in an even somewhat hoarse voice, "uncle, are you too a soldier?"

"Yes," said I. "And who would you be?"

"I—Alex."

"And what are you doing here, Alex?"

"Nothing. I just live here."

"With whom?"

"With nobody... well, with them"—he corrected himself, pointing at his friends.

"How long have you been here?"

"Very long," almost with pride he added—"almost a year."

"And how did you get here?"

"The soldiers brought me here. They took me away from daddy and mummy and brought me here."

Everything became clear to me in a split second. So that is where they were—the children taken away from the "enemies of the people," the children for whose fate their parents worried themselves to death in concentration camps and prisons! Never did I think that such an encounter would take place. And where? In one of the worst concentration camps in the depths of the Ural Mountains.

"Are you a Russian?" I asked the child.

"Yes."

"Where from?"

"Moscow."

"Are there any Latvians among you?"

"Latvians? I do not know."

At that moment a boy about 8 years old, just as thin and weary as the rest got up from the ground and asked me in Latvian: "Uncle, are you a Latvian?"

"Yes." The child threw itself into my arms, as if I had been its father and with tears streaming down his cheeks hastily began to beg me: "Please, please, tell my daddy that I am waiting for him here. Let him come here and take me away. I have been waiting for him so long."

"Where is your daddy?"

"In Riga."

"And why are you here, all by yourself?"

"I don't know. At first we travelled together. Mummy, daddy, I and Birutis..."

"Birutis—my sister. Afterwards they took me from the car and brought me here. I think that father and mother are already at home. What do you think, uncle, are they back in Riga?"

"Of course they have returned," answered I swallowing tears. "And what is your name?"

"Berznish. Elmars Berznish."

"Are there any more Latvians in here?"

"Oh, yes. Many more."

Indeed, another boy came up to me and began to tell me rapidly in Latvian all about himself. I could figure from his tale that the poor little wretches were transported under similar circumstances as we had been. With great eyes widely opened by horror, the little boy told me how his comrades had died in the cattlecars from cold, hunger, thirst, and exhaustion. All this was so terrible that I broke out in tears.

"Uncle, why are you crying?" asked the oldest boy. "I think you are in about as bad a condition as we are."

My nerves were so badly shaken that I was unable to answer them. All I could do was to take them in turn, on my knees and kiss their hungry, dirty, tear-covered faces. But it was time to leave. I might be seen and then both and I the children would have been punished. Noticing that I prepared to leave, Elmars Berznish again grabbed me and began to beg: "Uncle, dear uncle, don't forget to tell my daddy that I am here. Please do not forget."

I promised, and running, departed from the children.

For two days afterwards I lay in my tent, unable to close my eyes. What torture I endured, what curses I sent up to heaven, only God knows.

"Do not forget that—whispered I, clenching my fists. No matter what will happen to you, never forget that!"

Translator's Note
The author of this journal was finally brought to the battle-line where he was lucky enough to surrender to the Germans.

His memoirs have been published by Mr. N. Vito in the current issue of the *New Review*, a Russian language Quarterly published in New York, under the title of *The Account of a Latvian Peasant Who Fleed from the U.S.S.R.*, the abbreviated version of which was published in the *Gazette*. O. P.

Inter-Facts

Due to the Badminton Tournament held last Saturday afternoon in the Gym, only four games were played in the Inter-Fac Basketball League last week. In the most important win Commerce squeezed out a 32-30 victory over Law B to maintain their second place standing in the league race. Playing with only five men, the Commerce squad held off a scrappy Law B team to come off with the victory. Young and Ross with 10 and 9 points respectively paced the moneymen while Dolizny hooped 17 for Law B.

Arts and Science remained in contention for second place by downing Dents 43-36 in an important win. MacCurdy with 22 and MacKeen with 14 were the sharpshooters for A & S. Connors accounted for 18 of the Dents points and Stewart added another 10.

Pinehill defeated Pharmacy 48-19 to hand the Pharmacy squad its 7th straight loss. Edgecombe with 20 and Saxon with 12 headed the scoring parade for Pinehill. Engineers also suffered their 7th straight loss during the week, losing 39-17 to Med A. Sometime this year Pharmacy and Engineers are going to meet in a game, and one team will be forced to break its losing streak, unless, of course, the game ends in a tie.

Varsity Cagers Swamped By "X" 77-51

In the second game of their home and home series the St. F.X. cagers dropped the hard-fighting Dal Tigers 77-51 on their home court, after eking out a close 61-57 win at Dal. St. F.X. was paced by Frank Korb, who in scoring 35 points broke a scoring record previously held by a team mate Al Grassi. Playing on a narrow court the Dal quintet could not get started as there was a tendency for the team to get "bottled-up," resulting in many scrambles for the ball and many fouls.

With the uncanny and accurate set-shooting of Korb netting him 10 points, X more than doubled Dal's score at the end of the first frame. Dal was led by rangey Carl Webb who managed to score 5 points against the stellar defensive tastic "Packy" MacFarland, with 5 points and Shea and Richards with 4 each also paced X while Al Sullivan for the Tigers had 3 points. The quarter ended 25-12 in X's favor.

The second frame began with Dal trying hard to close the gap in the scoring margin only to find themselves on the shortend of a 37-24 half-time score. The "boy who couldn't miss" Frank Korb again led X swishing 3 baskets for 6 points. The Tigers were paced by shifty Paul Goldman with 6 points closely followed by Carl Webb who had 2 baskets. Play this quarter was fast and evenly matched throughout.

In the third frame St. F.X. pressed their all court attack to open up a sizeable lead. Korb and Grassi spear-headed the onslaught with 10 and 6 points respectively. "Gupper" Goss and "Butch" Sutherland kept Dal in the game with 5 and 3 points each. Sporting a 26 point bulge X led at the end of three quarters of play 61-35.

The final frame was closely-contested as each team scored 16 points. Frank Korb, unbeatable all night, managed to keep up his scoring pace sinking 8 points followed by "Packy" MacFarland with 6 points. Pacing Dal was Ron Franklin with 5 points and JV's Davey MacKinnon and Pete MacGregor with 4 and 3 points respectively. The game ended 77-51 for X, leaving them tied for first place with Acadia in the MIAU League with the record 3 wins and 1 loss.

ST. F.X.—Korb 35, MacFarland 13, Shea 10, Grassi 8, Richards 6, Thompson 2, Conely 2, Sullivan 2, Pezzarollo, Connolly.

DAL—Webb 11, Sutherland 9, Franklin 6, Goldman 6, Goss 5, MacKinnon 4, MacGregor 3, Sullivan 3, Gladwin 2, MacLaughlin 2.

King's Cagers Eliminate Varsity

The University of King's College eliminated Dalhousie Varsity cagers last Tuesday evening, as the Kingsmen lapped Dal 64-39. The game was the third contest of the semi-final Halifax Intermediate League playdowns, and previous to Monday's encounter, the two teams were deadlocked with a single win apiece in semi-final play. By virtue of their Monday night victory, the Kings team will enter the finals with the Studley Grads, undefeated in Halifax League play.

J. V. Basketeers Win Intermediate League

Dalhousie's Junior Varsity basketball squad copped the Halifax Intermediate "B" Basketball League Tuesday night with 53-50 victory over the hoop squad from Nova Scotia Technical College. Both teams ended regular league play with seven wins and one loss and the sudden-death game decided top spot for playoff purposes.

The black-and-gold j.v.'s are now engaged in semi-final playoffs against fourth place YMCA while Tech and RCAF are also engaged in playoff series. The teams will meet at the "Y" tomorrow night.

The game was certainly a farce as far as basketball goes. Both teams were off their usual standard, although the score does not indicate this. Dal did not play the brand of ball expected of them and Kings were not at their best either. Poor passing and poor shooting were the Tigers pit falls and Kings were sharp enough to take advantage of Dal errors. Ian Doig and Dixie Walker were the big guns for Kings, playing heads up ball all the way. Walker had a field day intercepting Dal passes and Doig was flying high all evening.

Kings opened fast and racked up a 10-6 lead at the end of the initial quarter. Within the opening two minutes of the next quarter, the Kingsmen spurred to a ten point rally and Dal were in the ropes. Doig with driving lay-ups and the Master, Dixie Walker had the confused Dal guards wrapt up in chains. With three minutes to go, Kings led 26-8. The Tigers roared for the first time and sank eight quick points, but Kings had taken the half 32-16.

In the third quarter, the teams traded basket for basket, with Dal missing many more chances. Kings showed signs of getting off the ball in the third frame, but nevertheless, the King's crew led 42-24 at the end of the quarter.

In the last quarter, fouls were called frequently, Lister being banished for an intentional foul and technicals being called on the Kings team. The play continued to be ragged with the final score being 64-39 in favor of the King's boys.

DAL — Rankin 12, Goss 11, Sutherland 8, Gladwin 5, Webb 2, Franklin 1, Sullivan, Goldman —39.

KINGS— Walker 20, Doig 20, Deacon 9, Nicholson 7, Andrews 4, Smith 3, Hickman 1, Lister.

"Hillel Night" To Observe Inter-Faith Services Feb. 26

"Hillel Night" will be observed tonight, Friday, at special Interfaith Services to be held in the Baron de Hirsch Synagogue beginning at 9:15 p.m. The program is open to the student body and all religious groups have been invited to attend along with faculty and community representatives.

Dal W.U.S.C. To Hold Rummage Sale Next Saturday

Relief work in India will benefit March 6th from the proceeds of a rummage sale being held under the auspices of the Dalhousie World University Service of Canada. The sale will begin at 2:30 p.m. at the St. John's United Church on Windsor Street.

Donations for sale are needed and larger items will be picked up on request by phoning Miss Sally Roper, 3-5536. Smaller items may be left with "Butsy" in the Dal gym.

Sermon for the evening will be "Faith Through Reason" to be followed by a panel discussion in the hall rooms on the sermon topic. Representing Hillel in the discussion will be Carole Liptus, Louis Greenspan and Ed Cohen.

It is hoped to present an exhibition of Israelite dances also by the Halifax Judaeum club.

On Saturday night all students of high school and college age are invited to a square dance in the synagogue hall with admission and refreshments free.

Letter To The Editor

The Editor,
Dalhousie Gazette.

Dear Sir,
The recent Art Show by students and faculty of the university has been a great success, and has been visited by many students and by many others outside the university. It is therefore very distressing that one of Prof. Trost's wood sculptures should have been lost during the exhibition. We have, of course, no means of knowing in what manner it found its way out of the Art Room.

This letter is written in order (1) merely to report the occurrence to the student body; and (2) to aid in the recovery of the statuette, if possible. Should this letter by any chance reach the eyes of anyone into whose possession the statuette may have come, or anyone who has knowledge of its whereabouts, I would be most grateful to hear from them.

(Signed) Alex S. Mowat,
Chairman
Dalhousie Art Committee.

THE KING'S COLUMN

How to write like a University Student

Did you ever think of writing for university publications? Don't think twice about it. Go right ahead. If you don't think you're good enough, look at what all ready gets into the *Gazette*. However if it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well.

There are a few simple rules: never use one word where two or three will do. When everybody's non-sesquipedalian, then no one's anybody. Don't say, "It's obvious." Say, "It's readily apparent." In fact, don't be obvious or lucid.

The more involved, the better a thinker you are. The obfuscations of your profound prose can be made philosophically invincible by injudicious use of the nearest dictionary.

Please do not attempt to just set down words—you must do it either off-key or off-color. Of course there will either be a smashing success or an equally spectacular failure, but don't worry about it. They laughed at Edison.

Finally, if at all possible, contradict a moral law or a long-established belief, such as the desirability of virgin marriage or the law of gravity. This at once impresses the reader with your keen insight and clear conviction.

NEWS

Last weekend King's College played host to Maritime Universities in inter-university badminton. Among the participants were UNB, Mt. Allison, Nova Scotia Tech, Acadia, Dal and Kings. The games were played at the Dal gym. Dalhousie carried away the tournament honors with the help of a strong female team.

In last week's model United Nations, sponsored by the Halifax YMCA, Bill Caines, Alex Farrell, Dave Millar and Dave Walker represented the United Nations was held for the first time in the new YMAC auditorium, in this its third year of existence.

The King's basketball team lost its last game to Dalhousie 50-44, although two previous games were victorious. This week they played the Dalhousie squad in the clinching game of the semifinals.

The Dalhousie-King's Sociology Club met in the Arts building Wednesday afternoon, Feb.

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Campus Rambler

Old Man Grippe held sway in this quarter for a couple of weeks, and as a result there wasn't much rambling done around the campus. We managed to get out and vote in the referendum though, and that's a lot more than most of the people did around here.

It rather looks like rough sailing for the Council next year. The poor Meds took an awful beating from the Gazette when they voted NO, but then they were expected to vote NO, from the start. The group that really disappointed us the most was the Engineers. Of all the faculties to vote in the negative, we reasoned this to be the most unlikely to do so. Perhaps they would have appreciated more fully the position of the Council if no one had bought a ticket to the Engineers' Ball!

If you notice a few people being extra pleasant or patronizing within the next week or so—don't be

too surprised, just remember it's election week. Slogans are rage now, perhaps the candidates could use some, like—"Don't be blind—Vote Rind." "Bust Everything for President" or "Stringer Knows her Vice—Say the Ice Mice." "Don't be mental—Vote Continental."

Closing on a more serious note—Why not give these elections a little serious thought? These candidates are the people who will be running your affairs for the coming year. Get out and vote for the person who will be the more Efficient and Unpretentious.

A. M. O.

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