

of the

**Joint Committee for the Defense of Revolutionists Imprisoned
in Russia**

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THE ABOLITION OF THE SOLOVETSKY CAMPS

Last June the Bolshevik Government decided to terminate the imprisonment in the Solovetsky of "members of anti-Soviet parties convicted of political crimes", and to transfer them to Tcheka prisons on the mainland. This important information was published by the Soviet press at the time in the most obscure corner, in very small type, in the same modest manner as the official papers had previously recorded the shooting to death of Socialists and Anarchists in the Solovetsky. Evidently the Government did not care by a display of the news to draw attention to the fact that growing protests of the libertarian elements throughout the world against the Solovetsky outrages had compelled it to take action. The "anti-Soviet parties", however, can not be duped by this alleged "reform". We know that the Solovetsky prisons still remain, and that the inhuman torture of "common" criminals continues there as before. As concerns the politicals, they have been transferred from the Solovki to the worst penitentiaries of the Ural, Siberia, and Turkestan.

The fake reform should not mislead the friends of the political prisoners into the belief that the fate of the latter has been improved. As a matter of fact, only a very small number of the Solovetsky revolutionists have been liberated, and that conditionally only. Most of the others have been transferred to various prisons, while some have been exiled to such isolated and unhealthy parts of Northern Russia and Siberia that their lot is equivalent to slow physical and mental destruction. Numerous letters received by us from the prisoners and exiles amply testify to that.

NEW WHOLESALE ARRESTS

The information reaches us of numerous arrests of Anarchists that have recently taken place in Petrograd and Moscow, mostly of the labor youth, of workers and sailors. Over 80 of them are already exiled to Siberia, among them the worker Esperantist Haidovsky and his wife Alexeieva, at whose home the Tcheka confiscated some manuscripts, translations, and a typewriter. The prisoners have been sent away for 3 years.

For a similar term has also been exiled the Student Golubiov, charged with membership in a group whose sole purpose was self-educational. The Student Bayanov, an Anarchist sympathiser though never an active worker in the movement, received 4 years' exile. The Anarchists Motchenovsky and Ney, for several years already in prison, are now being subjected to a regime of increased severity.

After 2 years exile in Ust-Sysolsk the Anarchist woman Donskaia has been condemned to "minus 30" — which involves exile with the prohibition to live in 30 of the largest cities of the country. A sister of Donskaia, though entirely non-

On June 17, all the politicals in the Solovetsky Camp were transferred to the mainland. A number of them were immediately taken to Tobolsk, in Western Siberia, where a special prison had been prepared for them. The politicals there number 85 persons, among whom are 6 well-known Left Socialist-Revolutionists: M. Samokhvalov, J. M. Yerushimovitch, S. Panov, A. Popov, Filatov, and Ivanov. This Tobolsk prison is an old Tsarist penitentiary; the present regime is one of the most severe in Russia, and the politicals are kept in locked cells.

The transfer from the Solovki was accompanied by a number of unfortunate episodes, due to the arbitrariness and inhumanity of the administration. The most tragic case was that of Martsinevitch, a young woman of the Left S. R. Party. Seriously ill in the Solovetsky, she had asked to be sent to Moscow for treatment. Her requests ignored, she resorted to two protracted hunger strikes, which together lasted 31 days. But her heroic protests were of no avail. The endless wanderings from prison to prison, during the transfer from the Solovetsky, proved too much for the woman's shattered health. She died on the way, in the City of Kem; just 8 months before the expiration of her sentence.

Similar was the fate of her friend Michael Lichtenbaum, whose condition necessitated a major operation, which was impossible in the Solovki. His demands to be removed to a larger city, where the operation could be performed, were persistently refused, with fatal results.

partisan, was arrested in March and exiled to the Ural district. The Odessa Anarchist Kliumshyev has without known reason been condemned to 5 years' concentration camp.

Just before going to press the information reaches us from Moscow that the well-known Esperantist comrade, A. Levandowsky, one of the contributors to the Esperantist organ "Sennaciulo", has been arrested. Cause unknown.

IN THE BUTIRKY PRISON

Some of the Anarchists arrested in Moscow and Lenin-grad have been imprisoned in the Butirky Prison, Moscow, known for the brutality of its administration. According to recent advices, 10 % of the prisoners had declared a hunger strike for the purpose of compelling more human treatment. The strikers were subjected to exceptional cruelty: they were permitted neither visits nor exercise, were given no bath, and were not even allowed to use the toilets except at certain hours. The least protest is punished with the dungeon, where the prisoners are frequently beaten.

In this prison the cells are supplied only with a straw mattress and the inmates are often compelled to sleep on the dirty and damp floor. Yet the Butirky are claimed by the Government to be a "model jail". The prisons in the provinces are even more barbarous.

In connection with the above arrests we have received the following letter from the Yaroslavl "Political Isolator" Prison:

"You are informed already about the numerous arrests of our comrades in Leningrad. During the house searches the Tchekists confiscated the correspondence of our comrades with the friends deported abroad, as well as addresses of Berlin and Paris comrades.

"15 of the prisoners were sent to distant points in the Far North. Others to Siberia, Turkestan, etc. Among those to be exiled there were a number of comrades on hunger strike that lasted already 6 days. The strikers were *forcibly* taken into freight autos. Usually those to be exiled are transported on Wednesdays between 6—8 in the evening. But the comrades in question were unexpectedly taken on Tuesday, at 3 o'clock at night, some of them *being dragged almost naked from their beds*.

"When the exiles reached Kemi (not far from the Solovetsky Islands) the inhuman treatment compelled them to *declare a second hunger strike*. They were treated as common prisoners, suffered physical violence, and were kept in prison barracks. 8 of those comrades were finally brought to Yaroslavl and placed in the prison known as the 'political isolator'. Among them are: Matvey Simushin, Maria Poliakova, Mikhail Losovsky, Ivan Setchov, Anatoliy Denissov, Nikolai Denissov, Nikolai Bogdanov, and Fiodorov.

"The truth of the above is hereby attested to by

Maria Poliakova. M. Simushin. M. Badin.
Polit-Isolator, Yaroslavl."

THE FATE OF IRINA KAKHOVSKAIA

The famous Socialist-Revolutionist Irina Kakhovskaia has again been arrested in Moscow and exiled to Samarkand (Turkestan). It has now become known that she is not only consumptive but that she is also suffering from a possibly fatal complication of diseases. Various Syndicalist and Unionist labor organisations of Germany have telegraphically appealed to the Russian Embassy in Berlin in behalf of Kakhovskaia, requesting permission for her to leave Russia that she may receive adequate medical treatment abroad. But no reply has been received from the Bolshevik authorities, though almost 3 months have passed since the appeal was made.

Irina Kakhovskaia, as some of our readers know, is the granddaughter of Kakhovsky, the "Dekabrist" rebel against Tsar Nicholas I., executed in 1826 after the failure of the "December conspiracy". As a young woman she had been condemned (in 1907) to 15 years' penal servitude for her revolutionary activities. Freed by the Revolution of 1917, she entered the ranks of the Socialist-Revolutionist Party. In 1918 she took part in the attempt upon the life of the German Field Marshal Eichhorn, in Kiev, and was condemned to death by the German court-martial. Freed by the outbreak of the Revolution in Germany, she prepared an attempt upon the life of General Denikin. After the suppression of the Kronstadt uprising, in March, 1921, Irina Kakhovskaia was arrested by the Bolsheviks.

ARRESTS OF LEFT S.R.'s and MAXIMALISTS

On the charge of participation in illegal political activity 16 Left S.R.'s and Maximalists were recently arrested in Moscow, among them Arkadiy Petrov, Boris Belostozki,

Dravert, Goldberg, and others who have now been exiled for 3 years to various points of Russia.

Later advices inform us that two of the prisoners — the bakers Niushonkov and Matchukin — have been condemned to the Yaroslavl prison for 10 years. Persistent rumors are to the effect that the Maximalist Danilin has been foully murdered by the Tcheka.

The report is also circulating (though not verified yet) that the well-known Communist Miasnikov, the leader of the 'Labor Group' within the Party, has been done to death in prison because he steadfastly refused to recant and to withdraw his charges against Zinoviev, Krestinsky, and other chiefs of the Communist Party.

THE TREATMENT OF A REVOLUTIONARY

We have already reported the exile of E. B. Rubintchik-Meer, the manager of the anarcho-syndicalist publishing house "Golos Truda", which issued the works of Kropotkin, Bakunin, Malatesta, and other Anarchist authors. Sent to Tomsk, Siberia, Comrade Rubintchik was systematically deprived of opportunity to accept any position in order to earn a living. Rubintchik sent a protest to the All-Russian G.P.U. (formerly the Vecheka) which we published at the time in the BULLETIN. The press service of the I.W.M.A. (International Working Men's Association), as well as almost all labor and revolutionary papers of Europe republished Rubintchik's protest. Instead of giving ear to the demand of international labor and repealing the brutal sentence passed upon Rubintchik, the Bolshevik authorities caused his re-arrest and transferred him to one of the most desolate spots in Eastern Siberia. From a reliable friend we have received the following description of the place:

"The district to which Rubintchik-Meer has been deported is entirely cut off from the rest of the world. There is not even a post office there. From early spring till late autumn the natives have no other food supply except fish. Neither bread, flour, or potatoes are to be procured, not even for gold, not to speak of milk, butter or other fats. The sentence of Rubintchik is equivalent to death".

PERSECUTION OF ZIONISTS

The Foreign Delegation of the Zionist-Socialist Party of Russia informs us that during the period of March 1924, till May 1925, 3,617 persons were arrested by the Tcheka charged with membership in the Party. Out of that number 160 are still in prison, awaiting sentence; 157 have already been sent into exile; several hundred have been deported abroad.

The condition of those in exile is most tragic. 17 persons are at a place called Tiubi, which is 2300 kilometers distant from any railroad (about 1,300 miles). It took the prisoners 6 months to reach the place *on foot*. One of them succeeded in escaping en route, in revenge for which the Tcheka imprisoned his wife who had never participated in any political activities.

SOME DATA

The general situation in Russia and the secrecy surrounding Tcheka activities make it impossible to ascertain the exact number of political prisoners and exiles. Undoubtedly, however, their number is very large. According to the information of the Russian social-democrats there were, at the beginning of the month of June of the current year, 89,000 persons in exile. Of this number 3—5 thousand were charged with "speculation", all the rest being socialists, anarchists, and non-party persons persecuted for political reasons. In the Province of Archangel alone there are at present 11,000 exiles, among them 2,000 youths.

LIFE IN EXILE

Notwithstanding Bolshevik claims to the contrary and the misinformation of publications like the New York "Nation", it is the rule of the Communist authorities to follow imprisonment by exile.

That is to say, the political is *not freed* at the expiration of his prison sentence, but is ordered into exile to various points of European Russia, Siberia, or Turkestan. This *administrative process* (without trial) is in practice in Bolshevik Russia as it was in the days of the Tsars.

Arrived at their point of destination, the exiles immediately face a most serious situation. The Government allows 6.25 roubles per person, which is less than \$ 3.25 per month. The amount is by far too insufficient to support life; at the same time the politicals, in most cases, are not permitted to earn a livelihood by accepting some position. Generally it is out of the question, anyhow, owing to local conditions. The exiles are practically left without means of support, depending chiefly on the contributions of friends and comrades. But their correspondence is always subject to the Tcheka censor: it is dangerous for their relatives or friends within Russia to communicate with them; while the exiles are punished for corresponding with revolutionists abroad. They are constantly under watchful eyes and are compelled to report to the local police at stated times.

These are the conditions under which the political exiles in Russia are trying to keep body and soul together. In certain cases their situation is worse even than imprisonment. The letters we receive from them — sub rosa, of course — picture a life of physical misery and mental torture. The petty persecution and spite of the local officials frequently make existence so unendurable as to drive the victims to desperation. We quote from a recent letter of a well-known revolutionist: "The Tchekists here make it a practice to torture us by insult and degradation. Woe to those that fall into their hands . . . Reason? They need no reason. They are constantly harassing and tormenting us; night searches, fault-finding, and downright brutality. A favorite method is the frequent changing of the exile from place to place. Recently one of our comrades was sent to a small village in the Kirghiz Republic where he found himself an entire stranger. Gradually he succeeded in acclimatizing himself and gaining friends; but no sooner did that happen than he was ordered into the Aulato-Kara Province, on the ground that he had exchanged letters with other exiles. Similarly was also treated our woman comrade — in Turkestan; where she arrived last fall. She had much to suffer before she got settled, in some measure, in the new environment; and then she was suddenly ordered to another locality, without any reason being given. Such cases are numerous. You understand what such a life means. . . ."

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Comrades: We have decided to cut down our correspondence: all letters are opened and we do not want to get people in trouble There is much unemployment in our circle and some of our friends have fallen sick again, and very seriously. (Meaning renewed arrests. Transl.) The news I can write you is rather sad. Lela Pissarevskaja has been transferred from Kokand to Skobelev, in spite of protests. She had served as a nurse there, but now — who knows? . . . New arrivals in Turkestan are Iosif Bromberg and Rhaya Shulman, students from Petrograd. Both are penniless and sick. Need medical treatment which is not to be had here.

In Kirghizia there have arrived: Alexander Petrovsky, a student from the capital; Constantin Govar and his wife and Semyon Pastukhov, from Orenburg. Anton Balunkevich and Meyer Raitsky, from White Russia, and Alexander Bogdanov (a Left) have been sent to Tchikment. In the City of Turkestan now are Nikolas Gontcharov, a student of the

Petrograd politechnical institute, and Sergei Bisov, who had attended the pedagogic institute in the same city. In Orsk there are Ivan Tchepurnov and Aida, sent away in connection with the case of the All-Russian Anarchist Federation (the Karelin-Group). Schmidt and another comrade from Petrograd, don't know his name, are in Urda. Benjamin Rakov and Alexandra Kvartchevskaja, Petrograd students, and Alexander Drugal, a sailor, are exiled to Uralsk. In Urda are also Alexei Maslov with his wife Xenia, syndicalists. To some of them we have sent financial aid, since we could spare a little. In all we forwarded to them over 260 roubles, which includes part of the money we received from you. Up to March there were 12 Anarchists in Ust-Sysolsk, as you were informed at the time. Now the number has considerably increased by arrivals from Petrograd Some have been sent to Naryn. Lenya Lebedev is in Kolpashev, 65 versts from Parabel. Dmitry Alimov was arrested and sent to Briansk. The State Prosecutor, Tchernogorov, remarked on the occasion that our comrade will be prosecuted as a common criminal, in order "to discredit Anarchism in the eyes of the workers". We think that D. A. failed to receive the money you sent him. . . . The Petrograd comrades sent to Solovki have been changed to Yaroslavl. Some of the others are now in Upper-Uralsk, among them Maria Weger. Misha Axelrod, arrested in Kharkov, was taken to Akatui in company with a comrade from Poltava. Enough for this time. Will write again at the next opportunity.

Your L. (Turkestan).

Dear Friends, I hasten to inform you that Vanya Kabas is now in prison in Moscow, after having been dragged about from place to place Over two hundred share the same fate. Kharkhardin, Khudolei, Alexei Solonovitch and others of that group (Karelin Group, Moscow) are in the same position as Vanya now, probably because they occasionally gave aid to their "poor relatives". (Supplying the politicals with money and food. Transl.)

Twice we received from Chicago the papers "Noviy Mir" and "Russky Golos". Wonder who sent them. May be you. But I can tell you, whoever did, the very fact is pleasant and encouraging. People are thinking of us . . . Do not complain that I write so little. It is true, my illness (imprisonment. Transl.) has had a bad effect on me: I have lost my energy, am indifferent, even morose. I hope, my dear ones, you will understand and not condemn . . . Must add that some of our exiles in Turkestan are being transferred to Siberia. Terrible situation. This being constantly thrown about from place to place is unbearable. Our life is bitter. One often thinks of taking a quietus . . .

N. (Central Russia).

My dear ones: You may "congratulate" me on being ordered to the furthest North. I thought I needed a southern climate, but our friends the enemy decided otherwise. Well, I guess they know better. Arrived here Juli 28. Am ordered "not to go far", to report (to the local authorities) regularly, and so forth. Permission of the G.P.U. is required to accept work, and such permission is generally refused. How are we to exist? . . . Orders must be strictly obeyed, else something even worse is in store. I cannot tell you how sick I am of it all.

Many arrests here of late. Prisons are filled and not enough room for the new comers . . . Fortunately my own health is still so so. Morally I am also well. I am preparing to remain here a long time, but then there is no telling. Just now I am hunting for lodgings. Very hard to find a place. The cost of living is very high. We are particularly worried about the approaching cold weather. Neither I nor the others have any warm things. At present it is summer and the sun is bright, but you know how capricious this climate is. Well, sufficient unto the day

Your Z. (Archangelsk Province).

. We live here together, the 4 of us. A little commune, with treasury, table, and work in common. About our material condition we have already written you — hope letter reached. The 38,80 roubles you sent have just arrived and will come in most handy. Most fraternal thanks to you and the donors. As you know, if you received our previous mail, we are allowed by the Government 6 roubles 25 kopecks per month (less than \$ 3,25 Transl.) There is no chance of earning anything: first, because there are only two or three local institutions in our village, while several hundred persons are looking for work; secondly, *we* are not accepted on principle The lowest minimum one needs here to exist is 10—12 roubles a month per person, not counting any expenses for necessary clothing. Therefore, but for your help, — well, you know where we should be

S. — K. — (North of Siberia).

Dear Comrades, during the summer mail arrives here per boat every week. But the telegraph has been out of order 3 months and now it is entirely suspended. May be that is the reason we failed to get the money you sent lately. We still hope it may reach us. From E. we have not heard for some time, and A. also is silent. Perhaps something has happened to them From America we received just one post-card last winter, and 4 papers during the spring; nothing else.

During the past winter we worked here in a little tinkershop that we ourselves had opened. After 2 months "they" kicked us out, to speak plainly. In the spring we planted vegetables; we were rather successful, so that we hope to have enough for our own needs this winter The mosquito and fly pest here is fearful, and to it must be added the "other" pest, that bites no less. . . . But we are persevering and living in hopes of better days.

M. (Narym District.).

TO YOU WHO READ THESE LINES WE APPEAL.

CONTRIBUTE YOUR MITE TO AID THOSE THAT SUFFER FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR IDEALS.

THEIR VERY BEING IN PRISON AND EXILE IS AN ELOQUENT DEMONSTRATION THAT THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY IS NOT DEAD IN RUSSIA.

HELP THESE LIVING MARTYRS.

All funds and communications please address to

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DELEGATION ABROAD OF THE LEFT SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONIST PARTY AND THE UNION OF
MAXIMALISTS

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