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ATTACHMENT 0

INTERROGATION REGARDING CONDITIONS IN SOVIET PRISON AND SLAVE LABOR CAMPS

1. The interrogation took place on 20 December 1953.
2. Information about the interrogated person:

* Juris ALEKSEJEVS (Alekseyev), born 24 June 1920 in Leningrad; Latvian; prior to the war he lived in Riga, Biesu iela (Tornakalns); studied mechanics at the Latvian University.

**
interrogated
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[]*

His parents are still living in Riga, but his mother's sister** lives in Sigulda. He has indirect contacts with his relatives.

He attended school together with the sons of Colonel Skaistlauks and with Z. Meierovics' son, Gunars. He has corresponded with the latter and sent him a detailed description of his experiences.

***Anna
Miriam.
Her name
given to
as a out-
cut to
receive
operational
mail*

He spent 8 years and 4 months in prison, or prison camps. He arrived in Germany on 4 October 1953. Married; his wife and son live in Australia. He has already established contact with them. At present he lives with a German family at (24a) Hamburg-Bergedorf, Toepferhof 3/I, bei Rudolphi.

He has no plans yet for the future. He is looking for work, but for the time being his state of health will not permit him to work, as he has ruined his health (stomach catarrh and sciatica). His wife remarried in Australia, since she had no news whatsoever from her husband for 7 years and believed him to be dead.

During the war he first worked in some German government office, then in the Riga City Commandant's office, and after the capitulation of Riga, in Ventspils (Fortress Commandant Windau). Besides

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himself, there were three other Latvians at that office -- Elstins, Millers (from Jelgava) and Roze (from Riga). After the capitulation he was separated from the others and does not know what happened to them.

When he was taken prisoner, he called himself Georgs Aleksejevs [Georg Alekseyev], as that was the name of one of his fellow-students. He also gave his friend's date [and place] of birth, which he had remembered. Georgs Aleksejevs had been repatriated to Germany, was drafted into the German Army, and got killed during the war. Thus, he assumed the name and biographic data of another person and when the Russians later checked his biographic data according to the lists of repatriates, they had no doubts that Juris Aleksejevs (Alekseyev) was actually Georg A., so he was considered as a German. This permitted J. A. later to return to Germany under a "disguise."

The interrogator remembers J. A.'s father only by name, as the latter was for some time employed at Latvian Army headquarters.

During the entire period since his return to Germany, J. A. has not met any Latvians. He has only written to his parents (through his mother's sister in Sigulda), referring to them as relatives. He has also corresponded with a German in Freiburg, whose name and address he obtained from some relief package sent to the German prisoners; while a prisoner he claimed this man to be his uncle and this circumstance was helpful in obtaining his release.

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Juris Aleksejevs asks that all the above mentioned facts be considered confidential and that they should not be disclosed to anyone, since this would obviously harm his parents and relatives in Latvia, and also possibly those Latvians who are still in the Soviet Union at this time and who, assuming false identities, have claimed to be Latvians or Germans.

It is requested that all those who read this information respect its confidential nature.

3. Conditions in Kurzeme after the Capitulation and A.'s Imprisonment

J. A. served as a messenger and motorcyclist during the entire period of the war. In Ventspils the units of "Festungs-kommandant Windau" lived in bunkers at the seashore (in the direction towards Liepaja). His last service unit was called "Einheit Rohr."

None of the soldiers knew anything about the capitulation. In the morning of 8 May, the day of capitulation, J. A. had gone to the city with a truck to get food supplies. Upon returning to his post shortly before noon, he found it deserted. All of the soldiers had dispersed. He went to the harbor in order to try to escape on some ship. The harbor was already on fire, also many motor vehicles and piles of paper soaked with gasoline were burning. He was unable to get on any ship. However, a rumor had spread around the harbor that the road to Germany was still open and that all the former German soldiers who could cross the Lithuanian

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border until 15 May would not be taken prisoners. Therefore, he and many thousand soldiers, both in small groups and individually, walked toward the Lithuanian border, without being organized in units. J. A. assumes that this rumor was spread by the Russians themselves, since at that time -- i.e. immediately after the capitulation -- prisoner detention points were established along the whole Lithuanian border. Many camps were organized, mostly in the open air. The whole border was closely guarded by Russian units and in this way all the dispersed German soldiers were caught without risk of resistance on their part. There would have been resistance if the movement toward the west had been organized and in units.

Many of the soldiers remained in the forests and became engaged in partisan activities. J. A. was detained by the Russians near the Lithuanian border and placed in a prison camp in Kretinga. There were two prison camps at that location, for a total of 25,000 prisoners. Most of them were from the German 121st Infantry Division, the 14th Tank Division, and members of various rear service units. There were no Latvians.

After one month these prisoners were moved to Liepaja, where they were located on Kalpaka iela, in the former quarters of Russian prisoner camps and in some of the Liepaja Sugar Factory buildings.

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In July, about 150 automobile mechanics including J. A. were selected from all the prisoners and taken to Grobina where a large number of German military vehicles had been assembled. These 150 men were given the job of repairing the vehicles in this motor vehicle park and making them fit for use. The prisoners had relatively much freedom. After repairing 75 motor vehicles, a motor column was formed and sent to Jelgava. Behind the Jelgava exhibition grounds, on the area of the Jelgava prison farms, was another large motor vehicle park with a collection of military vehicles. Here all the newly arrived automobile mechanics were placed at the disposal of the NKVD and they continued their automobile repair work at this place.

In Jelgava, J. A. remained until 16 August 1945, at which time he and seven German soldiers, with 8 trucks and 2 passenger cars, and with an escort of NKVD men, received the order to drive to some prisoner camp near Moscow. The trip ticket (Marschbefehl; in Russian "Putevoy list") indicated the route Jelgava-Sauli-Vilna-Minsk-Moscow.

(J. A. mentioned that even now every motor vehicle in Russia has to have a so-called "Putevoy list", as one cannot travel anywhere without it. The route must be described in detail.)

Since J. A.'s parents were living in Riga, he persuaded the column escort, a Russian lieutenant, to travel via Riga. He told this lieutenant that his aunt (not his mother) was living in Riga and that he would like to visit her. In order to interest the Russian in this trip he promised to give him a pair of high boots

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and riding-breeches which articles he actually had in the Riga apartment. The Russian lieutenant agreed, and they drove with only one passenger car, after amending the route on the trip ticket to read Jelgava-Riga-Sauli. In Riga he visited his mother for about 15 minutes; greeting her in Latvian, he said that she was just his aunt. He said good-bye to her, gave the boots and the breeches to the Russian, and they returned to Jelgava. His father was not at home at that time.

From Jelgava to Moscow they traveled 15 days. Along all the roads and in the cities they saw much destruction caused by the war; buildings destroyed by fire and bombing, ditches filled with demolished tanks and motor vehicles, etc.

J. A. did not conceal the fact that he knew Russian and this circumstance sometimes helped him out while he was a prisoner.

4. Conditions in Soviet Prison and Slave Labor Camps. Moscow

The Moscow prisoner camps were in the suburb of Lyublino-Dachnaya. Until 1 May 1948, J. A. worked here as a driver. After that it was forbidden to employ prisoners [of war] as drivers.

The remaining prisoners worked in the Mechanical Factory imeni Kaganovich No 44. This factory had many shops, including foundries, machine shops, forges, etc. The factory produced all kinds of metal parts for railroad cars. The shops were large; for example, the metal foundry employed 900 prisoners alone, the machine shop employed about 2,500 Russian workers, etc. The factory operated continuously, on a 24-hour basis, in three shifts.

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After 1 May 1948, J. A. worked in the "Novyy Mylovar" Moscow Soap Factory as a mechanic.

The prisoners were paid wages everywhere. However, the pay was very low -- only 75 rubles a month, while a loaf of bread at that time cost 80 rubles. The food they were given was inadequate. There was a lot of stealing going on everywhere.

J. A. himself, in an effort to get more food on the occasion of 18 November 1948 (Latvian National Holiday) took 10 pieces of soap in the soap factory, in order to sell them and buy some food. He was apprehended, arrested, put into prison, and sentenced for theft of socialist property.

Whenever a prisoner was sentenced, i.e. his guilt was proved, the investigator (sledovatel') received a bonus of 75 rubles, but the prosecutor received from 300 to 350 rubles per person.

Later on the wages paid at prison camps were relatively high. However, one had to pay 450 rubles for living in the camp (board, room, heating, etc.) out of the gross wages, plus another 15 or 20 percent, and each prisoner was not allowed to receive more than 200 rubles cash out of his pay. The remaining wage, if it was higher, was deducted for the benefit of the camp. Since one had to fulfill certain norms in one's work, some disabled individuals (sick persons or old men) did not even earn 465 rubles and they had to live at the expense of others. Persons fulfilling their norms were able to earn 24 to 27 rubles per day.

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At the same time the gross wages of Russian workers were 1,200 rubles per month. From that amount one-twelfth (one month's ^[per year] pay) was deducted for the state loan (zayem); single men had to pay 15-20 percent "bachelor tax" and 35-40 percent cultural and insurance tax (married persons only 25 percent).

These wage payments and deductions for workers and prisoners are still said to be in effect today, although there are supposed to have been price reductions and other changes to meet the people's needs since 1945.

J. A. remained in prison until February 1949. He was at the Taganskaya Prison No 1 in Moscow, (the oldest prison in Russia, dating back to the times of Catherine I; the walls were 1.5 meters thick). After that he was sentenced by a military tribunal. The court consisted of the chairman, Lt Col Zaytsev; an assessor -- militia lieutenant; a secretary -- MVD sergeant; and interpreters -- one major and one lieutenant-colonel (Russian-German). The sentence was 10 years of forced labor.

After the trial, the prisoner was sent to another prison, i.e. the relocation center, Krasnaya Presnya.

All the prisons were for prisoners awaiting trial as well as those who had been sentenced, i.e. Russians and other nationals, including prisoners of war. Only prisoners of war were sentenced by military tribunals. Civilians were tried by civil law courts.

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The cells were of various sizes. Foreigners were kept in solitary confinement, but the Russians were placed several in one cell. There were cells with 4 inmates, or even as many as 30 to 70 together in one cell.

The prisoners were allowed to take walks. The prison yards were divided into 5 to 10 meter wide areas surrounded by 2-3 meter high brick walls, patrolled by a guard with a machine pistol, so that the prisoners would not talk to each other. J. A. said that there had been some other Germans besides himself at the prison, as there were all kinds of inscriptions scribbled on the walls of the cell. Some of them were in German. Also, one day while he was out walking, he purposely started whistling a [German] song " ...Es geht alles vorueber..." , whereupon someone from another cell answered by whistling the same tune.

During the entire period of imprisonment, the food was very scanty: In the morning the prisoners were given 550 grams of rye bread and one lump of sugar; at noon, one half liter of watery soup and 200 grams of porridge; in the evening, one half liter of soup. Boiled hot water was given in the morning and evening.

The procedure of transferring prisoners from a prison to a slave labor camp was as follows:

- a) There were separate railroad cars for prisoners sentenced to 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years, respectively;
- b) the distance from the prison exit to the railroad cars was about 100 meters;

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- c) both sides of this road were fenced in by a high fence;
- d) there were guards on both sides of the road: after every 10 meters a guard with a cocked machine pistol, and between them a guard with a Nagant revolver and a dog by his side;
- e) the prisoners to be shipped out were placed five in a row at the prison exit, they had to hold hands and run to the railroad car without letting go of each other; then they had to squat down.
- f) the cars were large, four-axle, cattle cars; 75 prisoners were placed in each one;
- g) before boarding the train, the prisoners were checked by the train escorts and then they had to get on the train one by one, after being counted;
- h) each car had two small iron stoves and there were wooden planks for sleeping at each end; however, 10-15 men had to sleep on the floor, since everyone did not have enough room on the planks. On the opposite side of the car there was a 10-centimeter crack in the door which was nailed up with a board, leaving a 10-centimeter opening at the bottom; a pipe leading outside through this hole served as a lavatory. The diameter of the pipe was also 10 centimeters. The windows were barred.

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- i) Every car had a brake-platform, occupied by a guard.

There were machine guns on the roof of the first and the last car. On each side the train had searchlights which lighted up the sides of the train at night. Some railroad cars (even whole trains) were also lighted from below.

Despite the whole rigorous guard system, J. A. had heard that there had been some attempts at escape, when the prisoners broke out a plank in the floor and "rolled" one of the men out onto the railroad embankment. However, this did not happen in his transport;

- j) each car was given one 5-centimeter candle, so that one had to travel practically in the dark all the time;
- k) during a 24-hour period the prisoners' cars were checked twice. The prisoners in each car had to elect their own "elder", who would be responsible for order during the trip.

Checks of the prisoners' cars were made as follows: At first a crack in the door was opened wide enough for one person. Through this opening the guard would order all the prisoners to move over to the right end of the car, with their backs to the door (i.e. facing the wall). Then two guards, armed with Nagant revolvers enter the car. At the vacant end of the car they check the floor, hitting each board with a wooden hammer; they also examine all

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the clothing and check the ceiling and the walls. Then the guard orders the prisoners to turn around one by one and run over to the other end of the car, which has already been checked. There they have to stand once more with their face to the wall. If anyone cannot run fast enough to please the guards, he gets hit with the guard's hammer.

During the check, five guards armed with machine pistols stand at the door, two in front and three behind. Behind those are two more men armed with Nagant revolvers and accompanied by dogs.

The guards accompanying the whole train are in two cars -- one in front, next to the food supply car, and the other at the rear end of the train. All the guards are specially trained MVD men; (they have red shoulder straps, and a blue cap with a red cap band).

1) The food ration was 80 grams of bread per day and soup 3 times a day. The food was prepared by prisoners, but only those whose sentence was not more than 2 years, mostly women. Most of the prisoners who prepare the food for others serve their sentence while traveling on trains transporting prisoners to camps.

Prisoners of war were transported in a similar manner.

Before leaving the prison another special examination of the prisoners is made. All the prisoners inside the prison have to strip. All metal buttons and hooks are cut out of the clothing. Every seam of the clothing is examined. If there is any suspicion that someone might attempt to escape, he is told to tear a little

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strip of material off his underwear or foot cloth, wrap it in a piece of paper and write the number of his railroad car on it. These little scraps are given to the guards so that in the event of an attempted escape the dogs may "become familiar" with the scent of the escaped criminal and find it easier to track him down.

All the methods of imprisonment and tracking down are said to be so outstanding that even some American gangsters (who had somehow landed in Russia during the war to "seek their fortune") stated that it was impossible to "work" in this country.

The train from Moscow traveled 21 days and stopped at the northernmost Russian railroad station -- Karskiye Vorota (opposite Novaya Zemlya). From there the convicts had to walk a distance of 40 kilometers to the north, to the first camp where J. A. was interned.

Karskiye Vorota

J. A. worked here on a railroad construction project. The Russians are said to build a railroad line there from a point far up north, across the Urals, and through Yakutiya to Vladivostok. This line, when built, will be about 3,000 kilometers shorter than the present railroad line from Moscow to Vladivostok. J. A. worked in the 501st labor column (stroyka), but the 500th labor column was said to be in Yakutiya (also Germans). The blasting of tunnels in the Ural mountains was done by a Russian labor

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column. The new railroad line was to go from Karskiye Vorota along the sea coast, at a distance of about 30 kilometers [from the coast]. J. A. got as far as 30 kilometers west of the Urals. His labor column was building the railroad towards the east. All the work was done by prisoners only. Everything was done by hand (with hoes, shovels, and other tools), nothing was mechanized. The work superintendents (crew foremen) were also convicts, specialists, of course. All the guards and overseers were MVD men who had been sentenced for various misdemeanors, so-called "Strafversetzte" (transferred for disciplinary reasons).

The convicts lived in barrack camps. There were 600 men in their camp. One square kilometer included an average of 4 camps. The work continued uninterruptedly on a 24-hour basis, in three shifts.

The surrounding area was low, with morainic hills. The ground was frozen to a depth of 8-10 meters. In this region the winter continues for 10 months, with one month of spring and one month of autumn. There is no feeling of summer. The warmest weather was about 7 degrees centigrade in the sun. It is daylight for 6 months, and night for 6 months. J. A. worked there for 3 months, until April 1949.

There is said to be a great wealth of natural resources north of the Arctic Circle. Huge forests, coal seams about one half meter below the soil, and a large amount of petroleum deposits. All these resources are being exploited by slave labor.

There are numerous such labor camps within a 30-kilometer radius around Vorkuta. In 2 or 3 years Vorkuta is expected to be the richest petroleum and coal region of the Soviet Union. The city of Vorkuta itself is well built, it has modern buildings, etc.

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The capital of the Komi ASSR, Syktyvkar, is said to be the best built city [in the North]. The city now has a population of 700,000. Part of this population consists of voluntary workers. They are paid wages (north of the Arctic Circle) which are 2 or 3 times higher than in other regions; in addition, they receive a ^{vac}ation of 2-3 months a year in the south (according to their own choice). Deportees and former convicts are also settled in Syktyvkar. The streets of the city are paved with asphalt, the houses have modern conveniences, radio, movies, etc. The city residents are employed mainly in the exploitation of natural resources in the surrounding area.

There is a large number of military personnel in this region -- air force, tank, and ski units (even entire ski troops). There are said to be modern barracks both in Vorkuta and in Syktyvkar.

Only one railroad line runs to the north as far as Karskiye Vorota. It was completed about 1937 or 1938. The terminal station (Karskiye Vorota) has not been properly built up. There is just an old railroad car, in which the entire service personnel of the station lives.

Parallel to the railroad line is an ordinary road, a so-called "trassa." It is built on a foundation of fir-tree branches, covered with dirt. It is good only for sled transport; sometimes it is possible to drive by automobile (truck) over some parts of this road (in the winter, when it is frozen). In the summer the entire road becomes an impassable mess.

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The trains on this line keep running day and night, carrying out coal and petroleum. The latter is taken to Leningrad refineries. There is no industry in this region, only large warehouses.

There is a large railroad workshop in Vorkuta.

Misyu [Mysyu?]

After 3 months of strenuous and unaccustomed labor, J. A. became ill and was sent to Misyu (south of the Arctic Circle), where he worked in a kolkhoz. The word Misyu in the Eskimo language means "cow's tail" (the name comes from a small river of the same name).

Misyu is located in a virgin forest [taiga]. The natural scenery is beautiful, it is no longer the tundra. The forests abound in natural resources; there are plenty of fish in the rivers, and bears, foxes, hares, and various birds (different varieties of grouse) in the forests. It is a real paradise for hunters and fisherman.

The only residents of the Misyu kolkhoz were convicts. They also lived in camps under guard. Each camp had a certain work zone assigned to it. The convicts [here] had a little more freedom, although it was hard to avoid working, since everyone who walked away beyond the assigned work area could be shot immediately by the guards. The possibilities of escape were also limited. The only direction was towards the north, since by walking toward the south, one ran the risk of perishing in the swamp. However, in the north there was no chance of getting anywhere. The kolkhozes in the vicinity of Misyu were

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engaged mainly in forest exploitation [lumbering]. There were many sawmills, repair shops for tractors, etc. Convicts of various nationalities lived together in the kolkhoz: Germans, Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, and others. Here J. A. met a certain Pole who told him that Admiral Spade was said to have been in some kolkhoz between Vorkuta and Izhma. There were no Latvians or other Baltic nationals in this kolkhoz.

There were numerous such kolkhozes for forest exploitation. An indication of this were the camp numbers; for instance, the designation of his work place was 248/4/12. These numbers signify: 248--camp number, 4--detachment number, and 12--sub-detachment (crew) number (The Russian designation of his camp was Uskhimlag Sevzheldolag, Vyslanny rabochiy poselok No. etc). J. A.'s sub-detachment (in Russian: podkomanidirovka [?]) included 120 Germans. They worked in the northern section of Misyu, 70 kilometers from Vislani [?].

Morale among the convicts was extremely low. People were stealing all over the place. One had to carry all one's belongings around. As soon as anything was left standing, even for a moment, it was stolen immediately.

Among the convicts was a so-called "blatnoy" class, i.e. professional criminals who had spent all their lives in places of detention. They had only one law: not to work. Their law would not even permit them

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to pick up a coin which had dropped on the ground, as that would be considered working. There was an accumulation of thieves, robbers, and all other types of criminals. Even the camp administration cooperated with these professionals. The other group of convicts was called "Suka" [bitch]; they were excluded from the professional "class", since they were doing something that was equal to work. They were despised and tormented by the professionals. Criminals of the same type were found in the women's camps. There were even cases when those who did not want to work voluntarily inflicted bodily injuries upon themselves so they would not have to do anything.

The prisoner camps are usually separate for men and women. However, the work norms are the same for everyone. In exceptional cases, there were mixed camps. In that case each convict had his own wife and there were numerous children. All of these were later taken away by the MVD.

The women were said to be sexually more unrestrained than the men. There was a women's camp in the vicinity of Misyu, in some cattle-raising kolkhoz. All the work was done by women, and all of them had a criminal background. Those who had served half of their sentence had the right to leave the camp in order to perform certain jobs (for example, deliver milk to other camps), without a guard or an escort. They were given a so-called "propusk" (pass). However, even these women did not have any contact with men. Once an elderly man (60-65 years old) was assigned to transporting milk from the women's kolkhoz to J. A.'s kolkhoz. It happened that on one of his trips

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he got inside the women's camp (he had to deliver bread; otherwise he would only get as far as the camp gate, i.e. the guards). There they made him drunk ("samogonka" [home-brew] was prepared in every camp) and after that 16 women "raped" him one after the other (with special techniques). After this incident, he asked his camp guards to release him from the duty of delivering milk, and this was done, since even the Chekists understood that he had been "abused." There were only few instances of men "going to see the girls" in the women's camps (secretly, of course, by crawling through a barbed-wire fence). However, the women were always trying to "meet the boys."

All the work in the forests was done by manual labor. There were no electric saws. The work was extremely hard.

The food was usually very bad and inadequate. The further away from the main camp the worse it got. At the camp of J. A. in Vislani an MVD major dropped in once and asked if there were any complaints. Some of them complained about insufficient food. Then the major made all the convicts stand in a long row and gave the man at one end a snowball, which was to be passed on from hand to hand all through the line. Naturally, by the time it reached the end of the line the snowball was completely melted. Then the major laughed and said it was the same thing with the food provisions: the further they had to go the less remained of them, and there was nothing he could do about it. So everything remained unchanged.

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The treatment of the convicts by the supervisors and guards was fairly good, i.e. they were not insulted, beaten, or tormented.

The Vislani camp was a regular hodgepodge of various nationalities. For example, at one time J. A. lived in a barrack with 135 other convicts. Among them were men of 32 different nationalities, including 2 American Negroes, British, Turks, etc.

J. A. remained at the Misyu kolkhoz until early 1950, when the order was received to transfer all foreigners (non-Russians) to other places.

Borovichi

Borovichi is located in Novgorodskaya Oblast, near Leningrad. This place is known by the fact that the oldest ceramics factory in Europe is located there. (That is what the Russians said). All the former German prisoners of war who had been in the Misyu area were sent here. One of the camps here was a mixed camp for men and women.

In Borovichi J. A. worked in a lignite mine, 54 meters below the surface. The lignite seam was from 32 to 45 centimeters thick. All of the coal was sent to Leningrad Chemical factories.

It may be added that wages were paid for the work at all slave labor camps according to output norms.

The norm at the lignite mine was 1.8 ton per day. The pay was 22 rubles per ton. One worker was able to mine as much as 5 to 7 tons per day. However, the procedure was the same as in other places, i.e. he did not receive more than 290 rubles a month.

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Those who produced more were paid a double rate for each ton above norm. The workers were all convicts or prisoners of war; the coal mines (as everything else in Russia) belonged to the state, but the MVD provided the labor force.

The work was very hard. One had to work for 8 hours lying on one's back, frequently in 20 centimeters of water. The coal was wet, therefore there was little dust; however, everyone was completely covered with dirt after getting through work. All the workers received rubber overalls and rubber boots; they wore old motocyclist helmets instead of miner's helmets, they had no protective eyeglasses or face covering. The coal mining was done with a pneumatic hammer; a 10-watt electric bulb was used for lighting purposes. There were 4 men in a work crew: 2 coal cutters, 1 coal loader, and 1 coal carter. In order to pay for camp expenses and retain 200 rubles for oneself, it was necessary to earn at least 800 rubles a day [sic! - probably should be "a month"]. This was not difficult for the coal cutters, but the carters received only 1.20 ruble per cart, and the loaders only 5 rubles per ton. Therefore the whole work crew divided up its pay equally, by altering the work records, for the work superintendents -- Russian MVD men -- never went below and could not check to see who was cutting, or loading, or carting.

The underground work was very tiring: 8 hours a day were spent working below the surface and the remaining 16 had to be spent resting and sleeping. This is where J. A. ^{contracted} sciatica.

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He remained in Borovichi until the fall of 1952, when all Germans were told to stop working and get ready to move to another camp. About a month passed in waiting for their departure and for the arrival of replacement workers, and the convicts did not work during this period.

During the transfer from one camp to another there were always the same "ceremonies" as at the time of leaving the prison: individual search of prisoners, requiring them to strip; various checks etc.

Pervoural'sk

In August 1952 all prisoners were transferred from Borovichi to Pervoural'sk, located 48 kilometers west of Sverdlovsk. There they had to work in the construction of Pervoural'sk factories and apartment buildings. Bricks and slag blocks were used as building materials.

According to plan, the dimensions of slag blocks were supposed to be 19 x 20 x 39 centimeters. However, the prescribed measurements were not always observed and their size was usually 21 x 21 x 40, or even 42, centimeters. So the construction workers were always having misunderstandings with the construction superintendents, since nothing ever went "according to plan or schedule."

This labor camp was the best one of his entire period of imprisonment. When J. A. arrived in Pervoural'sk, he moved into newly built wooden barracks, with slag insulation. A central heating system, bath houses and kitchens were installed by fall by the prisoners themselves. The barracks were divided into 12 to 14 rooms, each one 55 square meters in size, which were occupied by 10 persons each.

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In all the previous prisoner and slave labor camps each barrack consisted of only one room, frequently occupied by 200 or even 300 persons! The barracks were sometimes very cold; however, the last named quarters were warm, as the prisoners themselves could heat as much as they liked. In the winter they even had to keep a small window open for ventilation.

Pervoural'sk is said to be an old industrial town, which the Russians are now expanding. As far back as 1700 some Frenchmen built the first factory here.

At present there are two well-known steel pipe plants in Pervoural'sk-- Starotrubnyy Zavod and Novotrubnyy Zavod. Both of them produce steel pipes for various purposes (chemical industry and other industries). Pipes are being produced even with a diameter of 55 centimeters, by the so-called Mannesmann method. Some new plants have also been built in this city, for example a concrete plant. Other factories produce structural parts for prefabricated houses, various construction plates etc.

J. A. remained in Pervoural'sk until the time of his release, i.e. until the proclamation of amnesty.

Wages were paid on the same scale as in the other places, so that each worker received not more than 200 rubles per month.

Food Rations in the Camps

Those prisoners who had an output norm of 80 to 100 percent, received the following daily ration:

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650 Grams of bread

soup 3 times a day; it was thin, often without any fats.

13 grams of sugar

Porridge, once a day (120 grams).

Those who had output norms of 101 to 129 percent received the following supplement to the above rations:

100 grams of bread

100 grams of porridge

15 grams of sugar

24 grams of fish.

Those who reached an output norm of 130 to 150 percent were given a double supplement, i.e. 200 grams of bread, 200 grams of porridge, etc.

Some of the camps had three different kinds of food kettles. The first kettle was the smallest, i.e. for workers who had fulfilled up to 50 percent of their work norm: 400 grams of bread, and 2 servings of soup per day. The other kettles had a larger food ration.

Those who were physically unable to do any more work were placed in the so-called sanitary center (OP - ozdorovitel'nyy punkt), where the food rations were as follows: 850 grams of bread, 3 times a day soup, 10 grams of fats, 2 times a day porridge (100 grams each serving). Once a week the men were weighed.

During the period of his stay at the Misyu kolkhoz, J. A. also was placed in such a "recuperation" center. When he entered it, his weight was 52 kilograms; after one month it had increased to 54 kilograms, and within the next 3 months it rose from 54 to 72 kilograms.

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After that he began to work again. Naturally he did not receive any wages or other support during his "recuperation period."

Persons who were seriously ill were placed in hospitals. The doctors and hospital attendants were also convicts.

Are Revolts in Prison Camps Possible?

There have been some instances. J. A. was told that such a revolt took place in the 501st labor column (construction project), which worked on tunnel blasting in the Urals. In some unknown manner the members of this labor column had carried a certain amount of explosives into their camp. J. A. admits this possibility, although it would have been practically impossible to accomplish this, since the convicts working with explosives were under extremely strict supervision and were examined after returning from work (even making them strip). However, with a carefully prepared plan one could accomplish anything.

The members of the above mentioned labor column are said to have blown up the guard, then they armed themselves and destroyed the local garrison, and finally escaped into the forests. All the garrisons in the vicinity were alerted, the forests were surrounded and searched by planes, army and MVD units accompanied by dogs, and all the fugitives were caught after about 3 days. This is said to have happened during the winter, since such undertakings would be impossible in summer (perpetual daylight).

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Conditions in the Surrounding Region

The population is very sparse. Every village or kolkhoz, where convicts resided, had MVD guards and strong militia units. It was the duty of all village residents to report to these guard units in the event they saw a stranger. Such a stranger was immediately detained. For every detained person the Cheka [KGB ?] was said to pay a large bonus: meat, fats, sugar, alcohol, and money. Especially the alcohol and money were a great "inducement" and therefore the local residents willingly betrayed any strangers.

Civilians who left this area had to obtain special permits. It was easier to get there than to leave. There were frequent controls. On certain sections of the road, persons were checked from 10 to 20 times.

Train connections were few; for example, between Kotlas and Vorkuta there was only passenger train per day (3 railroad cars).

MVD units and others subordinated to the Cheka [KGB ?] lived in these areas with their families. The areas were administered solely by the MVD.

In some places Russian workers were also said to be working side by side with the slave laborers. Probably they received high wages for such work. For example, in the Stalinogorsk coal mine (on the Moscow-Kursk Line) one could earn as much as 7,000 rubles per month. In general, however, the Russian workers are said to be very lazy and superficial in their work.

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Novaya Zemlya

Only those prisoners sentenced to 25 years were sent to Novaya Zemlya. They were said to be employed in uranium mining. The prisoners with a 25-year sentence were divided into two groups: the so-called "Kandal'nyye" (in chains) and "Katorzhniki" (convicts). The first group had to spend the whole period of their sentence in chains. This penalty was given for "high treason." Former members of the Vlasov Army were said to have been sent there.

Postal Connections With Family Members, Mailing of Packages

While serving a sentence, it was permitted to write one letter a month to one's relatives. It was also allowed to receive one letter a month. All the mail was examined. The incoming letters were apparently checked by some machine, as every letter was perforated in four places.

Each prisoner was also allowed to receive one package a month from one sender. Such packages began to arrive only in 1950; however, if they had not been sent, most of the prisoners would have died of exhaustion and starvation.

From republics of the Soviet Union it was allowed to receive packages weighing 8 kilograms, but from Germany only 5-kilogram packages. The packages all had valuable contents. For example, from Latvia every package contained even 2 to 3 kilograms of good-quality butter. No butter was sent from other places. J. A. drew the conclusion that

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the food situation in Latvia must have been better; he also gathered that his parents and relatives must have been fairly well off, since the cost of these packages was high.

Most of the packages arrived in 1952 and 1953. During 1952, in the camps where J. A. stayed, each prisoner received an average of 24 packages, but during the first half of 1953 even 34 packages. The senders were relatives; from Germany packages were sent by the German Red Cross and the Caritas organization.

The German prisoners had a great feeling of solidarity and divided the contents of packages among themselves. Their last camp also had 37 Spanish prisoners, members of the "Blue Division." At first the Russians permitted them to receive packages, but later withdrew the permission. After that they received their share from the Germans.

The Russian guards delivered the packages to the prisoners. Naturally the contents were all checked. Cans were taken out and delivered separately -- each can was opened in the presence of the examiners and their contents were stirred up. Apparently there was some suspicion that the cans might contain other items (letters or something else). Clothing and underwear, or other articles of wear, were also sent.

Release From Prison Camp

The first commission stayed at the camp from 22 to 25 June 1953. The prisoners were questioned and interviewed regarding their relatives in Germany, their destination in the event of release, etc. Nobody believed this, since all of them still had several years of their sentence to serve.

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The release took place on 14 September 1953. J. A. was in a hospital at that time, since he had a severe case of jaundice. At that time there were about 1,000 persons in the camp. Everyone was instructed to get ready to leave. They all thought it was just another change of camps. But then the rumor spread that they were all to be sent to Germany and released. Apparently the former prisoners of war too were included in the amnesty following Stalin's death. No one had any idea of what was going on in the world. They had no newspapers or radio.

The healthy prisoners were released and sent out first, then the sick persons. They traveled to Frankfurt/Oder, then to Fuerstenwald, in cattle cars. Then they were transferred to passenger cars and taken to Eisenach. Here everyone was given new clothes (fairly good quality), and was released and free to go home. When they crossed the border of the Western Zone and along the way as far as the "releasing camp" near Goettingen, the German population gave the returning prisoners an enthusiastic welcome. The bus on which they were traveling was stopped numerous times. Everyone received presents. Men who had gone through a lot of suffering, and who had never had tears in their eyes before, now wept with joy.

Those German prisoners of war who had no families were voluntarily adopted as "foster sons" by some families, so that everyone had a place to stay. In this way J. A. was taken in by a German family where they cared for him as for their own son. J. A. registered at the Hamburg police office and found out that there were some Latvians

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living in Hamburg. The police officers put through a telephone call for him to the Latvian Consul, Mr Apmanis, so that he could get in touch with his fellow-countrymen. He was very happy to hear his mother tongue again after almost 10 years. He has not forgotten it and speaks it perfectly, even without any accent.

He immediately sent news to his parents in Latvia. He received a short letter in reply, with some cautiously worded sentences. The letter was mailed from Riga on 26 October and received in Hamburg on 5 November. It was sent "registered." The ^{addressee's} ~~sic~~ - probably should be "sender's synname was fictitious. The envelope bore the stamp "Riga 4" (which is the Tornakalna Rayon). A sticker with the word "Mezhdunarodnoye" (International) was pasted across the envelope.

The Pulkveza Brieza iela in Sigulda has been renamed Karla Marksa iela.

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