

Man of Peace Finds None in Soviet Camp

In this heretofore unpublished letter, apparently written last summer, a founder of the unofficial Group to Establish Trust Between the U.S.S.R. and U.S.A., imprisoned for that activity since July 1982, describes his experiences following transfer to a Soviet labor camp. Although this communication reached the West two months ago, no word of his condition has been received since. (A related editorial appears today.)

Greetings, dear friends:

I want to hope that my letter reaches you, so that you can understand something about my situation in the camp. I consider further silence on my part to be stupid, in that it can only further untie the hands of several officials of the camp. I will begin in order.

I arrived in the camp on Feb. 3, 1984, completely healthy. On Feb. 4, 36 of us were put in a strict regime education division where, with the full permission of the camp administration, we were put under the authority of "prisoner-activists." From the first day, we were beaten by individuals or groups of five. On Feb. 4, I was beaten only because I could not march in step, raising my legs to 30 centimeters (after 19 months of prison). On Feb. 8, I was summoned to camp headquarters to the chief of the punishment detail, Lt. Dulatbaev, where I was beaten. Dulatbaev grabbed me by the ears and beat the back of my head against the wall. My face was blue from bruises. During all of this, he said that he was ready to kill me, cut me up into pieces. He called me a traitor and after this I was put in the punishment isolator where I spent two days and became very ill. From Feb. 13 to 27, I was in the sanitary department with pneumonia and from March 7, I was put under special supervision and expected to report every two hours as one who was inclined to escape. On March 4, we all stood without hats and coats in the strong wind and falling snow for more than two hours by orders of one of the bosses of the division who wanted to know who was guilty of tearing two pages out of the sanitary journal. In February, Pavel Lapko, 21 years old, died of meningitis. He arrived in the division with us healthy.

I have been in the ninth detachment since March 14. The detachment is overcrowded. We sleep three to a bunk. In the camp, there rages a cult of violence, the prisoners are beaten literally for any trifle and particularly for failure to fulfill the work plan, whether this is for sewing production or making nets. Also, in the camp they have begun exercise drills. They demand that after work, the prisoners stand and hold up their left leg extended for several minutes and then their right leg. Those who can't do it are beaten by the prisoner activists. In the division, these prisoners forced me to lean at a steep angle with my head against the wall and with my hands against the wall so that my head pressed against the wall in the bitter cold.

I landed in the 94th brigade for the knitting of big nets of synthetic fiber for vegetables. The norm was six nets in eight hours. We worked from six in the evening until two in the morning. The norm was very high and so the majority of prisoners were forced to knit in their non-working hours, devoting to this another six to eight hours. For failure to fulfill the norm, the foreman several times deprived us of a day's sleep so that in the daytime, we knitted nets. When I and another prisoner mentioned this to the brigade leader of the prisoners, I was summoned to the brigade captain, Dosnatov, who regarded my indignation as anti-Soviet agitation and said that as long as I was in the Soviet Union and not the United States, I would knit nets without any conversation. I several times asked the camp administration to be transferred to any other type of work but each time, I was refused.

On May 31, 1984, I was summoned to the boss of the detachment (I don't know his last name). He locked the door of his office and began to beat me savagely. With blows, he knocked the wind out of me, he kicked me in the groin and then in the skull and continued to beat me for a long time. He gave me to understand that this is the way it would be every day that I did not fulfill the work norm. Leaving him, I was received by the boss of camp, Col. Bakhaev, but he refused my request to be transferred to other work. In despair, not

seeing any way out of the situation, I tried to kill myself, stabbing myself in the side. After I was given medical aid, I fell into the hands of the chief of one of the divisions, Dulatbaev, who knowing all of the most vulnerable parts of a man began to beat me. He beat me several times around the neck from which I fell and lost consciousness. He clapped both of his hands on my ears from which began a powerful ringing. He choked me and beat me along the organs of my body, accompanying all this with insults. I was then put for 15 days in the punishment isolator where, despite the filth, parasites, meager food and limited amount of water, I nonetheless was able to recover psychologically. Everything which goes on in the camp resembles one of those films which shows the tortures given by the Gestapo.

On leaving the punishment isolator, I began spitting up bloody phlegm. The doctors diagnosed a worsening of pneumonia. I was given intensive treatment for 14 days during which I received more than 60 injections. Thanks to the doctors, I am now in the sanitary department of the camp. However, my lungs worry me. (There is a very high percentage of prisoners in the camp suffering from tuberculosis.)

And so that is my situation. I consider that to remain silent about this any longer is impossible. I don't receive letters, except from home. How my situation in the camp will be from now on I don't know. They constantly threaten to give me a new sentence when I finish my present sentence.

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