Arieh Gur

THE ESCAPE: FROM KIEV TO TEL AVIV

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THE ESCAPE

There could be no turning back. I was in the water, intent on putting as great a distance as possible, and in the shortest possible time, between myself and the ship from which I had but that minute rolled. I use the word "rolled" advisedly, for I had slipped from that floating prison with the minimum of noise. Had my escape been noticed? Would the cry of "man overboard!" be raised? And would I be hauled back to answer as yet unframed charges?

But I am anticipating events, for the story of my immersion in the cold waters of the Sea of Japan began many years ago. Indeed, I do not really know when it began. Perhaps it was in my father's home in Kiev? Perhaps when I was a youngster at school, bullied and badgered by my classmates? Perhaps when I learned something of Israel's Six-Day War? Or was it at that never-to-be-forgotten gathering in Babi-Yar? I suppose one's final actions are motivated by many causes, even when one tends to look for a single event. It is easier to explain things that way, but it is unrealistic. We are the products of heredity, of all the ages past; but we are also the products of our immediate environment.

I was born in 1946 in Novosibirsk, where my father and mother had fled from the Nazi forces in the early days of the war. With them came their two daughters, my father's by a previous marriage, born in 1922, and my mother's born in 1928. With my half-sisters I could have little in common, for they were not of my generation, and their thoughts were not my thoughts. The family had come from Kiev, and to Kiev they returned in 1947, taking with them their infant son, myself. My half-sisters soon left the parental home, to enter medical school, qualify as physicians, and to marry. We three

were left to occupy our fourteen-square-meter room with its three beds and very little else, in the apartment block which we shared with many other families. I suppose we were comfortable enough using the communal kitchen and the communal toilets, for if this is what you have always been used to, this you accept as the norm. We had enough to eat, even though my mother often had to stand in long lines to get the essentials—after she returned from her work in the clothing factory. My father went out early to his work as a shoemaker, and returned, tired, at night. I never really got close to my father, but between my mother and myself there was a very special relationship, perhaps because I had been born to her when she was already over forty.

I knew soon enough that I was a Jew, but it meant little to me except in a negative sense. My father had his talith and prayer books, he went to Synagogue at Festival time—for in Kiev a Jew could still worship—and at Pesach we usually had Matzoth. But of Judaism he taught his son nothing, and I never went to the Synagogue with him. To teach Judaism was a crime, and my father was not one to seek a clash with the authorities. For twelve years life went on peacefully enough—I do not count as important the blows and the insults I suffered at school—but I had very few friends. Then my mother fell ill and was eventually taken to a hospital.

Every day, as soon as school was out, I made my way to that sad building with its long corridors, its smell of antiseptics, its rows of beds, its groans and its sighs. Every day I stood by my mother's bed, and we spoke in low tones or we did not speak at all. And then when the visiting hours were over, I went home, did my homework, had my supper and went to bed. Father would come in later, but he had little to say. He was by nature a taciturn man whose chief aim in life was to avoid trouble. He was then sixty years old—five years older than my mother—short, of medium build, clean shaven, with a typically Greek nose. Tears came to his eyes easily, for he had suffered much. Yet his suffering he accepted without a

complaint. It was God's will. But he feared his fellow men. "God," he told me, "divided the people into the strong and the weak. We are very weak, we Jews, and there is nothing that we can do about it. When you grow up, you will understand this," —and the tears would flow.

I was only a boy, and I could not contradict him. Yet even then it seemed to me strange that this mysterious Being, God, should have ordained that one section of the people should be forever weak and should therefore suffer at the hands of the strong. In later years I would think differently and would question the action—or the lack of action—of those millions of our people who went, with the name of God on their lips, to the gas chambers of Hitler's Europe. Like my father they believed, I suppose, that they were of the "very weak" and must submit to the will of the strong.

But now the weeks and the months went by in slow procession, and I became even lonelier. The few friends I had fell from me, and I had only the classroom, the hospital ward, and the single room that was our home. Autumn came, and my thirteenth birthday passed without any special mark. According to Jewish law I was now a man and should have been ready to accept responsibility for my own actions, but in fact I was a poor, weak, irresolute, fearful child.

They brought my mother home from the hospital and laid her in her bed in the room that we three shared. I did not know then that they had discharged her from the hospital because they knew that there was nothing more that they could do for her—and so I was happy that she was near me. She was suffering from an incurable heart disease, and the end was not far off.For eight months she had lain in the hospital, and now they brought her home to die—but I did not know that. How well I remember her last night. I had gone to bed and had laid my head very close to hers. She looked at me with tears in her eyes—she who throughout all her illness had been so brave—and to her soft words of endearment I fell asleep. Early next morning I was awakened by a loud cry from my father. I

sprang up and saw him standing there looking down at my mother. Instinctively I knew what had happened, but did not wish to believe it. I blurted out, "Father, how is Mother?" "Your mother is dead," he said, and he sobbed. I covered myself with my blanket, and I too wept. Soon I heard father at the telephone on the landing. Cautiously I raised the blanket and looked at that yellow, dead face that I had loved so much. It was so close and yet so far away—far away in the world of Death. I was afraid of Death. I wrapped my head in the blanket again and tried to shut out the sights and the sounds around me. How long I lay there I do not know. I could sense the comings and goings, the movement in the room; but I did not stir until someone shook me and called me by name. It was the younger of my two half-sisters, my mother's daughter. She took me away from that crowd of relatives and neighbors and into another room, and there I lay, lifeless, throughout that dreary day. I suppose that I must have eaten and attended to nature's needs, but I remember nothing of what went on. Before my tightly closed eyes was the face of the mother I would never see again, hear again —and an overwhelming loneliness oppressed me. Was my father right? Were we born only to suffer? And were we so weak that we could do nothing about it?

The next day the rabbi from my father's synagogue came: women washed that dear body and wrapped it in the "tachrichim," the burial clothes. The rabbi recited a prayer which my father, sister and I repeated after him. He took a knife and cut a piece of our underclothing as a sign of our mourning and our grief—but he could not see into my empty heart—and then we made our slow way to the cemetery. When the first clod of earth fell upon the coffin it was as though it had fallen upon my head. I was numbed and life had no more meaning for me. The single light that might have shown me the way had gone out, and I was alone, in the dark.

I was quite a big lad for my age, but I was fat and flabby, without either strength of body or of spirit, fair game for

classmates who often teased and derided me. One lout in particular, Pyotr, who was so dull-witted that he had failed a grade, was my special fear. With no mind for books, he was yet able to devise a thousand ways of making my life miserable—hiding my books, putting stones in my case, spilling ink on my desk, taunting me, mocking me, calling after me, "How much chicken did you eat today, Yid?" The days at school were long and onerous, and every day when we were let out I sought solace at the grave of my mother, in the Jewish section of the cemetery, across the railway line.

I came to know every gravestone there, and every inscription on every stone. I knew every line of every face whose image was above the grave, and I tried to imagine what their lives had been. Had they suffered too, and had they accepted their sufferings because they were Jews and because God ordained that they should be of the very weak of this world? It was a strange life that I led—a life that was spent among the dead, communing with the dead, for I spoke with my mother often and felt her presence there. I would lean on the railings around the grave, and concentrating on her photograph would leave the harsh world of reality and find solace in my dreams. Slowly, imperceptibly, something was developing in me, although I myself was as yet quite unaware of it.

But at last the day came—the day that was to alter the whole course of my life, and which, perhaps, brought me to my present position in the cold waters, still far from the Japanese coastline. On that day Pyotr had been particularly aggressive, so much so that finally my mouselike courage was aroused and with all my pitiable strength I struck at him. I do not know who was the more surprised, he or I, but he quickly recovered and struck back. With blood streaming from my nose I rushed from the classroom and the school, pursued by his jeering laughter. I had struck a blow for my personal freedom, and now I made my way to my mother's grave to tell her what I had done. I was fearful of the consequences of my rash act, but perhaps she would tell me what to do. To that

silent grave I poured out my tale and waited for a response. As I gazed fixedly at the beloved face, a train went by and the refrain "Boh-rots-sah" came to me as the wheels passed over the sleepers. "Boh-rots-sah" and it came to me: "You must fight: you must fight." I looked at the face and a smile seemed to hover about the lips.

Now, for the first time in my life, I knew what I must do. The refrain rang again and again in my ears and in my heart: "You must fight: you must fight." I had no option. My mother demanded it of me. I must be as the other boys: I must be strong and brave. I must take part in sports and develop the body that I had. From the moment that I stood by my mother's grave and saw the smile on her lips, I became a different person.

When I reached the room that was home to me, my father was already there, for I had been longer than usual on the way. He looked up and saw the blood on my shirt front and knew at once what had happened.

"So, one of your classmates beat you up today? Yes?" he said.

"Yes," I answered.

"So it must be," he said, "we must be patient."

"No, father," I replied, and I saw the look of surprise on his face. "No, father, I don't agree. From today I am going to be strong: I am going to take part in sports. There will be no more tears. Next time any boy tries to hit me, I shall hit him back and beat him up." It was a gesture of defiance and the blood mounted in my cheeks.

My father shook his head sadly and looked at me with something akin to pity.

"My son," he said, "you are very young, and you don't understand. What they can do, you can't. You are a Jew. I know—my grandfather was weak; my father was weak; I am weak, and you will be weak too. It is our Fate."

And he fell silent.

I said nothing, for we no longer spoke the same language.

He would not be able to understand what had taken place in the cemetery, and we could not communicate. His attitude almost disgusted me, but in a calmer mood I realized that he was as he had been taught—his was co-existence with his fellowmen, but it was not life. For my part, I was determined now to live, and I bent all my energies towards that end.

Near our apartment was a sports field with a track and a gymnasium where wrestling and other indoor sports could be learned. I knew that other boys went there, but it had never occurred to me that I too might take part in what were, after all, normal activities. I was fourteen years old, and I had never played games—never run on a track, never jumped, wrestled or boxed—these were not for a Jewish boy whose fate it was to be weak and to be bullied. I smiled to myself as I somewhat shyly entered the gym. To make up one's mind to take a decisive step, and to take that step, are not by any means the same thing, and I hesitated on the threshold. I saw the smiles on the faces of the other neighborhood lads as they swung from the bars, turned somersaults and wrestled, pointing their fingers at me and passing, no doubt, uncomplimentary remarks. But I stood my ground. My mind was made up. Presently the trainer saw me, and approaching he said curtly, "And what do you want?" My reply came eagerly and without hesitation, for I had rehearsed the words many times. "I want to join your group—to be a wrestler." He looked at me and laughed. "You will never make a wrestler," he said. "This isn't a kindergarten. Now be off and don't bother me!" He did not sound unduly harsh, but he could see that I was not good material—fat and flabby as I was.

But his dismissal did not deter me. I went out and walked up and down outside the gym until at last the trainer came out. I rushed up to him and pleaded, "Please, please take me! It is important to me. Truly, I can't live without some kind of sport. You have to help me!" Tears came unbidden to my eyes and my voice cracked—I must have appeared a pathetic sight. He looked at me intently, and after a moment's hestitation

he asked me how old I was. When I told him I was fourteen, he shook his head as though to indicate that it was rather late to start a sport, and that in any case I did seem to be a rather poor specimen. But he melted, "All right," he said, "come along to our next session on Tuesday, and we'll see what we can do with you."

I thanked him and walked home with joy in my heart. I would learn to wrestle. I would be strong. I would lift myself out of the rut in which my father and his father before him had passed their days, for even in my innermost thoughts I would not accept that they had had real lives. I would strike out on my own and beat a new path to life, and on the next Tuesday afternoon I was at the gym at least half an hour before the class was due to start and before anyone else had arrived.

I looked at the bars, the ropes, the horse, and I wondered if I would ever be able to do what the others could. Was my father right? Or should I answer the call I had received in the cemetery? The boys all trooped in, the trainer came out of his room, and the exercises began. I joined in as best I could, and I knew that the trainer was watching me, making up his mind as to whether I would make the grade. My wind was poor, my reactions slow. I soon felt tired, but I did not give up. The preliminary exercises were over, and we sat around resting. The trainer came over to me where I sat alone, tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Get ready. In a few minutes I want you to wrestle."

I stood up and at a signal found myself on the mat in the center of the room, facing another boy slightly smaller than myself but with muscles rippling beneath his skin. I felt a momentary fear as his outstretched hands came towards me, but I stood my ground and grappled with him. I had watched some of the others and knew that I must not use my fists. The first bout did not last long. Within a few seconds I was lying on my back with my opponent standing grinning over me. I heard the laughter of the others, but I couldn't move. There

was a great pain in my neck and a mist before my eyes. The trainer came over, grasped my hand, hauled me to my feet, and shook his head. "I told you you'd never be a wrestler. You'd better stick to chess."

Somehow or other I staggered home and put myself to bed. I ached all over and was very depressed. So this is what sports were all about? When my father came home I could scarcely turn my head to tell him what had happened. I did not expect much sympathy from him and did not get much, though I fancy that he was not altogether displeased with me. He did ask the old woman who had been coming in to do our small amount of cooking since my mother's illness to see that I didn't starve. I lay in bed for two weeks, fourteen long days. They were days of pain and self-analysis, but I knew that I must not give up. The beginning had been hard and unsuccessful, but I would try again. I would keep on—no matter what the cost.

At last I was able to return to the sports center. The trainer saw me at once and called out, "Do you still want to be a wrestler?" I nodded "yes." He took a deep breath and sighed, "Really, I don't know what I'm going to do with you, but if you're so determined, we'll give it another try. But don't blame me if you break your neck!" He laughed and said, "Get changed now and get on the floor!"

And now began my new life of hard training. They were difficult days, and I often came close to giving up—but I went on. I went to the center early, and I was the last to leave; and gradually, as the weeks passed into months, I felt my muscles hardening, and in the full length mirror in the gym I saw that the fat was falling away. I could hold my own now with the other boys of my own age, my breathing was regular, my actions quicker. My mother, I knew, would have been proud of me. She would have understood what I was doing.

In the summer of 1960 I completed my seven years of elementary school and entered the high school where I would learn the techniques of building and construction. I completed

four years at this technical school in December 1964 and was then qualified to take a job as a supervisor of building or as a construction designer. Meantime my father had re-married. My stepmother was thirteen years younger than my father, and at first our relationshiop was fairly good. She had a son who was in the army, and perhaps she regarded me as a substitute. Soon, however, I realized that she resented my presence there in the room every night, and her unfriendly manner drove me into the streets where I roamed about for hours until it was time to go to bed. I had no friends outside the sports center, and I would not visit them at home. At the center my progress continued. I took part in the competitions. I was often defeated, but sometimes I won and these victories gave me confidence which I had never known—nor thought I could know. How wrong my father was! We were not always destined to be weak. We could and should fight back. In wrestling I was now placed in Category 1. I could run faster than most of my fellows; I could lift a 100-kilogram weight. I was my own man and could walk with my head up.

It was in 1965 when I started work as an ordinary laborer on construction jobs that I left my father's home and went to live with my half-sister. My stepmother's son had come back from his army service, and my presence was clearly not welcome. When he was involved in a traffic accident, and subsequently died in a hospital, I knew that the break with my old home was now complete.

Perhaps plans for a different future were already forming in my mind. I don't know. Sometimes a power outside and beyond ourselves compels us to a certain line of action. I moved from job to job, and though I was qualified for a technical post, I had not received one—for those responsible for hiring staff knew that I was a Jew.

I enrolled as a student at the Kaliningrad Marine College and started to study refrigeration. After attending full-time for a month, I would take a correspondence course extending for some six and one-half years, enabling me to qualify in January

1972. There would be annual stays in Kaliningrad, for one was required to do practical work and meet the instructors. This was recognized procedure, and there would be no difficulty in getting away from work for these periods.

The years were going by, and I moved out of my teens, and every day my body grew stronger. Winter and summer I ran every day and worked through my schedule of exercises. I had taken up swimming now, and my arms and shoulders were well developed. As I floated on the waters of the Sea of Japan I wondered, "Did some Power direct me then to those skills, knowing that the day would come when I would need them? Did that train indeed call to me, 'You must fight! You must fight!' because on a distant dawn I would have to fight for my life in a faraway ocean?" These are things of which we know nothing.

Memory took me back to Kiev and the pain of my first love. I was already twenty-one, but completely innocent of love. At the time I was working as a technician for the company which serviced all the electrical equipment in the barber shops and beauty parlors of Kiev. One, the largest in the city, a two-story affair, where only women went, was close to our workshops, and I was quite often there working on the air conditioning plant in the basement. What went on in the upper floors I could only guess—strange sounds came from there, there was a constant coming and going, beautiful women passed up and down the stairs, and most mysterious of all, strange perfumes were wafted through the building. These strange, exotic perfumes went to my head, I think, and aroused in me desires of I knew not what.

Then one day as I was passing a partially-opened door I saw her—the Jana who was to fill my life for so many weeks of happiness and despair. She was beautiful beyond any woman whom I had ever seen before, and I just stood and stared. Then she passed from my view, but by no means from my memory. It was weeks later before I saw her again. I was busy with a motor when she appraoched me. So she must have seen me

staring at her on that other occasion, and she must have sensed her attraction for me. Idly she began to talk about the equipment on which I was working, but I would have none of that. With a courage which I did not know I possessed—but I had rehearsed this scene often during the last few days—I asked, "Will you go out with me?"

She gave me a sideways glance and asked simply, "Why? What for?"

I blurted out, "We'll see. But if you don't want to, I won't insist," and my courage failing, I turned and fled downstairs. How I upbraided myself—happiness had been within my grasp and I had let it go. That would not happen again, I told myself. Next time—but when, if ever, would that next time come?

It came sooner than I imagined. I was on a job with a fellow electrician in the manicure section of the beauty parlor when I felt, rather than saw her come up to me. I looked up and there she was at my side. "Hello," I said, "are you ready to go for a walk with me yet?"

Without a word she walked out of the shop, and I followed, telling my partner that I would be back soon. He grinned and made a suggestive gesture which I resented.

Jana and I walked in silence, but every now and then she would look at me and smile. I knew we would have to return to the beauty parlor in a few minutes. I stopped, and facing her, asked, "Do you want to meet me again?"

"What for?" came the answer.

"We'll go to the Registration Bureau and get married," I said.

She burst out laughing and turned back towards the parlor. When she reached the entrance, she handed me a slip of paper. "This is my address. You may come to see me sometime if you want to," she said—and disappeared through the staff entrance. "If you want to"—could I want anything more in this world? I was delirious with joy.

I was in love! It was a wonderful sensation, and my heart

was leaping, but I had a nagging doubt. Could she love me in return? I looked into my innermost being, asking myself what I had to offer. I was well built, it was true, and not bad to look at; I could run and swim and wrestle; I was not bad at my work, and I had never fallen foul of the authorities. But in company I was almost inarticulate. I could not discuss books or art or music. What could any woman see in me?

Somehow the night passed, and the day that followed; and in the evening I was at her door. She opened at my knock and came out with a little girl of about five. It was almost as though she had expected me, for without any hesitation she took my arm and said, "Come, let us walk in the park. It is a lovely evening."

How can I describe those hours of perfect bliss? We strolled by the Dnieper, and then sat on a bench. She told me that she was twenty-six, some five years older than I—but what did that matter?—and that she was divorced. She was living with an aunt now, and of course with her child. She was a pretty child—could she be otherwise with such a mother?—quiet and shy, yet not so shy as I was. I scarcely said a word, being content to look upon the face of my beloved, to be with her, to listen to the words that came from her lips. The hours passed all too quickly for me, and it was time to return (it was already past the girl's bed-time). I made my way home in a dream, but I scarcely slept that night.

Next day at work my buddies noted my preoccupation and teased me about it. I suppose that they recognized the signs of a young man's first love. They were more experienced in such things. I thought of the previous evening on the park bench and of the thousand things I might have said if only I had had the courage. But Jana would understand, I was sure of that, and she would know what my unspoken thoughts were.

With the evening I waited outside her place of work. At last she came, hurrying, wrapped in her overcoat and with scarcely a glance in my direction—though she could not

but see me—walked towards the subway. What had I done or not done to deserve this? Was this her understanding of my unspoken words? It was clear that I did not know anything about women. And how could I? I had known none except my mother, and our relationship had been of a very special kind. We reached the subway station together, and I burst out, "When can I come see you again?" She looked at me with almost a sneer, and with a toss of her head there came the reply, "We don't have to meet again!" "Why, why?" The words rushed out in my despair. "You men are all the same. There is only one thing that you want when you go out with a woman."

This was too much for me. How could she have such thoughts about me? I caught her by the coat and with tears very near the surface, I almost screamed at her: "I shall come to you, whether you want me or not—tomorrow evening."

She tore herself away and boarded her train, leaving me there dazed, wondering what unmentionable crime I had committed. I was unschooled in the game of love, and did not know then that not making the first move could be an even worse offense than making it!

True to my word, I knocked on Jana's door next evening. Her aunt, an elderly woman, who I now realized was blind, opened the door to me and in response to my inquiry told me that Jana had gone out with a young man. I think, now, that I detected a note of triumph in her voice. "But she can't have," I blurted out, "I told her I was coming." "Oh, but she has," said the crone, and closed the door in my face. I stood there dumbfounded. And so she had meant what she said: "We don't need to meet again." But we had to. Without her life could have no meaning for me. How I suffered in the days that followed—at work I was morose, uncommunicative; at the sports center I was lethargic and disinterested. My friend Alex, who was five years older, recognized my symptoms and urged me to open up. I told him my sad story which I can laugh at now, but at that time was a tragedy.

It turned out that Alex had known Jana from the time when she was a little girl. They had been neighbors. He was not surprised at her behavior, for he knew the rules of the game. "Have courage, my friend. Don't give up so easily. She's just stringing you along—having a bit of a game with you. You're not the first, you know; Jana has had plenty of experience."

I was indignant. How could he speak of my goddess that way? I opened my mouth to protest, but he stopped me with a gesture. "All right, you're serious. So you must play her game for as long as she wants, and then maybe she'll listen to you. But what's to be done now? As a first step, take a few flowers every morning, and put them outside her door. Ring the bell, and then take off. There's no need to put a note with them. She'll know who has left them, and she'll react in her own time and in her own way." —"And how long do I have to do this?" I asked in my innocence. —"I don't know. Jana will decide that—or you'll get tired," he added with a laugh.

"Never! Never!"

So began my morning pilgrimage to the door that hid my love. They were mornings of pain and pleasure, despair and anticipation. At last the day came—I had laid my offering on the mat, rung the bell, and turned to retrace my steps across the landing, when I came face to face with Jana. She was dressed for work, and I realized now had been waiting for me in an alcove. She bent over and picked up the flowers, pressed them to her—how I envied them—thanked me and invited me to walk to the subway with her. I don't know what I said. My heart was in my throat, and I could scarcely speak. My temples throbbed, and my face was scarlet.

That evening when I met her outside the shop, she took my hand and we walked as lovers walk. And when it was time for us to part, she lifted her face, pulled down my head, and kissed me full on the lips. What unutterable bliss! She kissed me and said, "I want to be with you, but I cannot. I have a

boy friend, and I can't just drop him."

"But when will you tell me? When can we get together? I can't go on living like this!"

"Be patient," she said, "I'll let you know." And she was gone from me.

"I will let you know." –I fed upon these words and tried to draw strength from them; but as day succeeded day, I became more and more desperate. My head swam from lack of sleep, and my work started to suffer. I ate little, I couldn't read. What should I do? I didn't dare go to her apartment, lest by doing so I should offend her and lose her forever. Patience, she had said. What could I do to remind her of my being and bring her back to me? She had kissed me. She must care. She was no ordinary woman, to throw kisses at every Tom, Dick and Harry. She was a goddess and almost unattainable. But she *had* kissed me!

I wracked my tortured brain. And then I remembered that I had heard her say once that she had to order coal for their stove, because there was no central heating in their apartment block. On an impulse I ordered a load of coal to be delivered to that cold shrine, and with trepidation at my daring, I awaited the result.

Her call came three days later, where I worked. I was busy at some distance from the office when one of my co-workers called out, "She's here, Lyonya, on the phone. Hurry up!" She thanked me so warmly. The coal had come, she said, and it was such a comfort to them all. "Tonight," she said, "I'm going to the movies with my friend. Would you like to come along?"

How could I say "Yes?" Be a third party–share her with someone else? How would I be able to keep my hands off my rival? There would be a scene. I would disgrace myself and embarrass her. And yet how could I say "No?" that would be churlish. Hadn't she told me that she wanted to be with me? My mind was in a whirl. I managed to stammer, "Can't I come at see you at the shop now?"

"I don't know," she said. "I'll call you in half an hour. I'm busy now and I can't talk."

What impelled me I don't know, but I went out. I was afraid of that telephone call—and I went out. I would not be there when she called, but, I told myself, she would call again. Had she not said that she wanted to be with me? Yes, she would call again. But she did not.

The days dragged on. I was never far from the telephone but she did not call. I had lost her, I was sure—and through my own stupidity and cowardice. How she must despise me for having refused to come to the movies with my rival. How I despised myself! Obviously I was afraid that he would outshine me. What else could she think? I couldn't eat or sleep. I walked the streets for hours on end. I wrote her countless letters—but there was no reply. My sister, with whom I was now living, knew that there was something wrong and she questioned me. But I could tell her nothing. I nursed my secret and fed upon my sorrow. Had my mother been alive, I would have discussed it with her. She would have understood. Perhaps if I went to the cemetery I would be able to re-establish that bond of communication. Perhaps the train would inspire me again—tell me what to do—how to rid myself of the sweet burden that was oppressing me. But I did not go to the cemetery.

I found myself at Jana's door, and I pressed the bell. Jana opened the door herself. She smiled, sadly, I thought, when she saw me, and stood aside to let me in. At the table was a young man of about thirty-five. He looked up from his writing when I came in. "Garik," said Jana, "this is Lyonya, whom I told you about." I looked at him and felt physically sick. I couldn't say a word, but just stood there, dumb, in the center of the room—and hated him. Jana tried not to appear embarrassed, but she must have known that she had treated me badly. Now she stood against the stove, heated no doubt by the coal that I had sent, and turned on the radio. No one spoke. No one helped me out.

At last I could not stand it any longer. "I'm flying to Kaliningrad for my examintions at the college there, tomorrow." It was a decision. I turned to Jana. "Can I come to see you at work before I go?" –"If you want to. You know my hours."

Without a good-bye I left the room. Hammers beat upon my head. I was in a truly desperate plight. I knew I couldn't go see her at work or at home. I couldn't even bear to pass by her shop. All my old doubts assailed me. Why hadn't she accepted me? What did Garik have that I didn't? If he had been tall and handsome, I might have taken it better; but he was short, had an over-large nose, and his skin was bad. I must be stupid, I thought. Jana wanted an intellectual, and I recalled that she had let drop that Garik was clever, that he read books, that he enjoyed concerts. Yet she had told me that she liked me, that she liked being with me–and she had kissed me first. Poor fool that I was who knew nothing about women! I concluded that I must be different from other people. I was inferior to them. My father was right. I was a Jew, and Jews are weak. Still, I had done well at the sports center.. But that was not enough. I did not read good books. I did not go to classical concerts. I could not carry on a witty conversation. There was nothing I could do about it. I was what I was.

I went to Kaliningrad, but I couldn't concentrate on my studies. I recalled the old saying, "To lose money is nothing, to lose a friend is to lose the half of oneself, to lose faith is to lose all." In those gloomy days I lost faith in myself, in my ability to pull myself out of the mire into which I had sunk. Life had become too great a burden, and I knew that I could not stand it any longer. If Jana rejected me, others would do the same, and there was no future. My mother was dead; my father re-married; my sisters had their own lives filled with husbands, children, and the insistent calls of their profession. I had no friends. I was alone in the world, and always would be.

I began to smoke in order to dull my pain. I inhaled as deeply as I could, and the only effect was to make me more dull, more pained and depressed. There was only one way out —suicide. I knew that I must end the torture before it drove me mad. Every day, and many times a day, I passed a pharmacy, but I was afraid to go in to buy the sleeping pills which I knew could give me everlasting relief. The afternoon came when at last I did go in and ask the pharmacist for some. He could see that I was ill and believed me when I told him that I was studying hard and could not sleep at all. He let me have two boxes of the pills, and I carried them off to the dormitory room which I shared with three other students. There was no one there.

I remembered it was a fine afternoon, cloudless, with the sound of music from someone's radio floating in through the window. I sat on the bed and smoked cigarette after cigarette. I looked out upon a world that I was soon to leave, and I did not regret it. I no longer had any faith in my fellow beings nor in myself. I swallowed all the pills and lay down on the bed. The light faded, the music became softer, pain drained from my head and from my body. I felt completely relaxed, as though I were floating in space. Was this death? Then why had I not sought it before? All those needless years of pain and suffering, loneliness and deceit. Why did men live and struggle to live when death was so peaceful?

When I opened my eyes I did not know where I was. People were moving about and there were other beds near mine. The sun was shining on me, and the light was hard to bear. I groaned and a woman in white was quickly at my side. Then I remembered, and I knew I was in a hospital and that this was a nurse. I had failed in my attempt to end it all, and I was angry.

The doctor came to my beside and looked down at me with a smile. What right had he to smile when I was suffering in such anguish? I tried to look away, but he held me with his eyes.

"Well, and how are you feeling, young man? It was touch and go with you, but your friend who brought you here and your own strong constitution saved you."

"Why did you save me? I don't want to live. To live is to suffer, and I have suffered enough." I was angry.

"Nonsense. You are only a youngster, and you don't know what life is yet. You'll get over this, and everything will be fine. You were in love, I suppose, and she threw you over for someone else? So what? There are plenty more like her, and you'll soon find someone better. Most of us have been through this, you know, but there's no need to poison oneself for a silly, broken romance. There isn't a girl worth it." And he laughed.

What did he know? I burst out: "But I'm not the same as all the others. I'm different, and I don't want to live!"

"Oh, I've heard that before too. But you're no different than anyone else, I can assure you, and you'll still be able to have a good time with any of the girls you want. You've a good body on you, I must say. You look like an athlete. Are you a boxer?"

In spite of myself, I showed some interest. "No, not a boxer. But I am a wrestler—and the 'A' Division—and I run and swim too."

"Good for you," he responded. "When you get out of here—and it won't be long—find yourself a decent girl and forget all about this. Believe me, you're well rid of the other. She didn't deserve you!"

Before I had a chance to protest, he went on.

"Now, we'll wash out that stomach of yours and get rid of all the rubbish you put into it. And when the nurse has done her part, I want you to drink as much as you can and as often. We'll have you on your feet again in no time. Promise?"

He patted me on the shoulder, and I nodded my assent. He was not to be resisted.

The next day my roommates visited me and brought me

candy and fruit. I was deeply touched by their kindness and concern—for when had I ever experienced it before? They teased me a little, but there was no harshness in their words. My faith in my fellows was partly restored, and I could contemplate a life outside the hospital. When I was discharged five days later, I went to say good-bye to the doctor. He shook me warmly by the hand and said, "Now, keep up your courage. Things are never as bad as they seem at first. You have to take your problems in stride."

I wonder if he was a Jew and if he recognized that I was a Jew too. I should at least have asked his name. I think he would be proud of me now, if he could see me in these distant waters, and if he knew what I have done to get here. It is all so long ago in Kaliningrad.

I returned to Kiev in due course, determined to study. I would read and read, and I would learn of life and of living. Philosophy should be my field. It would be difficult, I knew, for I had so little on which to build, but I would persevere, and I would succeed. That doctor had done more than purge my physical system of the poison: he purged my doubts and fears—at least in part. I would succeed.

I went to live with my half-sister. They were a family of five, for they had three children, and we shared a two-room apartment. Clearly, there was no place for me to study. Obtaining permission from my employer, I carried the first books which I had borrowed from the neighborhood library to my office, a dirty ill-lit box below street level.

I started with Spinoza's *Ethics* and went on to his *Tractates*, seeking an answer to my questions on the meaning and purpose of life. From Spinoza I was to go on to Descartes, Hegel and Nietzsche. It was a hard struggle, and I sat for long hours, deep into the night. But as I had mastered the weaknesses of my body, so I was determined to overcome the weakness of my mind. I realized now how I had wasted the years—I had scarcely read a single book worthy of the name, my speech was slipshod and clumsy, I was virtually

bereft of ideas. I had lived all these years almost as an automaton doing as I was told with seldom a thought of my own. I must read and read and become a whole person.

I started talking to the girl who worked in the library where I borrowed books. I brought her some flowers and invited her to take a walk in the park. It was not a success. My mind was filled with what I had read and only half absorbed, and I must have struck her as very dull, because she declined my second invitation. I was disappointed, but did not give up. I had no better luck with the second or the third girl. I was not interested in necking, and they were not interested in my chatter. I started going to theaters and movies to try to learn more about life. But they had little appeal, and I went back to my books. First I had to learn to know myself, and I wrote, "If you hate yourself, you do not know yourself."

Gradually life began to take on meaning for me. I decided that one did not live for oneself alone. Improving one's own mind and oneself was not sufficient. One had to work for other people too. But I still felt that I did not belong where I was. I could not feel myself to be part of the Soviet Union, though I had lived there all my life. And I knew that as long as I remained there, I would not be able to fulfill myself. So where did I belong? And suddenly this knowledge came to me.

I was now twenty-three years of age, and the year was 1969, two years after Israel's Six-Day War. That war had made a tremendous impression on me, though at the time I did not realize how tremendous. Remember that I had been brought up to believe that Jews were weak and would always remain that way. Suddenly those weak individuals, banded together in nationhood, had become strong and overcome mighty enemies. Israel became the symbol of bravery and courage for me. I could identify with her and with her people. Imperceptibly my links with Israel and the Jewish people were growing stronger. I came to realize that alone

and separated, Jews can be weak, but together they can withstand any attack and prevail. I thought a little more deeply about my own position. How often had I been called Jew: how often had I been mocked and pushed aside? How often had I felt the hatred of others, made to feel that I was not a Russian as they were. Why even my family name was different. Every day as I read and thought more, I knew more clearly that there could be no real life for me in Russia. Only with my own people—and the use of that phrase even in my unconscious mind frightened me—only with my own people, in Israel, would I be able to find satisfaction and contentment.

The climax of this development came on September 29, 1969. What is the significance of this date for Kiev? Ask the citizens of Kiev, and nine out of ten will look at you blankly. It is understandable. Why should they know? They have read nothing of that day in any newspaper or magazine. They have heard nothing of it on the radio, nor seen anything of it on television. But I knew, for it was one of the few things which my father had taught me. On September 29, 1941 my grandfather had died, brutally murdered by the Nazis along with 80,000 other Jews. Here, in the district of Kiev Sirets, at the bottom of a hill and separated from the residential area by a forest, lie the bodies of 80,000 of our people. This is Babi Yar. But you could pass by the spot without a second glance.

I have visited many Soviet towns. In Leningrad I visited the Peskarov Cemetery where a splendid monument records that there lie the bodies of some thousands of the citizens of Leningrad who died from hunger or were killed by the enemy during the blockade of the city during World War II. Tourists from all over the world come to pay tribute. In the town of Volgograd on the Momaev Kurgan there is an enormous complex in marble to the memory of those who fell in the Battle of Stalingrad. In towns and villages across the country there are large and small monuments which have cost thousands or millions of rubles. Even in Kiev itself, in the Park Slavi, on

the hill overlooking the Dniepr, there is a monument with an eternal flame. This the tourist will see, and here he will pay silent tribute to those who perished in that terrible war. But at Babi Yar where 80,000 Jews—Russians they were too, in the services they had rendered the land of their birth—at Babi Yar where 80,000 Jews had been slaughtered, there was no monument, no stone, no inscription.

On that day, September 29, 1969, at about six in the evening, I made my way to the small forest clearing which is Babi Yar. It was cold and wet, a wretched evening befitting the occasion. In that space, surrounded on three sides by tall trees, a space which might have held 200-250 people, were now gathered about 100. On a low platform was an official, probably from the District Committee of the Communist Party, who was addressing the gathering. In standard Party style, he spoke of the Soviet people, of all nationalities, who had been exterminated there by the Nazis. I noted that there was no mention of Jews, though I really paid little attention to what he was saying. I knew it all so well. I had heard it all so often before. Soviet propaganda varies very little from place to place or time to time. Instead I looked around me. On the benches, on the outer fringes of the crowd, sat young men in two's and three's smoking, chatting smiling. Beneath their raincoats they wore ordinary civilian clothes. I wondered why they were there, for clearly they were uninterested in the proceedings. They seemed to be waiting for something, and finally it came.

As the speech drew to its close, cars approached and drew up just beyond the crowd. These were not private cars carrying mourners, but the easily recognizable cars of the KGB. Now I knew why those young men were there. There would be trouble—of that I was sure—but nothing that I could do would prevent it. A great bitterness welled up in my soul, but I knew that for a time at least I must continue to suffer. The official speaker and his attendants, having placed a wreath saying "Soviet citizens of all nationalities"

had been murdered in this place by the Nazis, moved off. Their place was quickly taken by the young men wearing raincoats. There now remained a small group of Jews who moved up to conduct their own memorial service. Two of their number came forward with wreaths bearing inscriptions in Hebrew. They were not permitted to approach nearer than three meters of the official wreath—at which point theirs were snatched from them, and they were hustled off to the benches where they were beaten about the head before being bundled into KGB cars. Then the remainder of the Jews within that small square were pushed and jostled, insulted and derided, so much so that at last a few resisted. This was what the police wanted—these Jews were thrown into cars and taken to the police station, to be charged no doubt with "hooliganism," a crime which the police can always prove. I could do nothing, but my mind was made up there and then. "A pity the Nazis didn't kill all the Yids," I heard one of the police officers say. The Soviet Union was no place for a Jew. There could be no acceptance of a Jew there. He simply did not belong. Now I knew with certainty that I was not wanted in the land of my birth. But there was one land in which I would be welcome—Israel.

My mind filled with these thoughts as I made my way on foot back to my sister's. The events of eight years before, when I was last in the vicinity of Babi Yar, took on a new significance. Eights years ago, before the Six-Day War, I had experienced that strange stirring, that feeling of oneness with the people from whom I had sprung and apartness from those among whom I had lived. What had happened at Babi Yar eight years ago? I had not thought much about it since. But now I recalled vividly and with a new significance the horror of that sea of mud and the frantic search for bodies. The civic authorities had decided to change the contour of the countryside around Babi Yar. They would fill in that hollow which contained the remains of 80,000 Jewish martyrs, and they would built a park there, a play area, a cafe, a dance

floor where Russian young people would relax. What did it matter if Jewish corpses lay underneath as long as young Russians could enjoy themselves—and an amusement center of this sort would be so much better than a useless and expensive stone monument.

To aid in the project a huge dam had to be built above the neighboring residential area, and then through great steel pipes water was pumped up from the Dnieper. This would be mixed with soil and the resulting mess would be used to fill in the hollow that was Babi Yar. But spring came early that year, the snows melted before their time, and there was enormous pressure on the dam which had been faultily constructed. The walls burst, the pipes were swept away, and millions of tons of mud and water poured down, engulfing houses, shops, buses—everything in its path. It was a shocking tragedy. I was there the next day, and I saw the soldiers digging, removing the dead and the few survivors. The city committee called for "volunteers," which meant that I and others from the technical school where I was studying had to take part in the gruesome operation. I shall never forget those days—the sheer horror of mothers searching for their children, children for their parents. The hospitals, schools, and morgues were filled with the dead and the half-living, but the news media made little reference to the tragedy. The official death toll was 503, but it was actually many times over that figure. The local newspaper, *Evening Kiev,* gave little space to a tragedy which reflected Soviet inefficiency and worse: it was more important that its readers should learn that in capitalist Brazil—wherever that was—a few workers had been killed in a mine explosion. It hurt me when some religious Jews said that the Almighty had punished the goyim for the planned desecration of that holy site. It hurt me because ordinary citizens—Jews among them—had perished, and not the top officials who had been responsible for the planning. The mayor of Kiev, Davydov, did not lose his job—he was a relative of Khrushchev.

It all came back to me so clearly now. The project had been abandoned, and Babi Yar remained. Evening had closed in as I reached the main street, Kiev's Kreshchatik. I had grown to hate that street with its rows of buildings all constructed in the Ukrainian style with the typical white ceramic tiles and the traditional decorations. Here there were always crowds of people moving aimlessly up and down or sitting at the restaurant tables drinking cheap coffee. Everywhere there was the smell of food. The restaurants were crowded, and even when there appeared to be no room, for a ruble the waiter could always find you a place inside. It was a drab, dirty and depressing street. I used to go there often when I was a student, because there was nowhere else to go, and I would sit in the dreary glass-fronted cafe and watch other young fellows trying to pick up girls, discussing the latest soccer scores. In the winter, huddled in their great-coats, they sat and smoked, or just strolled up and down those sad streets, jostling others, making rude remarks to innocent and inoffensive bystanders. They had time to kill and nothing worthwhile to do. I was little better than the majority, but I kept to myself and held my peace even when I was jostled and called "Yid."

Anti-semitism had not worried me particularly until then, because I had not yet realized that it was official policy. My first experience came in my last term at the high school when representatives of the Ministry of Education directed students to jobs. The non-Jewish graduates were all posted to Kiev; the Jews, comprising some thirty percent of the students, were offered posts in Kazakhstan. For a reason that I could not fathom, the officials did not insist that we should all go there, and having given me to understand that I was a second-rater, they told me that I could report, with another Jewish lad from the next class, to a particular building company which was under the direct control of the department of radio-electronics. Every day for a week the two of us reported there with our papers, only to be told finally that a

mistake had been made and that there were no job vacancies. Mistakes like that do not occur—that we knew. There were no vacancies—not for Jews.

It was March 1965 that I decided to apply for admission to the Kiev Building College in the Survey Section. Fortunately for me the section was not popular, and I was accepted. Many of my fellow students were older than I and were obviously not particularly intelligent. I passed the first three examinations without any difficulty and was then informed that I would be called in for a fourth and final examination, which was conducted orally. On the appointed day I presented myself at the office, full of confidence, and faced the examiner who was seated at a table. She took out a file from the table drawer, and as I glanced across I saw there was a mark against my name. I took little notice of this until she started asking me questions on matters completely outside the syllabus. Then I knew the reason. She gave me a "D"—unsatisfactory. Outside I met other Jewish students who had received similar treatment. When we appealed to the official in charge, he was very polite, gave us to understand that our knowledge was not up to standard, and that we might try again the following summer.

My position was now getting desperate. I had to find a job, and I looked for one among the building companies. I went from one to the next without success. If the manager appeared ready to accept me, the official in charge of personnel would find a reason not to do so. There were days when I had little to eat as I tramped from one site to the next. I could not expect much from my father, whose earnings were very low, and my relationship with my stepmother was bad. Clearly she resented me, especially since the death of her son. Eventually I took a job as a bricklayer, where it didn't matter what your nationality was, nor your criminal record for that matter. It was hard work, but my physical training stood me in good stead, and by degrees I grew used to the heavy work, and perhaps I was strengthed by it. Perhaps the strong shoul-

ders which are driving me forward now, in this cold sea, owe something to my labors as a bricklayer in Kiev. There was no future for me as a bricklayer, but I had nothing better to hope for until a Jewish workmate recommended that I try to enroll as a correspondence student in the Kaliningrad Marine Technical College. In Central Russia and elsewhere anti-semitism was not so bad, and perhaps I could qualify there as other Jews had done. I applied: I passed the entrance examination and was accepted for the course in refrigeration technology. It would mean six years of study with regular assignments and an annual visit to Kaliningrad, but it might be worth it.

As I rested now on the water, I knew that I had already passed in review, in my mind, many of the days of my study, and up to the time of my visit to Kaliningrad when I attempted to commit suicide, but it was only my thoughts that kept me going. I must bring back the purpose of it all, the motivation; or else, I knew, I would give up—and the cold and the sharks would have me.

On the strength of my reports from the Marine College I did get a better job—with the company that serviced the air conditioning machines in all the hairdressing establishments in Kiev. At this I was to work for three years—it was to bring me almost to my undoing, but when I got through this ordeal I felt I was a man.

That evening as I walked back from Babi Yar, I could have no conception of what the future held for me. "It's a pity the Nazis didn't kill all the Yids," the captain of police had said, and I have no doubt that he meant it. This thought, this knowledge came back to me time after time. It was inescapable.

I read the documentary novel *Babi Yar* by Kuznetsov (who later emigrated and re-wrote it even more honestly) and saw the picture more clearly. Not only had the Nazis killed Jews, but the secret police and petty officials too. Given the authority, today, the captain of police would have done

likewise–"A pity the Nazis didn't kill all the Yids". Little by little I came to the realization that there was no place for me in Russia, no present and no future. There was only one country to which I could go–Israel. But what did I really know of Israel and of the people who lived there? From the Soviet Press I had learned little that was to the credit of the State, which was represented always as an aggressor against the Arabs. Israel was militaristic: Zionism was an evil force whose aim was to enslave the peoples of the world. I had seen copies of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" but the charges there were too fantastic to be believed. There was no disregarding the fact of the Six Day War when this tiny group had broken through the steel ring that the Arab States–with the assistance of the Soviets– had thrown around her. We had our secret radios and our underground sources of information and something got through to us. I knew that when they were able to stand together Jews were strong and brave and I reached out to them in Israel. I began to understand more and more the falseness of the Soviet propaganda. I did not see the Soviet as the paradise on earth where all men are free and live together as brothers. I grew tired of hearing constantly on the radio of the Soviet achievements, of the factories, the industrial plants, the collective farms. I distrusted the Soviet claim to be a peace-loving state, the friend and protector of all oppressed and suppressed peoples. I knew the Soviets as the friends and supporters of the Arabs who had sought the total destruction of the Jewish people in the State of Israel. The propaganda is unceasing and is all around you. On the radio, on television and in the newspapers you are told of the evils of capitalism, of America's imperialist aims, of strikes in the capitalist states and inflation. At every public function it is the same story. At school and on the job, whenever there is free time, there is an official speaker to remind you of the superiority of communism over capitalism. At the cinema, the first fifteen minutes of the program is devoted to the same theme

and on the streets are displayed the "wisdom" of Marx, of Lenin and of Brezhnev. Pick up a book, whether it be of a literary or of a technical nature, published in the Soviet, and the introduction will, as like as not, contain references to important decisions taken at Party Congresses. One cannot escape the propaganda. It is unceasing. Slowly, slowly, I began to see the propaganda for what it was. It was, for the most part, illogical and ridiculous but undoubtedly repeated thousands and thousands of times, it had its effect on the mass of the people who were unable to detect the lies and, I imagine, they were not really interested—their whole history had taught them blind obedience and acceptance of the dictators' authority. Under the Tzars they had enjoyed no freedom: under the communists they had no more. Russia was a vast prison where everything was standardized and decided for you—your work, the food you ate, the apartment in which you lived, the books you read, even your very thoughts were regulated. There was a flat, unrelenting uniformity in which there was no room for the individual, for the non-conformist.

I understood now that I could not live in Russia—but how was I to get out? How was I to attain that freedom which I knew was my right as a human being? I had no-one with whom I could discuss my problem, no friend to whom I could turn. The Soviet, I knew, had signed the Declaration of Human Rights and in theory every Russian had the right to emigrate. But the Convention was a useless, valueless piece of paper and I knew that very few Jews had succeeded in leaving Russia legally. I knew that many had waited years for an exit visa and I knew that from the moment a Jew applied for a visa, he was subjected to harassment in his job—if he was not dismissed—and that he was under the constant observation of the K.G.B.

I decided that to make a formal application for a visa to emigrate to Israel would be of no avail. I must leave the country illegally—but how? Various alternatives suggested

themselves. I might try to leave the country as a tourist and not return, but I was sure that I would not obtain the necessary travel documents because I was a Jew. The ruse would be too obvious even to the dullest official. I might try to cross Russia's land border but I knew that it was guarded by troops, dogs and a variety of electronic devices. And to what country could I escape? Should I try to hijack a plane? This I rejected as quite impractical for while I could not do it alone, I had no one with whom I could share even the idea.

My Correspondence Course at the Marine College at Kaliningrad was almost complete. I must somehow or other, find a job with a shipping company and jump ship at some foreign port. I did not know that it would take almost four years to achieve my object. That night as I made my way home from Babi Yar I thought it all out and it seemed certainly within the realms of possibility.

I knew that before I could get a job on a ship, I would have to obtain a visa. That was normal for anyone who wished to move out of Russia or beyond the limit of her territorial waters. But a sailor required a character reference from his last place of work and he must have been employed there for a minimum period of one year. One would think that it would not be difficult to obtain such a reference if one had worked more or less conscientiously and had not come into conflict with the management. So I thought. But my application would have to be discussed and approved at a meeting of the party and the trade union within the factory. If that hurdle were overcome, the signature of the district committee of the Party had to be obtained and then the papers had to be submitted to the shipping company. I knew that I would have a much better chance of that final employment if I waited until my Correspondence Course was completed—but I could not wait that long. I had only one desire at this stage—to get out of Russia and this desire filled my mind to the exclusion of all else.

Following the formula of Lenin, the Government and the Party placed the greatest emphasis on heavy industry and on the production of armaments. Factories producing goods for the general population–clothing, textiles, food etc., even furniture– had simple equipment, lacked automation, and relied largely on hand labor. Buildings were poorly constructed, badly lighted and inadequately ventilated. As a result, production was low and the workers had little interest in what they did. About this time, however, the Party and the Government began to realize the weaknesses and efforts were made to improve the conditions.

I, myself, was working on designs for ventilation systems and air conditioning, work which my company would carry out in many parts of the Soviet. Some twenty-five technicians were employed and I worked in the same office as four women. I did not find the company particularly congenial. Their conversation was mainly about clothes, the price of goods in the markets, furniture–and their love affairs. When I could see that my presence was embarrassing I would go to the rest room for a smoke and, as I hoped, a chat. Seldom did I find satisfaction there for the talk was about soccer, girls–or the men told smutty stories which did not appeal to me.

I noticed that often during the course of the day, women slipped out to do their shopping to avoid the long wait in queues after work. Everybody worked with one eye on the clock and there was no real interest in what was done. Often when projects were completed, with many pages of drawings and masses of calculations, they were merely filed. The work was often not carried out because some top official in the Ministry had changed his mind or because there was a lack of money or material. The waste of time and energy was appalling. It irked me and consequently I too lost interest and found my work duller by the day.

Relief came when after a year in the drawing room,

I was given the post of engineer which necessitated my visiting various plants to make tests of the ventilation systems and to supervise the installation of airconditioning and refrigeration machinery. In passing, I recall that my first job was at the Factory "Vulcan". The ventilation system was singularly ineffective and the dust was almost suffocating. Most of the workers were women and it was pitiful that they should work there day after day on seven hour shifts in an atmosphere which I found difficult to support for two hours! I travelled to many towns in different parts of the country, testing ventilation systems and making recommendations for their improvement. Sometimes I travelled alone on these trips and sometimes with another engineer. It was a great change to get away from the crowded home of my half-sister where she, her husband and three sons and I, shared two rooms.

The jobs usually lasted a month. This was the apparent, but by no means the true position. The procedure was quite simple when you knew the ropes. Our recommendations were scarcely ever put into effect but they had to be made for officials in the Ministry or from the local Committee of the Party which instructed the Director of the factory to admit us, for certain moneys had been assigned for the purpose and had to be paid over to our plant through a Bank. Who ultimately received the money, I do not know but the Director whose plant we visited, had to go along with the senior official or else take the unpleasant consequences. We understood what was required of us—we made our inspection and our recommendation, taking perhaps a maximum of ten days; the Director would sign all the necessary documents and with a sigh of relief, see us go: and we spent the next two to three weeks sunbathing on the beach of Kiev together with other engineers who had been engaged in similar projects in other parts of the country. When approximately a month had passed, we reported back to our Company. Before that, however, we had to cover our

tracks and prove that we had only just returned from the town to which we had been sent. For this purpose, we would appear at the main railway station at Kiev and approach returning travellers for their clipped railway tickets. This was a regular practice and at the month's end, the crowds at the station were considerable. The police and the railway inspectors knew what was going on and occasionally made raids to try to catch the wrongdoers. Then we would work out some other system. The whole thing was thoroughly dishonest—we were paid for time that we spent in idling and our Company (or the President of the Company) collected the State money for work that was never carried out. And our Company was not alone in this.

It was in April, 1970, that I had proposed to ask the Party Secretary for a character reference when I received an unexpected summons to present myself for examination at the Marine College. I would have to fly to Kaliningrad and post from there my application for the character reference.

Kaliningrad was formerly known as Konigsberg and was then the capital of East Prussia. Consequently even though twenty-five years have passed since World War II and its incorporation in the Soviet, it differs in many respects from other Soviet cities. There is still much to remind one of the great battles that were fought here for it was a center of Nazi resistance. As the Nazis defended stubbornly, so the Soviets and the Americans bombed and bombarded and to this day many of the ruined buildings remain. In the local History Museum, is a model of the city as it was—and very beautiful it must have been. Now, beyond the limit of the ruins, stand rows and rows of four and five-storey boxes with no pretence of architectural adornment. This is typical of Soviet architecture and such "boxes" are to be seen in every Soviet city. I suppose the main purpose is to save money, but I believe there is a more sinister one—to stamp out any attempts at individuality among

the architects–for the decision "to stamp out architectural deviation" was taken at a Party Congress perhaps ten years ago.

For many years Kaliningrad was a closed city which meant that one required a special permit to enter for there are many important military installations and the headquarters of the Baltic Fleet.

My college was in the center of the city and during the German occupation, housed the Gestapo High Command. Now it had as near neighbors the headquarters of the local K.G.B. as well as a prison and a place of detention for drunks, vagrants and prostitutes. From my classroom window I often saw prisoners and sometimes the inside of their cells–little dreaming that two months later I would be sitting in one. The Seminar and Examination period at the College is a most difficult one for Correspondence students. In thirty to forty days they are expected to cover the full year's syllabus. Unless they have studied on their own throughout the year, they are unlikely to do well. I had usually come well prepared but this year I was very ill-prepared for my thoughts were not on my work but on my plans for getting out of Russia. I was depressed, I could not concentrate, I missed many lectures and found little rest at night in the dormitory in which were housed some twenty students. I knew that in Kaliningrad were five shipping companies and with one of these I must somehow find employment. I began to look around for someone to help me.

One of my fellow students was Victor Razanov. I knew him and had passed the time of day with him but I couldn't call him a friend. He lived in Kaliningrad and worked as an engineer in the Research Institute, "Atlantniro". The Institute itself had a number of research vessels and I thought he would be a good contact. My approach was careful. We met in the corridors between lectures and chatted about unimportant matters. Gradually we became a little closer.

He told me that he was thirty-four years of age, that he was married, that he lived with his wife in one room in a communal block and that their only child, a daughter, had died as the result of an injection carelessly administered by a nurse in the local hospital. One afternoon I invited him to drink coffee (and perhaps a glass of vodka) with me in a neighborhood cafe. As we sat at the table, I wondered whether or not I could trust him with my secret desire. He looked, I thought, honest enough, with his blue eyes and his slightly greying hair.

"Victor," I said, "I'm very keen to go to sea. Do you think there's any chance of my getting a job on one of the fishing ships?"

He looked at me closely for a minute and said:

"Why not? I know a lot of people connected with ships and it shouldn't be difficult to arrange. You'll have to meet one or two, entertain them a bit and they'll tell you how to go about it."

I agreed and a few minutes later he went off to see one of his friends on my behalf. On his return I bought two bottles of vodka and we made our way to the offices of one of the shipping companies where Victor introduced me to his friend, Vladimir. On a pretext that he wanted him to go out on a job, Vladimir got rid of his clerk and the three of us sat down to talk and drink. At first Victor and Vladimir paid little attention to me though I am sure now that they were studying my reactions to what they were saying, and my occasional comments. They spoke of their experiences at sea and of the various countries which they had visited and, I suppose, I betrayed my eagerness and my envy. After quite a few glasses of vodka had been drunk and when already I was feeling a little dizzy, Victor broached the question.

"Vladimir, do you think you could help my colleague here to get a job on one of your company ships? He's a good lad and I can vouch for him."

"Of course," said Vladimir. "It's quite simple. All you have to do is to get a character reference, submit it and three or four months you'll be at sea."

He raised his full glass of vodka in salute to me and drained it in a gulp. I couldn't match his drinking though I did my best. I was amazed at how simple Vladimir made it appear.

"But I am a Jew, you know" I stammered. "Will they give me a visa?"

Victor interposed, "I know that, and it'll be quite all-right. You won't be the first Jew to get a visa and you won't be the last. Everything will be O.K. Anyway," he added, "I like Jewish stories." He laughed. "Do you know this one?" And he proceeded to tell one Jewish joke after another and none in very good taste. It was late before the party broke up and I made my unsteady way back to my dormitory with a heavy head but with the feeling that things were running right for me. I couldn't have been more mistaken. A few days later I saw Victor again and it was agreed that I should return to Kiev to get my character reference and that meantime he would make full inquiries in Kaliningrad and write to me when all was ready. I was overjoyed. It was impossible for me to think of lectures and examinations, so I packed my bag and left.

As it was too early to return to Kiev, I decided to stop over in Moscow. I arrived there on 22nd April,1970—a great day, the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Lenin, the father of the Communist Revolution. For a whole year Russia had been preparing for this day. Special committees had been appointed to draw up suitable programmes for the celebration: newspapers and periodicals had been filled with articles on Lenin, his life, his work, his thoughts. It was Lenin, Lenin, wherever one turned. A thousand writers, good and bad, had turned out books about Lenin and these were displayed in every town and in every village of the U.S.S.R. Everything connected with Lenin, with his

family, with his places of residence, whether it was written well or badly, was printed for everything connected with Lenin was precious. In normal years industrial plants and farming companies which had exceeded their production quotas, gave the surplus, as it were, as a present, a holy offering to the Party Congress. This year every such gift was laid at the shrine of the Lenin Jubilee. You could not escape from Lenin–radio, television, the cinema, every bookshop and kiosk, proclaimed his greatness to the world–though I did not see many people buying the books and pamphlets on him. I know that I certainly did not. Millions of words were written about him during that Jubilee Year. Thousands of tons of paper must have been spent–and on the day that climaxed it all, 22nd April, 1970, I, Leonid Friedmanovich,was in the Red Square, Moscow–and it meant nothing to me–the great crowds, the enormous portrait of Lenin that blotted out the blue sky, the sayings of Lenin printed on every wall–left me cold and depressed. Not for me, jollification and drinking. I left Moscow and returned to Kiev.

Immediately on my return to work I approached the Party Secretary of the Company and told her that I required a character reference. She looked at me with an air of suspicion and told me curtly that such a request would have to be submitted to an open meeting of the Party and that the next meeting would be in two weeks' time. She warned me to be ready. There was nothing for it but to wait–and how long a wait it seemed!

At last the evening came and I was called into the room where the meeting was held. I looked around–there were the workers in our company who were members of the Communist Party. I knew them all and was on friendly terms with many–the younger engineers with whom I sat on the beach and played chess or cards, some with whom I had been to the cinema or to the cafe where we had drunk coffee and the occasional glass of wine. There was the chief

of the ventilation group—a Jew, like myself. I had been to his home a few times. I anticipated no trouble and my spirits rose. I smiled but there was no answering smile from anyone there. They sat immobile, cold, with hard staring eyes.

The Party Secretary was the first to speak.

"Tell the Comrades your background", she rapped out, "your education, everything about yourself.....".

I told them whatever I thought was of importance in what must have appeared to be a very dull life. Of my feelings at Babi Yar, of my hopes and dreams for the future, I naturally said nothing. The Secretary of the Comsomol, the Communist Youth Organization, stood up.

"And why were you not a member of the Comsomol?"

I explained that as a boy I had been weak, and that I did not understand what the Comsomol was. It was only in later years that I had developed my body.

The next question came from the back corner of the room.

"Why haven't you attended meetings of the Marxist-Leninist Circle?"

Unwisely I retorted that I was not the only one in that room who did not attend those meetings. The questioner snapped back.

"Answer for yourself. It is you who want the character reference!"

I apologized but stressed that, as many of them knew, I was often away from Kiev on trips connected with my work and I did not have the opportunity to go to the Circle.

"Are you studying on your own?" was the next question.

"Yes," I answered, "and at the college I study Marxism and Leninism."

"That is not enough," was the response,"we want evidence of your active participation. Why did you not participate in the last Saturday Parade?" (note: The "Sub-

otnik" or Saturday Parade is a feature of Soviet life. It is said that on one occasion Lenin had paraded on a Saturday with a board on his back to popularize some slogan. Since then such parades have been organized on a regular basis by the Government and the Party and the "Out-of-works", who are paid, and the Party enthusiasts who are not, participate. The last Subotnik had been organized on a country wide basis because of the Lenin Jubilee.) I thought quickly. "Last Saturday I was in Moscow in the Red Square." After that, questions came thick and fast, everybody remembering some little thing in my life that was apparently not to my credit. I just could not recognize these people who I thought were my friends—or, if not my friends, certainly not my enemies. One of the last to speak was the Jewish head of the ventilation group. He said that he could not support my application for a character reference because I took no part in public life. My work was satisfactory and he had nothing against me personally, but I was not a good citizen. When two others had spoken in a similar vein, I knew that it was all over for me. I took my hat and left the meeting.

I was appalled at the hypocrisy of these people. That men with whom I had sat on the beach, with whom I had played chess and cards, who had shared my bottle of wine, could speak against me as they had, was almost unbelievable. Worst of all had been the ventilation chief. How could a fellow Jew, who had entertained me in his own home, speak against me as he had? My head ached. I walked for hours scarcely knowing where I was and decided that I must quit my job. I realized that for a character reference I had to be in one post for at least a year but I knew now that such a reference was beyond my reach. I would think of something.

Next day at work I handed in my notice. I saw my chief, Yakov. He greeted me and extended his hand. I ignored it and turned my back on him.

"I am not guilty of any crime," he said, "in my place

you would have done exactly the same. I did what I had to do, not of my own free will. It was an order from the top and I have a wife and son to consider." And he added, "I wouldn't want to answer for you if you went to Israel, and I don't know your real intentions. You know what the position of the Jew is and you had no right to ask for such a reference."

Then I lost my temper.

"Yes, I know what the position is—but I am not you. And let me tell you this—I shall be in Israel unless I am in my grave first. Nothing else will stop me." I turned on my heel and went out.

The days dragged by in my misery, but I learned to be patient. Then a letter came from Victor. Everything is O.K., he wrote, I am waiting only for your character reference. Victor is a true friend, I told myself, but how was I to get that character reference?

And now was born in my mind a new and daring plan. I would hand in my notice and would ask for the usual reference which would enable me to seek another job. Such a reference, which was in a set form, did not require any endorsement by a Party Meeting. I would type out the recommendation myself and leave a space for the vital sentence recommending myself for work on a ship going abroad. I felt fairly confident for the various officials signed hundreds of these forms and I felt sure that they never read them. Well, I had to try. I put the paper on the table, the officials duly signed, smiled at me, wished me luck in my new job and handed it back to me. I suppose at this time I was incapable of rational action. I typed in the words I wanted, yet I must have known that my forgery could be easily detected. A recommendation for service on a ship going abroad had to be signed in the District Office of the Communist Party and would be checked by the K.G.B. I had no such signature and there had been no such check but my desperation drove me on. Victor wanted such a character

reference and he should have it. I placed all my hopes now on him. I quitted my job, took all the money I had and with out a word to any of the relatives, I made my way to Kaliningrad. The Kiev chapter of my life was closed and I saw a brighter future ahead.

Arriving in Kaliningrad, my first thoughts were of Victor. I bought a bottle of vodka for I knew his tastes by this time and went immediately to his home. He was not there and his wife did not know when he would be back. I waited five long hours. Victor invited me in but showed little enthusiasm until I produced the bottle of vodka. He poured himself a full measure, then, raising his glass to me, he gave the toast. "To Leonid F. and may he be a good sailor!"

The gesture moved me and in a flood came out the whole story of my misery and my fruitless struggle to get the character reference. I kept back nothing, telling him every detail of my forgery. I gave him the reference; he read it carefully.

"Don't worry," he said, "everything will be O.K. I'm not absolutely familiar with all the procedures but I know those who are. I'll see some of my friends and we'll find a solution to your problem. But it'll take a little time. Give me two days. Meet me at 7:30 in the evening at the "Moscova" cafe. You know the table where we usually sit. Now take your reference and bring it with you with all your papers to the cafe. Good night now and don't worry."

I shook him warmly by the hand and went out. Victor was my hope and he would not disappoint me. I walked round to my old dormitory where a friend gave me a small bed in his room. For two nights I walked the streets of Kaliningrad, my mind filled with only one thought—Victor would arrange everything and in a few weeks perhaps, I would be out of Russia. What I would do once I was on the ship, I did not know, but I would think of something.

At 7 o'clock I was at the cafe. I could not wait any

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longer though I knew Victor would not be there yet. I found the table, set down my bag with all my papers and though I had little money, I ordered food and two bottles of expensive cognac. I wanted to be sure that Victor and anyone else whom he might bring along would be sufficiently mellowed. I was intensely excited. Half-past seven came but there was no Victor. But I must give him a few minutes grace. I began to smoke—one cigarette then another and a third. My hand shook as I lit the match. Eight o'clock had passed. What could have happened to Victor? He was ill; he had been detained at work; he had forgotten the day or I had made a mistake. I knew I had not yet I could not bring myself to believe that Victor had let me down. He was my last hope.

Another half-hour went by. A man of about thirty-five, already bald and with a dull, expressionless face, sat down heavily in the vacant place in which I had expected to see Victor. He ordered a bottle of vodka and waited for it to be brought. He gulped down a glass and sat there shaking his head. In spite of my own preoccupation, I had to observe him and I felt there was something wrong. He looked up, regarded me gloomily and invited me to drink with him. I declined, telling him that I was waiting for friends, but he persisted.

"Drink with me," he said, "I've nothing left to live for. Today is the unhappiest day of my life. My wife has left me and I've been sacked from my job. What's the use of living?"

I felt drawn to him in my unhappiness and encouraged him to talk. He told me that he had been to sea—how I envied him in that moment—but that lately he had been working in the laboratories in the "Atlantniro" Institute—a strange conincidence for that was where Victor worked. Victor—he won't come now. It is 9 o'clock—too late now. I shall not see Victor again. He has let me down. Perhaps he had betrayed me to the authorities. I opened a bottle

of cognac and began to drink with my companion in misery.

Though I was no hardened drinker, I matched him glass for glass. My head swam, my sight was blurred, my tongue was loosened and I had little control of what I said. My new friend began to talk of other things.

"I've been to many countries, you know," he said. "I've seen many things outside and I've spoken to many people. They live better outside Russia than we do and they have freedom. You know what freedom is?" And he took another glass of the cognac.

I was drunk by this time and did not mind what I said. I told him of how I had been in the Red Square on the day of the Lenin Jubilee, of how depressed it had made me; and how bad everything was–the housing, the food, the working conditions.

"Yes," he said, and shook his head gravely. "Let me tell you this. Once, before he was First Secretary, I met Brezhnev in some foreign port. I don't remember which now. We got talking and he told me that he knew all about the mess here–the corruption, the shortages, the inefficiency. But, what could he do? He wasn't the First Secretary. Well, he is now and I can't see that there's been any great change. We're still in as bad a shape as we were." I agreed with him and found other things to criticise.

At 11 0'clock, he stood up, paid his bill and made his unsteady way to the door. I followed but he seemed to have lost interest in me.

"Shall I see you again?" I asked.

"Yes, we'll see each other." And without a goodnight, he walked away. I decided to go back to the dormitory to my friend, Misha. Gradually the night air cleared my brain and I was able to recall some of the things I had said. What had induced me to talk as I had? Why had Victor not come? Who was that man and why had he sat down at my table when there were many other vacant seats? I began to suspect. Was he an agent? It was not natural that he should

have spoken to a stranger in the way that he had. I knew that I had been betrayed.

Back in our room, I asked Misha to play chess with me and for a few minutes I forgot my troubles. There came a knock, but I took no notice. Misha got up and opened the door.

"Passport check," I heard. "Let me see your passport."

I looked up and saw two men there—a policeman and another in civilian clothes.

Misha showed his passport which was in order. The policeman turned to me.

"I want you to come along with me. Bring all your papers and other things and come downstairs."

He was quite polite. I gathered up my things and went downstairs with them, the man in civilian clothes keeping close to me. He said nothing. He looked like an ex-boxer with his flattened nose and cauliflower ears. We got into a car and I sat between the policeman and the "boxer".

At the central Police Station we alighted and were ushered into a fair-sized room in which were seated a police officer, a civilian and a middle-aged woman. I realized that I was to face an interrogation and my worst fears of Victor and of my cafe acquaintance were confirmed.

"Empty your pockets and put everything you have on the table, on this table." said the policeman.

I must admit that there was no bullying. He spoke quietly but firmly and I complied without hesitation. I knew, in any event, that non-compliance with the order would do me no good. I might as well cooperate and at least pretend that I had nothing to hide. Everything was gone through carefully and systematically. My forged character reference and my pocket book were handed to the Police Officer. He turned the pages and asked me about every name and address that he found. Then he came to the telephone number of the British Embassy in Moscow. The explanation for the number being there is quite simple. A couple of

years before, when I had already begun to study English, one of my nephews brought me a book which he had gotten from a friend at school. It was an English grammar book which his friend's father had bought in Finland where he had been on business. On the cover was the address and telephone number of the British Embassy and for no particular reason—perhaps because I might have thought that I would be able to get some other English study books —I had written the number in my pocket book. And now it was in the hands of a Soviet police officer and I was facing interrogation. My possessions were carefully listed and the interrogation began. It was a harrowing experience. The questions came in rapid succession—as one waited for my answer the second prepared his question. They were polite enough, their voices were not loud but I was given no respite. And over and over again they returned to the forged character reference and to the telephone number of the British Embassy. They were not prepared to believe me; they could not disassociate the one thing from the other—the forged character reference and the telephone number. What was the connection? What was I planning? What contact did I have with the British Embassy? My mind was in a whirl. I scarcely knew what I answered. Then the interrogator in the civilian clothes tried a new track.

"Why," he asked, "do you want to work on a ship? You have a good profession. You live in a peaceful city. Why do you want to go to sea?"

"I want to work in a new profession." I said. "As you can see, I am studying at the Marine College, here."

"Then why did you forge your character reference? You could have applied for one in the ordinary way and you would have received it."

"I tried, I asked for one, they wouldn't give it to me," I replied miserably.

He looked at me with some suspicion and began to turn the pages of my student's record book.

"I see here, that in 1967, at the Examination Session, you scored no mark; that you did not answer the questions. Why?"

"I couldn't," I stammered, "at that time I was very depressed."

"But the State was spending money on you to enable you to improve your position. That was a poor way to repay the State."

I was contrite. "I know and I am sorry. But I was not able to do anything. I was ill."

He turned the pages of my pocket book.

"This telephone number of the British Embassy. Can you explain why it is written here?"

"How many more times must I give the explanation!" I told him. Oh! How could I have anticipated that that simple act of mine could have caused me such trouble? He listened."That doesn't sound like the truth, and I want the truth." He got insistent. "What is your connection with the Embassy? Whom do you know?" "I know no one, I have no connection, you must believe me." I was almost crying then. I knew they did not believe me. I remembered reading that a young Jew who had tried to enter the American Embassy was arrested and put in an asylum. Was this my fate?

Now the civilian picked up my pen and unscrewed the top. "What is in here? What have you put here?" he demanded.

"Nothing Nothing at all! There is nothing in the top of the pen—" and my voice broke. I was becoming desperate.

Then the questions began again. Name after name was extracted from my pocket book—who is this? Where does he live? What is his work? What is your connection with him? Until I could think no more and I fell silent.

"Alright," said the Chief, "we'll check your pen later."

The others went out, leaving me with "the boxer". Presently another policeman came and conducted me into a neighboring room.

"Get undressed!" he ordered. I did so, placing my

clothes on a chair. He left me there, standing, naked, while he subjected my clothes to a most careful examination. He turned out the pockets: he even examined the soil on the soles of my shoes. At last he was satisfied.

He turned to me. "Open your mouth! Wide." And with his not too clean finger he probed and probed.

"Turn around! Bend down and open your legs!" The search was over.

Thankfully I put on my clothes and we returned to the interrogation room. I was presented with a foolscap sheet of paper on which had been written, I presumed, a list of my possessions and I was instructed to sign it. I tried to read but my sight was blurred. I signed and after me the woman and the "boxer" signed.

I was driven to another building about five minutes away. I was too exhausted even to register who or what was in the office which we entered. I know that someone took my belt from me. I was pushed through a dark entrance: a door clicked closed and I sank down on to something hard. I slept immediately.

How long I slept I do not know but it could not have been for very long for it was still pitch dark when I awoke. I could feel that I was lying on a bare plank bed without a pillow, sheet or blanket! I stretched out a hand and felt the damp wall of a prison cell. I could hear someone breathing and knew that I was not alone. I fell asleep again and when I awoke it was light.

My cell measured about 3½ meters by 1 meter and was, perhaps 2 meters high. The walls were damp and dirty—it had been a Nazi Gestapo prison, I was to learn later. (Was this the jail I had seen often from my student's quarters?) The furniture consisted only of two bare beds and a pail. There was a heavy door with a small peep hole and high up in the opposite wall a barred window through which filtered some light and dust.

My cell-mate was still asleep. Confused thoughts tum-

bled through my mind and in that moment I wished that I could die. Nothing that I had touched had turned out well. Nobody whom I had known had been true to me: Victor, in whom I had placed such confidence, was in all probability a police informer. My companion, in the cafe, certainly was. One could scarcely trust one's own shadow.

There was movement from the other bed. My cell-mate was awake. He was a small man, dirty and with dirty clothes. His hair was unkempt: his beard was of several days' growth. He yawned, stretched, sat up, scratched his head and his chest and peered at me. His appearance did not inspire confidence nor a desire to speak in me, but yet I was grateful that I was not alone.

"Hullo, young fella! How'd you get here?" His speech was coarse and his voice uncultured.

I told him I had come during the night.

"And how long have you been here?" I asked.

I thought that he would be more interested in himself than in me. And—how did I know that he had not been placed there to suck out anything he could from me?

"Today it'll be a month," he said and with a wealth of descriptive adjectives of whose precise meaning I had been previously unaware, he proceeded to tell me his story. He had been picked up because he had no papers and no job. It didn't worry him overmuch: it was not the first time he had been in prison and he was quite sure it would not be the last. But this, he told me with some relish was a special kind of prison. It was really a place of detention where one was held, without an order from the Public Prosecutor, for no more than thirty days. It was not a hard labor prison, therefore, but there were cells for solitary confinement for those who were subjected to intensive interrogation. I already knew something of what that meant. No, prison really didn't worry him. He had left his village school after two or three years and he had no profession. He moved from town to town and was in and out of jail.

Jail, he said, was like a home to him and was better than the so-called freedom of the outside world. What did he do there? When he came out—as he would again, in a day or two, the authorities would put him to work as a "black laborer" on some building site. He would be paid seventy to eighty roubles a month. And a man could not support a wife and child on that and still have something over for his glass of vodka. Ivan was his name and the mention of vodka set him off on the thought of his drinking adventures in the main cities of the Soviet. I listened with half an ear and pondered on the utter uselessness of his life and the ever repeated circle of jail, temporary work, unemployment, drinking, tramping, jail.

We were interrupted by the warden who put his head in at the door and told us we had ten minutes to attend to Nature's needs. I went down to the end of the corridor and saw that this was, indeed, the prison I had seen from my dormitory window. I even caught a glimpse of two of my former fellow students. Only yesterday I had been with them : now I was inside with no idea of when I would see them again. They were free but I was on the wrong side of the wall. The ten minutes passed and we were back in our cell with Ivan continuing the story of his life. He was not a spy, I decided, he was too crude, too ignorant for that. The warden brought us food—a kilo of bread that was to last the day and a cup of black tea without sugar. That was for breakfast. I lay on my bed and considered the hopelessness of my position. Black despair overwhelmed me and in that moment, if they had left me my belt, I could have ended it all. My attention became fixed on a particle of dust which caught the shaft of sunlight which filtered through that barred window. It had come from the outside, from the heavens above. I concentrated on it—it was Almighty who had in this way found a means of talking to me, of raising me from the dark pit into which I had sunk. I shut out the cell, I shut out my uncouth companion and I listened

to the voice of the Lord.

"Life," He seemed to say, "has dealt you another hard blow, but do not despair. You are still young and inexperienced and have not yet learned whom to trust and whom not to trust. Now you must summon up all your inner strength for you have a hard fight ahead, but, if you are guided by Me, you will come through in the end. Now your gaolers will try to find sufficient material to enable them to bring you into Court—and you must not help them. What have they after all? A forged character reference which you have not used? A telephone number? These, in themselves are not sufficient".

I knew that I must speak as little as possible and that I must not allow myself to be diverted from my original story that I wanted to go to sea, that I had taken the course at the Marine College and this was clear evidence of that desire: that I did not have my own apartment in Kiev and that when I had been unable to get a character reference in the ordinary way, I had been tempted to forge one. Yet I had not attempted to profit from it. I had not presented it to any authority and so I had really done nothing wrong. As for the telephone number of the British Embassy— I had nothing to hide. I had told the truth about it and could say nothing more. My thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of a policeman who conducted me to a small office where I saw a woman in a white uniform, who I presumed, was a nurse. She told me to undress and proceeded to examine my skin for any external signs of venereal disease. This did not take long. Then the policeman gave me a board on which was a chalked number—my detention number, no doubt. With this, I was photographed, after which I was fingerprinted and then returned to my cell.

At 12 o'clock the guard brought our mid-day meal—thin cabbage soup with no meat or fat. I tried one spoon but could not get it down. My cell-mate told me that this was the usual meal. He assured me that it was better than

the soup of the previous day and he did not require a second invitation to drink mine.

Later I was taken to another room where was seated a man of about fifty or fifty-five years of age. He was bald and his manner and expression were polite and friendly. I was surprised and even a little puzzled, when he began to talk about his friends, his hobby of stamp-collecting—all in a most interesting manner. He spoke of everything except my "crime" and seemed to be trying to make me feel that everything "outside" was so pleasant and enjoyable. I almost forgot where I was, I felt so much at ease in his company. But at last he came to the purpose of the interview. Looking at me keenly he said, "It is much better to be outside than in here, isn't it?" I nodded but said nothing.

He went on, "But you must understand that you will have to remain here until you have satisfied us as to the true reasons for what you have done. Now, I don't want to be cruel in any way, but you must tell us the truth."

"I have told you the truth," I said, "I have nothing to hide."

He shook his head a little sadly, I thought, and went on:

"You had a good job in Kiev. Why did you want to change everything and go to sea?"

I gave the same explanation as I had given before. Then he took my pocket book and turning the pages he asked about everyone whose name was written there. Who was he? What did he do? What was my special relationship with him? Why was his name in my book?

"Why have you entered the telephone number of the British Embassy? What is your connection with the British Embassy? Whom do you know there?"

I told him, as I had told others. "I know nobody at the British Embassy. I have never been there. I wrote the telephone number because I was studying English and I had some idea of inquiring about a book there. But in fact,

I never did."

"Well," he said, "I don't think that is a very good explanation. You will have to think again. That will be all for now but we shall meet again and then you will tell me about the telephone number."

He called a policeman who took me back to my cell. Thinking of the interview, I came to the conclusion that my interrogator was not a police official, but from the K.G.B. No wonder he could not accept my simple explanations.

Next day my cell-mate was released. He expressed no excitement and no pleasure. As he said, it was not the first time he had been detained and he was sure it would not be the last. It was really all the same to him whether he was inside or out. At least, when he was inside, he knew when he would get his next meal!

And now I was all alone in that box of a cell without books, papers or companionship. By stretching my arms, I could touch the opposite walls and the ceiling. What was to become of me? What would they do with me? Day followed day and I saw nobody except the warden who brought me my food. I tried to eat it but it turned my stomach. My body was dirty and sweaty, my clothes clung to me and gave off an evil odor. My head swam and I began to talk to myself. I had to talk to someone! A rash broke out on my body and when next he came to the cell, I asked the guard if I might at least have a chance to wash myself.

After ten minutes he returned and told me that I might take a shower. The joy of that cold water douche was spoiled by the fact that I had no towel with which to dry myself and that I had to put on again, my dirty, sweaty, smelly clothes. But it was something.

From the other side of the shower partition I could hear women's voices. They were loud and coarse and from their conversation, I could judge that they were professional prostitutes. That I had come to this! I knew their type for I had seen them at street corners, at the railway stations,

in the bars. Ugly women, for the most part, with an excess of make-up and often drunk. Like my former cell-mate, they were, I was sure, here not for the first time—nor would it be their last.

Now I was alone again. I lay on the bare plank bed and tried to anticipate events. Why was I being kept in solitary confinement? I asked myself. Clearly the interrogator wanted to break my spirit. He appeared friendly but that was just a trap. He would want to break me down so that I would reveal to him even my innermost thoughts. Now there was nothing with which to charge me. I had committed no crime. In itself, forging a character reference was no crime, for I had not used it. They had really nothing against me and if I could hold out for a month, they would have to release me. My cell-mate had told me that. A month—thirty long days and nights. But some had already gone. I must hold out and devise a new strategy. When next I was questioned, I would keep my answers to the minimum "Yes" and "No", "I don't know" "I can't remember". That would have to suffice The interrogator was experienced in his work but I would have to resist him. I must summon up all my inner reserves and pit myself against him or else he would drag out from me some fact which would be sufficient justification for keeping me in jail for years. I counted the days, the hours and minutes as they dragged by. The day came when I found myself with him once more. He would expect me to be weak, I knew, so I put on an expression of extreme gloom and lack of interest. I dropped my head and concentrated on a spot on the floor. When he greeted me cheerfully, I replied glumly.

"Well, and how do you feel now?" he asked heartily.

In line with my self-decided strategy, I answered "I don't know."

He seemed surprised, but went on: "Have you thought about your position?"

"Yes."

"And what have you decided?"

"I don't know."

And so it continued. To every question I gave the answer, yes, no or I don't know!

It was to be a battle but I would not give in. He was experienced and shrewd. By his show of friendliness he wanted to win me over, to get me to talk freely and give something away, but I would not be moved. I would show him that solitary confinement, far from creating a desire to talk, could have the opposite effect. I let him see that I was too depressed to talk: I fixed my eyes on that one spot on the floor and I replied in monosyllables to his probing questions. He tired first, and after half an hour of futility, I was returned to my cell.

An almost uncontrollable desire to walk, to run, to do something, possessed me. But in that narrow cell, there was scarcely room to move. A great weakness overwhelmed me but I must not give way. Wild thoughts flooded my brain. I counted to 1000, turned round, counted again to 1000, tore at my hair—and counted again. I must keep sane: I must not let them break my will!

The door opened and my food was set down on the table—thin cabbage soup without meat or fat, and a bowl of porridge. It was poor food, worth not more than 30 kopeks. I gazed on it with distaste and a new idea came to me. Here I was detained for no real reason: I was not a vagrant: my identity papers were in order: I had committed no crime: I had not been detained on the instructions of the Public Prosecutor. My detention, then, was quite illegal. I would go on a hunger strike and thus force them to release me. I left the meal untouched: the guard came in: picked up the dishes and without a word took them from the room. The procedure was repeated the next day. On the third day I was taken into the Governor's Office. He looked at me sternly: "Why do you not eat?" he demanded.

I answered quietly: "I have no appetite."

I had decided that I would say nothing about the law, about illegal detention when no charge had been brought against me. He knew, I was sure, better than I, what he could or could not do. No, my attitude would be simply that I could not eat because I was depressed and that thus solitary confinement would drive me mad—as indeed, it might and in my mind the counting restarted.

"I have no appetite." I repeated.

"Prison rules provide," he said, "that if a prisoner does not eat, we can force him to. Do you understand that?"

"Yes," I said. I would follow the same line as I had followed with the bald-headed interrogator.

"I don't recommend you to continue your hunger strike," he went on.

"I have no appetite." I told him for the third time.

"You understand that you must eat to live?"

"Yes." I said.

"Then will you eat?" he asked.

"No. I have no appetite."

We were getting nowhere and I was taken back to the cell.

A little later two men came in and told me that they had orders to feed me.

"Yes." I said, and on their instructions I lay, face upwards, on the bed. My arms and legs were secured and a tube was inserted in my mouth and forced down into my gullet. I could feel something butting in my stomach. I could have protested but I knew it would be to no avail—I had not the strength to resist even if I had wanted to and the feeding was, at least, a break in the terrible monotony and an opportunity to see another human face. They were not cruel men and they were merely doing what they were told. I began to look forward to their next coming.

Everyday my condition became worse. The cell was virtually airless for there was no proper ventilation. Only

when the door was opened did some non-stale air seep in. The smell from my slop bucket was almost unbearable: my clothes stank from the sweat of my dirty body: an intolerable, itchy rash broke out on my skin. I scratched and scratched but there was no surcease from my misery. I clutched at the wall, threw myself down on the floor, I moaned in wretchedness. At night I prayed for day: by day I prayed for night. My sight was blurred, my mind was a tangle of confused thoughts. Had God deserted me? Had I imagined that His Voice had come to me on that ray of sunlight—how many days ago? I was almost at the end of my tether when the Warden called for me and told me that I was being sent to the Hospital. I could not believe my ears. I was too depressed to take in at first what he had said. I was to leave that cell? I was to go to the hospital where there would be soap and water and clean clothes? For the first time for many days, I smiled.

The two hour wait in my cell with two policemen passed quickly and we were in a car in the bright sunlight. What an inexpressible joy it was to breathe the clean, fresh air, to see the bright sun and to feel the warmth of its rays upon me. Then I knew, in truth, that the Almighty had spoken to me through that ray of sunshine, and tears—tears of joy—flooded into my eyes. By the time we stopped before a tall building, which was, I supposed, the hospital, the itchiness that had enveloped my whole body, had disappeared.

My escorts placed me before an official who asked me a few routine questions and filled in certain particulars on a card. Then he handed me a complete set of clean clothes and instructed an orderly to take me to the bathroom. Words cannot describe, adequately, the utter joy of that bath with hot water and sweet smelling soap. I stretched and rolled, rubbed and luxuriated. I dried myself, put on the fresh, clean clothes and indicated to the attendant that I was ready. We went by elevator to the second floor and now I began to look around. I saw that the attendant carried keys which

locked and unlocked every door. I looked up and saw that the windows were barred. This was no ordinary hospital. I caught a glimpse of some of the patients. I saw their twisted expressions. Then I knew where I was—I was in an asylum for the insane! My joy was indeed shortlived. I had exchanged one form of detention for another. What would happen to me now? This was but to be a continuation of my suffering.

I had of course heard about the institutions for the insane—who in the Soviet cities had not? But I had no idea of what they really were. I was curious to see these people—to learn how they behaved and how they were treated. We came to Ward No. 1: my companion unlocked the door and I gazed into a room in which were about twenty beds in two long rows. Inside the entrance sat an orderly in a white coat and his eyes followed the movements of everyone of the patients. I was directed to my bed—a real bed covered with a white sheet with no walls or ceiling within arm's length! Oh, the joy of it. I sank down into the sheer luxury of those white sheets and it did not distress me that the man in the next bed continually rolled his eyes, shook his head and clashed his teeth like castinets: that most of the others had yellow parched faces and expressionless eyes: that many groaned and plucked nervously at their heads, at their hair, at anything within reach. I had a bed with real sheets and blankets and pillow. I removed my slippers and stretched my legs, pulled the top sheet and blanket up to my neck and slept. I was completely relaxed—I slept deeply and dreamt.

When I awoke I considered my position. What would become of me I did not know. I was with insane people, I knew, but I was with people and this was infinitely better than being alone in a tiny cell. I could move about: I could hear voices: I might even be able to talk with the guard. He must know that I was not mad and that I would be able to carry on a normal conversation. But it was too soon to make any approach to him. I lay on my back and looked up

at the whiteness of the ceiling and for a time forgot where I was, forgot the difficulty of my situation. I was taken to a small room, lined with books. At a large desk sat a woman whom I took to be a doctor–probably a psychologist. She opened a new file and began to question, probing, probing into my background. I had nothing to hide and to her I felt I could speak quite freely. My name, the names of brothers and sisters–question after question. It was a relief not to have to weigh every word I said; not to have to confine myself to "yes", "no", "I don't know". I could almost feel a weight lifting from me.

I was returned to my Ward which seemed to be on the second floor. Not all the inmates were insane–that was obvious. They must have been detained like myself or committed by the courts as dissidents who dared find fault with the system and had "stepped out of line." Clearly, those who did not approve of the system must be mentally ill! But many were insane. Inspite of myself I almost laughed at their antics, wondering if continued association with them might not change me. Meantime, I would enjoy the freedom of walking and moving freely, relaxing on a clean bed and eating normal meals.

After dinner, I was taken to the Senior Doctor of that floor. He invited me to sit down facing him and after he had studied my file and my face for a few minutes, he suddenly asked:

"And how do you feel now?"

I answered that I felt much better and he looked back at the file and considered the entries made earlier by his woman colleague. He asked a few questions about my past and then came, as the others had done, to my forging of the character reference and to the telephone number of the British Embassy. I could not give any answers different from those I had given before but he did not seem to be satisfied. Finally he told me that he was required to make a report on my mental state.

"I can see," he said, not unkindly, "that at the moment you are depressed. We shall give you a course of medical treatment and study your reactions."

He wrote something on a pad, summoned an orderly to whom he handed the prescription, and dismissed me. What lay ahead, I did not know.

I returned to the Ward and now I had an opportunity to look around me and to take stock. Previously I had been too tired and too overwhelmed by the change from confinement of that narrow cell. I realized, now, that there was indeed little space between the individual beds and that inside the locked door sat a man in white, whose eyes constantly moved over the "patients". I learned later that this was the "control" ward to which came all newcomers as well as others who had been committed, though they were at the far end. Here the doctors could observe closely the behavior of the inmates and could receive reports from the guard. But now I looked at my fellows as best I could, for I am shortsighted and my glasses had been taken from me when I came into the ward. Apparently they were not permitted here—I was able to deduce a possible reason for this later.

I felt, as one does, someone staring at me. It was a man, three or four beds away and his eyes did not move from mine. I lowered my head but the eyes continued to bore into me. I turned away but still I felt that unblinking stare. Another approached my bed: stood there, silent, for some minutes and then moved on to another. His head was bent and his expression indescribably sad, but he made no sound. Suddenly there came a voice from nearby, "Victor—show me how you can cry." And the lad burst into tears, great sobs wracking his frame. It was pathetic to see and to hear him. Then came another command: "Stop crying, now, Victor!" And as suddenly as he commenced, Victor stopped. There was a pause—"Now Victor, I want you to smile", and a smile of sweet innocence covered his features. "Now, laugh— loud-

er, louder, Victor! I want to hear you laugh." And poor Victor laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks and his tormentor ordered him to cry again. And so it continued for about half an hour until I could take it no longer. I went to the guard in white who sat there unmoved by the door.

"Can't you stop this humiliation of a sick man?" I demanded.

I could smell the vodka on his breath as he turned his blood-shot eyes towards me.

"I should have told you," he said roughly, "it would be best for you to keep your mouth shut!" And he spat into a corner. I looked at Victor, "Go to your bed now, Victor, and don't listen to anybody." Dumbly, like some terrified animal, he moved slowly to his bed and lay down. No one interfered.

Another came to my bed. "Do you know who I am?" he asked.

"No," I said, "I have no idea."

"I am Lenin" he said and looked at me.

Then someone began to sing, another to cry and a third to clamp on his teeth. Noises grew as the day closed in and I pulled the blanket around my ears and then over my head to block out the sounds and the sights of this strange new environment. I fell asleep and did not wake until morning.

And now that the first shock of being away from my cell had passed, I began to analyze my new situation. Why was I here in an Institution for the insane? I was not mad. Wanting to go to sea was not a sign of madness. Even forging a character reference to achieve that end could not be called the act of a madman. What would they do with me there? I knew that I could not be detained indefinitely in the prison without an order from the Public Prosecutor for I had not been convicted of any crime, but here it was different. No court order was necessary so no doubt the interrogation would continue. But what did they hope to

find out? I had nothing to hide except my secret intention to get out of the country and to my own people in Israel and I had told only the truth. But I must work out some procedure, some way of resisting the assaults upon my innermost thoughts.

Suddenly there came the sounds of a struggle and a cry. "I don't want another injection! Don't give me another injection" and two attendants came in dragging between them a young man whose battered face showed what he had already gone through. And now I guessed why my glasses had been taken from me. Was this what was in store for me? But this was no time for my own thoughts. The attendants threw him roughly on his bed and, though he had ceased to struggle, one of them continued to beat him with his fists about the head. I had the impression that they were enjoying this torture of a fellow human being—and there was nothing I could do to stop it. The guard had already warned me to keep my mouth shut. While the attendants held him there, a nurse came in with three wide leather straps and with these he was secured to the bed—one over the legs, the second over the abdomen and the third over his chest. The straps were pulled tight with all the strength they had and the victim could not move. I looked at that pain-drawn face—a young man of perhaps twenty, whose hair was already turning white. What could have been his crime? As the nurse approached with the syringe, I saw the fear in his eyes and felt, rather than heard, the cry that was forced from him. As the needle touched his skin, he fainted away. It was a pitiful sight—that a man should have to suffer such indignity! I looked at the guards and the nurse. They seemed quite unconcerned. To them, I suppose, this was an everyday occurrence. For them, it bore no special significance. The injection was administered, the straps were removed and the attendants withdrew. I assumed that the wretched young man would regain consciousness in due course.

"How long have you been here?" came a voice from the bed next to mine.

"Only two days." I said.

"Oh yes, you are the new one. But don't let things like this surprise you. They happen often and one grows to accept them. I have been here for four months and it is all a matter of course. You'll get used to it too. You must be prepared for anything."

I looked with horror upon him—to regard such a scene with complete equanimity: not even to protest inwardly at such treatment.

"But why did he plead so piteously?"

"He just didn't want the "sulphurzin" injection. He's afraid of it."

"I've never hear of this," I said, "Sulphurzin—what is it?"

"The injection itself," he said, "is very painful. But the after effects are worse. You are paralyzed, your temperature rises to about 40 degrees and you cannot move for about two days."

I shuddered at the description. He went on calmly as though he were telling a simple story of no significance at all.

"I believe the doctor has ordered ten injections, and he has had three up to now."

"But for Heaven's sake," I burst out, "what has he done to deserve that?"

"I don't know all the facts," said my neighbor, "but I believe he was rude to the doctor or wouldn't listen to him. So he must be taught to observe the rules of this place."

It flashed through my mind that the same thing could happen to me. Here, in this Institution, I had no rights. They could do with me what they wanted. There was no authority to which I could complain. If I tried to resist, the Doctor could enforce his will. If he could not break me

psychologically, he had other means and I saw myself battered and strapped to a bed with the nurse hovering over me with a syringe. What should be my strategy? How should I respond to the interrogations which I knew must follow? My thoughts were interrupted.

"And why are you here? What have you done?" my informant asked.

And so I told him my story—how I had wanted to go to sea, how I had followed the course at the Marine Institute, how I had been refused a reference by my local Union and how, in desperation, I had forged the character reference —though I had not used it. I told him of the prison and of the interrogations.

He nodded his head. "It is an unusual case," he admitted. "I've seen many different cases here in my four months, but never one quite like this. But wait—I remember now, just after I came in, there was a fellow whom they held because he tried to cross the border illegally."

"But I didn't want to escape from the country," I said. I didn't want to give away anything. For all I knew, he was an agent planted there to worm something out of me. "I only wanted to work on a ship and I had taken the Course in Marine refrigeration."

"Yes, yes," he said, "I believe you but they don't. I suppose the previous interrogations didn't satisfy them and they hope to get something more out of you here." He went on after a pause, as though he were weighing up everything I had told him. "And the business of the telephone number makes it much worse. They are not children to believe that you have written down in your diary so dangerous and suspicious a number as that of the British Embassy without intending to use it."

He pursed his lips and looked at me as though he expected some comment. There was nothing I could say.

I had told him the truth.

"The forged character reference and the telephone number taken together give one something to think about. By the way, what is your nationality?" he asked.

"I am a Jew," I said, with perhaps a tinge of pride. "Do you think that makes any difference?"

"At this point, yes," he said. "We have only now heard of the group of Jews who tried to hijack that plane in Leningrad. This coincidence is not going to be in your favor and you should try to realize this. I think you are going to have a hard time here."

He spoke with no particular emotion or emphasis but every word fell on me like a blow. I did not think he was trying to frighten me: he was merely indicating what my position was. I felt lost—completely lost. What would happen to me now? What would they do to me? It seemed that I had exchanged one form of suffering for another. I felt suddenly tired—tired almost beyond endurance. I closed my eyes and sank back on the bed but my neighbor went on relentlessly.

"You know, we can divide the patients here—" and he stressed this with something of a sneer, "we can divide the patients here into various groups. In the first there are those who are genuinely ill—who really belong here. In the second are the habitual drunkards and those who, as a result of depression and great unhappiness, have tried to commit suicide. Group three patients are those who have been sent here by the Police, by the military authorities or by their employers. They are not here for treatment, but for observation. The authorities here will watch every move and reaction and will devise means of assessing their mental ability. Inmates belonging to what I designate Group 4 have been committed by the Courts. Found guilty of certain abnormal crimes they receive prescribed treatment. With them

we do not mix: they are kept apart, separated from the rest by metal grilles–which you may see at the end of the corridor. We–you, I think, and certainly myself, belong to Group 5, the last group. We have been separated from Society because we are considered dangerous elements. We have not been committed by any order of Court, but perhaps some psychiatrist has found in us some mental disease and so for the time being, until we are cured of the disease, we will be kept here. When I think of our case, I recall the well-known saying: "If you want to meet really clever people, you will find them in a mental institute." He spoke quietly and without emotion and his words made a deep impression on me.

"Yes," he mused. "They have found in us a dangerous mental disease. And what is it? What is this disease that is common to all of us who belong to this group? It is the holding of an independent point of view and the critical approach to the reality of the social structure around us. From the first days of the Soviet system, this critical attitude has been regarded as a dangerous disease. In Stalin's day it was not difficult to cope with. The deviate, the critic, was either put to death or committed to penal servitude in the labor camps of the North. In these days, when the Soviet is more sensitive to foreign public opinion, when it is endeavoring to foster more friendly relations with the West, it is more difficult. Such men of independent thoughts cannot simply be eliminated or held for years in the camps, so we are held for observation, ostensibly in mental institutions. There is some justification for this and it is infinitely more respectable." He sighed deeply and paused.

I seized the opportunity to ask: "And why are you here?"

"I," he said, "I criticized the Party authority at my place of work, The result–I was sacked. Such action is

justifiable so I spoke out in defense of my rights. I was determined to have justice. I spoke and I wrote criticizing the Party and its administration. Such criticism is unacceptable, it is not to be tolerated—so here I am in an institution for the insane!"

"And how long will you stay here?"

"That I don't know and the doctor won't know either for a decision in a case such as mine is not made by the medical staff. It will be made by the K.G.B. The K.G.B. committed me and when the K.G.B. decides, I shall be released."

Where did I come in all this, I wondered. I supposed that I had been sent here on the orders of the K.G.B. and so I could not even guess how long I should have to remain. Perhaps I should not be released at all—and at the thought a cold shiver ran down my spine.

"And you think that I am in Group 5?" I said.

"Yes." he said slowly. "I should think so, though your case is a new one. As I said, in the four months that I have been here, I haven't met a case exactly like yours. I really cannot give you any advice on how you should conduct yourself but in the next ward there is a neurologist and I think he'll be able and willing to help you. He is, I should say, about fifty-five years of age and is in our Group 5."

"Why is he here? What has he done?"

"His case is somewhat similar to mine. I don't know all the details but he has told me enough about his case. It seems he wrote a letter to the Town Prosecutor of Kaliningrad in which he quite strongly criticized certain of his actions. That was enough. There came a knock on his door a few nights later. He was already asleep but he was obliged to open the door where he was confronted by two men, one of whom, I think, you already know. He was ordered to dress and to come with them to the Hospital for observation.

When he declined, he was dragged from the apartment in spite of tearful protests from his wife, as well, and forced into an official car. The neighbors who had been aroused did not dare to interfere. The doctors here, of course, certified that he was mentally ill and he has been here now for eight months. His wife is allowed to visit him on special days but the meetings are sad and tearful. The poor man has grandchildren whom he misses sorely, but how can grandchildren be told that their grandfather is in an institution for the insane and how could they be brought to a place like this? But it is possible that he will be released soon."

"But can I see him before he leaves?" I interrupted. "The guard at the door is not likely to let me go into another ward."

"Let me see," he answered. "There is a period when all the doctors are occupied in their rooms. Then you must ask the guard for permission to go to the toilet to smoke. This is accepted. Meantime I shall find an opportunity to talk to the Doctor and to explain your case." When I looked, I suppose, somewhat doubtful, he went on, "No, it's quite alright. The guards let me move around fairly freely because they know me now. I'll see the Doctor and arrange for him to meet you in the toilet. I'm sure he'll give you sound advice. I know the guard is watching us. Perhaps we've been talking too long. Remember, you're under observation all the time here, so it doesn't pay to take any chances!"

"Now, before you go, tell me your name." I said.

"Anatoly." he said.

The guard stood up. Anatoly said: "Now move over to your bed. The doctors are coming in and it would not help you if we were seen together."

I quickly went across to my own bed and a moment later, three men in white, who I presumed were doctors, came in. I could not see them very clearly for, as I mentioned before, my glasses had been taken from me. At every bed they asked the same question: "How are you feeling

now?" Sometimes the guard, who accompanied them added a few words. As they approached me, I saw that one was the doctor to whom I had spoken the previous day. He asked me how I was and then in a lower tone spoke to the one next to him. I caught only snatches of what they said as they moved away. "I suggest aminosin. But we can discuss him in more detail later." They concluded their round and we were instructed to lie down and rest until it was time to prepare for lunch. At about half-past twelve, we washed and made ourselves tidy and at this stage a nurse came in to give us medicine. She handed me three yellow pills which she instructed me to swallow. I did not know what they were but I had no option but to obey. Anatoly slipped by and whispered, "Our Doctor friend will see you in the toilet after lunch."

Lunch was served in a large room on the other side of the corridor and into it we trooped at one o'clock. We each had a single metal plate and a spoon—there were no forks as, I suppose, these were regarded as dangerous. We had soup and porridge, a poor meal which left me hungry for there was no second helping. With keen anticipation, I made my way to the toilet and soon spotted Michael Ivanovich whom I recognized from the description Anatoly had given me. He was a well-made man of about fifty to fifty-five years of age, bald and with an intelligent face which was rather wrinkled. I approached him and somewhat diffidently, I asked: "Are you Michael Ivanovich?"

"Yes," he said, "and you, I suppose, are Leonid?"

I nodded.

"Come then," he said, "let us move away into a corner. It will be less crowded and perhaps not quite so evil smelling!" He laughed. "Come along. I think I shall be able to help you. I know something of your case from Anatoly and I want to help you. All my life I've tried to help others who have been penalized unjustifiably and there are many public officials who have little reason to like me." He seemed to

be enjoying the recollection of the wrongs that he had righted and my confidence in his ability to help me increased. But he was still talking.

"I shall probably be released so this will be our only opportunity to talk–first of all, let me ask you a question. Do you know why you have been sent here and have you ever been in a place like this before?" He looked at me keenly and I knew I could tell him everything.

"No," I said, "it is not really clear to me. This is the first time that I have been subjected to such an ordeal."

"Well, let me go over the ground as far as I know it from Anatoly and you will correct me if I go wrong. As for the precise reason for your being here, only your interrogator will know that. Now, let us proceed. Before being brought here you spent time in prison. You were not under arrest. You were merely being detained because there was no order from the Prosecutor. Right?"

"Yes." I said, and I was about to complain of the injustice of the whole procedure when he stopped me with a gesture.

"They had a perfect right to detain you but for not more than one month, if you had no passport. This would give them time to identify you. But if you had a passport, then your detention was illegal. But yet you cannot complain. If you do, they will merely state that you had no passport on you at the time of your arrest and you will not be able to prove otherwise. Now you are here, in this asylum or "durdom" as we call it, and again without any order from the Prosecutor or a Judge.My wife was here a few days ago and she told me of the hijack attempt by certain Jews in Leningrad. This is unfortunate for you for no doubt the authorities think that you are also attempting to escape from Russia and they will use every possible means to make you talk. This means that you must be very guarded in everything that you say. I am a neurologist and I know a little about such things." I leaned forward, nearer to him for I felt that he would give me good guidance on how to meet the new ordeals that

lay ahead.

"It is more than likely that they will use certain drugs." —And I recalled the three pills that I had already been forced to swallow.—"If you really had absolutely no intention of wanting to escape from Russia, then you have nothing to worry about, but if there was in your mind, no matter how deep down, such an intention, then we must make preparations. You must concentrate only on the story that you have told. You must go over this in your mind again and again until it becomes a part of you. Beyond that you must know absolutely nothing. You must remember nothing."

He was most emphatic and vaguely I realized the importance of what he was saying. I began at once to recall what I had said to my interrogators. But I must pay attention now to the good Doctor who was trying to help me. He went on: "You know here they can do almost anything they like with you for there is no authority to which you can complain; there is no one to whom you can appeal for protection. Just think positively: tell yourself your story over and over again. Don't allow yourself to think of anything else—and I feel everything will be alright with you. You didn't give way in prison, there's no reason why you should give way here. They can't hold you here indefinitely and I think you'll soon be free."

I thanked him for his advice and his encouragement.

"What is the connection between this asylum and the police department?"

"There's a very close connection. I am of the opinion that institutions of this sort are under the direct control of the Police or of the K.G.B. and I should not be surprised to learn that many of the attendants and the apparently medical personnel are from the Police and are not medically trained at all." He looked around and saw that the last of the patients were filing out of the toilet.

"We must not remain here alone," he said. "Go back to your ward now, and good luck to you!" I shook his hand

and was very soon stretched out on my bed.

There was a buzzing in my ears, my head ached and I had a horrible feeling of dizziness. This was, no doubt, the effect of those pills. How long I lay I do not know nor do I know whether I slept or not. But suddenly I felt someone shaking me. I opened my eyes and groaned.

"Get up," she said. "The Doctors are waiting for you!"

Slowly I raised myself off the bed and slowly I followed her down the long corridor, past three wards, to a heavy iron studded door. She knocked and I heard a key turned in the lock. We were admitted and the door was fast closed behind us. I saw at a table two men, one of whom I recognized as one of the doctors who had passed through the ward earlier in the day. The other, probably a police official, had a white badge on his coat. Before them was a pile of papers—my record I presumed—and this they studied for a few minutes. The doctor looked up and in a normal voice invited me to sit down. "Now," he said, "I have asked you to come here so that I may talk to you about your childhood, your parents, your friends and so on. I know that you have been asked about these things before, but perhaps I may learn something more. I have, on the basis of what I have in this file, discussed your case with some of my colleagues and it seems to us that your most recent actions have not been quite normal and quite illogical. And that is why you are here—and here we shall have to keep you until we are satisfied that you are mentally healthy. I do know that this is not the ideal place in which to live, but that is the rule. I have asked two of my colleagues to join me here today so perhaps, between us, we shall be able to get a complete picture of you."

I was sitting now in the center of the room and I felt the three pairs of eyes trained on me, watching my every action and reaction. The pills had had a horrible effect on me—my body felt big and weak. My mind was clouded: concentration was very difficult and all I wanted was to

sleep. It was a state of unnatural and enforced relaxation. With an effort I concentrated on Michael Ivanovich and on what he had told me. No, I would not give up. They could, of course, force me to talk; they would try to confuse me with their questions. I must answer as briefly as possible and must try not to give anything away. I looked at the Doctor.

"I do not feel well now," I said, "I cannot talk to you now."

The medical man at the next table broke in, "That is why you are here. We will try to help you."

Then the interrogation began. I was already familiar with the procedure and perhaps this helped me. Question after question was fired at me. Then—what books had I read, had I read any of the books of—and they named various authors, among them the so-called dissident writers. What was my opinion of such and such? I cannot remember all the questions now for I was very tired, physically and mentally. The man whom I suspected as being from the Police, was particularly pressing and the doctor wrote down all the answers. My experience in the prison helped me now—while I did not always pay full attention to the question, for it could always be put a second time, I concentrated on my answers. I realized that I could not follow fully my previous technique for I had to show some willingness to talk, for the doctor had stressed that on the basis of my answers, they would arrive at a decision on my mental state and this would determine the length of my stay in the asylum. All this I realized vaguely, yet sufficiently to keep me out of trouble. The questions on the events of my life, the simple, straightforward things, I answered fully, but when they asked for an opinion of someone's philosophy, a criticism of someone's work, it was always one which I did not know of, that I had no clear idea, that I did not fully understand what he was aiming at, that I had insufficient experience in such fields. No, I don't think I committed

myself at that session and at last I was dismissed.

Next day the nurse brought another three of the "aminozin" pills and she stood by me until she was sure I had swallowed them down. My condition became worse—my head swam, my body was not my own. By chance I met Michael Ivanovich in the toilet and I told him of the pills. I am sure he could see without my telling him that I was receiving "treatment" of some kind.

"Don't worry," he said, "taken in reasonably small doses and for a fairly short period, the aminozin pills will not do you any permanent harm, so if you can hold out for a few days, they will stop because they will not want to undermine your health. The pills are designed to weaken your willpower so if the doctor questions you again, I suggest you refuse to answer until they stop giving you the pills. But be ready; prepare yourself. Do as I said and repeat over and over again the positive answers until they become a part of you, of your subconscious." He spoke very earnestly for he knew that he must impress me with the importance of what he was saying. "It is possible that they will give you certain injections and then question you again. Your answers must be so much a part of you that even if you are unconscious, you will give nothing away. Keep on saying to yourself "I don't know," "I don't remember" and so on." He moved out of the room and I returned to my bed.

How long will I be able to hold out? My head ached. Was my mind giving way? The sleep I had did not refresh me. Would my strength leave me? Yet I resisted in prison—I could not give up now.

"I don't know. I don't remember. My mother died when I was 11. Yes, my father married again. No, I haven't read that book, I didn't understand what he meant. No, I have no brothers. I don't know. I don't remember. I only want to go to sea."

On and on, again and again I repeated these answers. A few days later—I don't know how many—the doctor sent

for me again. I told him that I couldn't answer his questions because of the pills. He sent me away. I looked through the barred windows and saw patients walking in the open space on the inside of a high wall accompanied by a guard or a nurse, but no one ever took me into the fresh air. My condition became steadily worse. They had taken my glasses from me so that I could not read and everything around me became more and more irritating and nerve-wracking—even the comic items in the regular concerts that were presented and which at first had amused me. In the ward were fifteen or so other patients and they were never quiet—now one would talk, another cry, a third would moan and beat himself. Then two would get into an argument and start to fight until the warden would separate them: while in another part of the room an unfortunate frustrated soul would masturbate. It was horrible to be in such an environment. Even at night there was no peace. Among us was one who slept by day, and at night, walked up and down, between the beds, calling upon the moon. How did I retain my sanity? I do not know. I saw with something akin to terror, room-mates who went into epileptic fits and came out eventually, their faces covered with blood.

I began to long for the loneliness of my prison cell. I kept my eyes tight closed: I plugged my ears with my fingers but I could not keep out those horrible sights and sounds. They assailed me, sleeping or waking. To what dreadful deeds would I be driven? I complained to the Doctor at my next visit and pleaded for some relief. He appeared unmoved but two days later I was transferred to another ward where the control was not so strict. We could move about more freely. I received my glasses back and I had access to books and I was even allowed to take a short walk in the garden. That night patients from wards two and three were allowed to attend a concert given by local artists in the main hall. I sat next to Michael Ivanovich and was able to talk to him.

He told me that he was to be discharged: that the

following day would be his last in this dreadful place. It was his intention to go to Moscow and to seek an interview with the Central Committee of the Party with whom he would lodge a complaint against the Prosecutor, whom he regarded as responsible for his eight months' detention.

"I am a Communist," he said, "And I have been here for eight months for no reason at all!"

"And what do you think will happen to me? I asked.

"I think," he said, and he weighed every word carefully. "I think they will discharge you soon, too. They really have nothing against you and unless they can think up some charge, they will let you go. But, be careful and remember what I told you, for in your present easier position, you may forget yourself. Well, we may not meet again, so, good luck to you!" And he shook me by the hand and walked from the hall. My head was already a little clearer and I looked after him with affection and gratitude. I would hold firmly and would give nothing away.

That night I slept, for the ward was quiet and I was more at ease. My companions were very different from those I had left. Next morning I dared to ask the nurse for pencil and paper as I wished to write a note to my family who must have been worrying about my long absence and silence. I chose my words carefully, giving no hint of the ordeal which I had endured, merely saying that I had been ill,that I was well on the road to recovery and that I expected to be back in Kiev very soon. I finished the note, put it under my pillow and went to the toilet. When I returned the letter was gone and for a moment, terror seized me lest I had given something away and that I would be tortured to say more. My relief was almost overwhelming when the white-coated attendant approached me and quite pleasantly informed that it was the rule that all letters were censored; that mine had been approved and that I might send it.

And now I was given only one pill of aminozin three times a day. This could not affect me after the massive

doses which I had previously been given and I felt physically better and mentally relaxed. I suppose I was in a state approaching euphoria for when, after dinner one evening, the nurse said that she wished to give me an injection, I made no protest, merely holding out my arm. I felt the sharp stab of the needle, I saw the syringe empty and I remembered no more. How long it was before I recovered consciousness, I do not know, but one of my roommates told me that in my unconscious state, I had been taken to the Doctor's surgery for interrogation. I must have answered their questions in the manner that Michael Ivanovich had instructed me. I could not have given anything away for, from that night, the Doctor seemed to have lost interest in me. I was given no more pills: no more injections: there were no more visits to the Doctor's room. What was going on? Day followed day and I seemed to be no nearer to release. The atmosphere of that ghastly asylum became more and more oppressive. Would I ever get out and live again with normal people? What could I do to force the issue? I thought of going on a hunger strike as I had done at the prison, but I looked around me and decided against it for the guards had some refined forms of torture which could effectively break one's resistance. I saw how they tied a wet sheet, tightly, around a man's middle. As the sheet dried it exerted more and more pressure. The pain must have been excruciating for I heard the victims cry out. Another would be secured to his bed with a strap or a belt which would be regularly pulled tighter so that any movement became impossible. I had seen and I have described before the effects of the "sulphursin" injection which paralyzes the body, sends up the temperature, and induces unbearable pain at the point where the needle had entered the body. And for those who did not wish to eat there was the soft tube which was forced down the throat and into the stomach. No, a hunger strike would bring no satisfactory results from my point of view. The

least I could expect would be some blows on the face or the neck from the "men in white" who took an obvious pleasure in inflicting pain. I decided that on every possible occasion, I must tell every official who would hear me, that this prolonged association with the insane would indeed drive me crazy. Perhaps it had some effect, I do not know, for no one ever gave any sign that he heeded my words. Now I began to dream, something which I had not done before. Over and over again, I dreamt that I was lying in the ward and that all those around me were dead. In whichever direction I looked, I saw only corpses—and I would awake screaming and sobbing. By day I wandered about disconsolately, talking to myself, depressed, knowing that life held no promise for me and that I would be better dead. Those were terrible days indeed. At last, the Doctor called me to his room and told me to sit down opposite him. He took down a thick file and opened it, turning the pages and looking at me in a not unfriendly manner. I assumed that this was the history of my "illness." He began to speak, quietly.

"Leonid Friedmanovich," he said, "as you know, you were sent here by the police authorities because they were not sure of your mental state. Some of your actions seemed quite inexplicable and we were asked to make a thorough test. This we have done and we have reached certain conclusions." He paused and looked at me keenly. I think my heart must have missed a beat for I knew that my whole future depended on what he would say next. He continued:

"I have come to the conclusion that you are worried—precisely about what, I do not know, but you are a worried man. You have quite a good head on your shoulders, but you are affected periodically by psychological disturbances. I recommend that you find a quiet job and put out of your mind the ideas that were previously disturbing you."

I breathed a sigh of relief and nodded. It did, indeed, seem that my long ordeal was at an end. The Doctor went

on,

"Today you will receive back your clothes and you will be discharged. You will be a free man again. The Captain of Police has asked that you call at the Station and collect all your papers and other items of value." He stood up and waved his hand in a gesture of dismissal. I could scarcely believe my good fortune. I almost staggered from that room. I was free—at last.

The two hours to lunch passed on leaden feet. I was impatient to be gone, to be away from those long corridors, those rows of beds, those horrible staring eyes, those moans and cries, those stern-faced nurses and those guards in white. How long had I been there? I did not know and I did not care. Soon I was to be free. The nurses and the guards knew it too for their attitude was changed—it was almost friendly. At last the lunch hour passed: a nurse handed me my clothes and I opened the door to the outer world.

I stepped across the threshold—to freedom. A feeling of intoxication flooded through me. The scent of flowers assailed my nostrils and the song of birds, my ears. I was experiencing these things for the first time in my life for indeed I was newborn. The breezes played about my hair and my body and I understood now that I had never appreciated before the meaning of freedom and the beauty of nature. One must lose that which is precious before one can understand its values! I was walking on air and I wanted to sing aloud but I knew that I must do nothing to attract attention.

My first duty was to go to the prison to get from the warden my papers and documents. He received me politely and asked how I was. He seemed pleased when I told him I was well and that I had no complaints about the treatment I had received in the "hospital". I signed a receipt for the release of my papers and I left him with no hard thoughts. He wished me well and I believe he meant it. He was an official, a cog in the wheel of an infernal machine and he had

to carry out his duties or be crushed. As I drew away from the prison, I looked back and identified the window at the end of the corridor on which was my cell. I wondered who was there now and what "crime" he had committed. But, for a time at least, I was free—and I drew in great breaths of the fresh air.

I made my way to my old dormitory and pushed open the door. Misha looked up in surprise.

"Halloa," he said, "what are you doing here? What is going on? They told me you were in prison but wouldn't tell me anything more." The words tumbled out. "Tell me where you have been and what is going on."

I would have liked to have told him but at this stage, the words would not come.

"Don't ask me now, Misha" I said. "I know you wish me well but now I can't talk. I'm going out now but I'll be back later and perhaps we'll be able to talk then."

Evening had closed in as I wandered about the streets, just thinking, turning over in my mind the events of the past years. I came to a building destroyed in the last war and left as a ruin. Here was burned the philosopher, Karn. I had read some of his books at that period of my life when I had devoted myself to study. What did it all mean, I asked myself. Why did such things happen to me? Why had I apparently made so many mistakes? Why had I been decieved by so many people? Gradually the conviction came to me that I must leave Russia. I had told myself this before but clearly it was imperative if I was to have a life at all. I must devote myself to this one thing alone. Yet it would not be easy. This I had reason to know already. If it was so difficult to get onto a ship and go to sea, how much more difficult would it be to get away from the country altogether! It seemed to me that I must change my whole life style, that I must act in such a way that no one will ever suspect me of any such intention. I must become in my manner almost a simpleton—at least a stolid unimaginative country

yokel. I must be quiet in my speech, sparing of words, slow in my reactions, uninterested in affairs of state—a country bumpkin, but yet with something of a desire to see a little of the world.

But how was I to change my life style, my personality? I had read a good deal about Yoga and at one time, a few years back, I had toyed with the idea of taking up the practice. I knew that through Yoga, I could learn to control both body and mind and thus I would be able to overcome new difficulties which I saw looming in my path.

It would be almost impossible to obtain elementary text books on Yoga, but I remembered a former workmate, Bob, an electrician who was with me often when we serviced machines in the barber shops of Kiev. We had been quite good friends and indeed he had invited me to his home where he had spoken of his hobby which was Yoga and Psychotherapy. Occasionally he gave public performances to demonstrate the acts of extra-sensory perception, a field which has been little investigated. I was sure he would help me. I recalled a performance of his at which I had been present. It was at one of the Social Clubs one evening when there were about one hundred and fifty of us sitting and drinking. Bob was invited to show his powers. While he was out of the room several items were hidden—a watch, a lighter, a tie and so on. He was brought in blind-folded and without hesitation, after only a few minutes concentration, he went straight to where the articles were. It had made a great impression on me and now I was determined to return to Kiev, try to get my old job back again and ask Bob to instruct me in the basic principles of Yoga.

I stayed on in Kaliningrad for a couple of days and went to the Station to buy a ticket to Kiev. The official told me that all places in the Third Class had been taken up and that I must travel in a coupe—a compartment for two only. I had never in my life contemplated travelling in such luxury but it seemed that I had no option. I bought the ticket

and within half an hour before the train was due to depart, I found my compartment No. 11, and opened the door. Two men, respectably dressed, were sitting at the table talking. I waited in the corridor until the one got up and left the train. I sat down and a few minutes later, the train moved out of the station.

My companion looked up. "As we are going to travel together, let me introduce myself," he said. "My name is Sasha." He held out his had. I shook it and gave him my name in return.

"Just a minute," he went on, and left the compartment. A few minutes later, he was back with two bottles of vodka and glasses which he set down on the table. Then he took down his suitcase, opened it, and brought out a bottle of expensive cognac, and a container of most appetizing cold foods. He rubbed his hands, smiled, poured two glasses of vodka and as he lifted his glass, inviting me, with a gesture, to do likewise, he said, "This looks good and smells good, especially when one has been at sea for six months. Now I've got a few days' leave and I'm going to Moscow to visit relatives. Where are you headed for?"

"Kiev," I told him and raised my glass. I was not a real drinker but I was hungry and I decided to be sociable. He seemed such a decent type, too. Sasha began to tell me of his experiences in the various countries which he had visited. I quickly gathered that he was not an ordinary sailor and I asked him where he worked.

"The Atlantniro Research Institute," he told me and then a suspicion entered my mind for this was where Victor worked—Victor who had seemed to be my friend but who had so obviously, and as I realized now, betrayed me.

I held my peace but watched and listened with great attention. His talk was most interesting and every now and then, he tried to draw me out. Why, I thought had the station clerk insisted on my buying a ticket for a coupe? Was there a reason for it? My companion went on with his

stories. Was it chance alone that had brought me into a compartment with a man from the "Atlantniro Research Institute"? He saw to it that my glass was kept filled as he spoke of the freedom of the seas, of the opportunities one had in foreign ports of meeting different people, of experiencing new ways of life. I became more and more suspicious. Was he another Victor? Was he an agent as had been the man I met at the "Moskov Cafe" before my arrest? How could I be sure? I must be so careful what I said, I decided to act drunk and I opened up a little. Choosing my words carefully, I said: "The Atlantniro Research Institute"– and I had some difficulty with the pronunciation–"The Atlantniro Research Institute". "I knew a fellow that worked there. He was an engineer. He may still be there. Perhaps you know him–Victor Rozanov."

"Sure I know him," said Sasha, "sure–I know him –too well. He was on the same ship as I, but he's not worth talking about. Forget him." And he munched on a piece of meat and took a pull at his vodka. I decided to pursue the subject. I looked at Sasha with his small face, his narrow eyes, a sly, shrewd Ukranian.

"You know," I said, "I've something of the same feeling about Victor as you have. Not that he has ever done me any harm," I added. "As a matter of fact, he even invited me to his home–but I have my doubts about him."

"You're quite right," said Sasha. "On that last expedition he–I'm sure it was he–betrayed a few of the sailors. And what for? They bought a few handkerchiefs in Dakar and were going to sell them when they got home. Just to make a couple of rubles! It couldn't do anybody any harm."

I made no comment but asked, "And what happened to them?"

He sounded bitter when he answered–but I couldn't be sure. "They were arrested, tried and sent to prison for four years with hard labor and strict confinement. And for a few handkerchiefs. That's what Victor Razanov did!"

And he swallowed a mouthful of his vodka. I decided to play along. "It doesn't surprise me," I said very briefly. I told him of my association with Victor and the results of it. My new "friend" indicated his sympathy and filled our glasses with cognac.

"I'll tell you what," he said, "those lads I told you about are still in prison, of course, or else they'd break every bone in Victor's body, but I know some others who, for a couple of rubles would teach him a good lesson. What about it, eh? Nobody else would know. I can easily arrange for you to meet them at a restaurant."

I had bitter memories of my last restaurant appointment but I was non-committal. He gave me his address and invited me to contact him when next I was in Kaliningrad. He'd get hold of "the boys" and I'd be able to get my revenge on Victor.

Sasha went on to talk about his travels, of life abroad and of how different conditions were in other countries. I felt he was trying to get me to say something against the system, to make some adverse comment or comparison—but I merely listened. My mind was working at fever pitch. Victor was a police informer and as such was under the protection of the Police. If I made a move, to contact the others with a veiw to beating him up, I could certainly be seized and that would be the end of all my hopes of ever getting out of the country. I should probably end my days in some remote prison camp in Siberia. My travelling companion was clearly an agent designed to trap me and I would not fall for his easy talk. Everything was falling into place—the enforced buying of the ticket for the coupe, Sasha's friendliness, the lunch basket and the vodka and cognac, and the stories of life at sea. No, if I was to have my revenge on Victor—and I very much doubted if I ever would—I would have to do everything myself. And very carefully too. I feigned extreme tiredness, lay down on my bunk, and pretended to sleep. Sasha lay down too, and very soon

his genuine snores could be heard above the noise of the fast moving train.

At Minsk, I got up quietly, for here I would have to change. With infinite care, I opened Sasha's bag which he had left on the seat. Among the papers, right on top, was one headed "Ministry of Internal Affairs." My suspicions were fully justified! I left the coach, crossed the platform and without further incident arrived back in Kiev where I again took up residence with my sister. I kept to my story that I had been ill and had been hospitalized in Kaliningrad, and this the family accepted.

After a few days, I decided to call on my old acquaintance, Bob. He greeted me warmly, remarking that it was a long time since we had met and invited me to come in. He apologized for the absence of his wife, who, he said, had gone out to do some shopping. Without waiting for me to ask, he told me that he was engaged in writing a book, based on his own experiences, on extra-sensory perception. He was collaborating with a friend who was a psychologist. I recalled the performance that he had given which I had attended, and I could see that it gave him pleasure that I remembered in such detail, the truly amazing things he had done. He nodded and said that this was a field in which, up to now, little research had been done. I looked around that big room which contained the minimum of furniture but shelves of books, many of which had been published long before the Communist Revolution and I thought that one day, Bob would be famous and his book, too, would be seen on many shelves.

His wife Dinah, came in and I did not require persuasion to agree to stay for lunch. Meantime, while the preparations were being made, I asked Bob if I might discuss with him a very serious personal problem. We moved to a corner of the room and I told him I was worried about my mind. I had been in some difficult situations and I knew that I had said the wrong things. It was, I felt, that I could not

control my emotions, that my subconscious took control and that I was not always aware of what I was saying. He agreed that my condition was serious but he doubted whether he would be able to help me. "However," he said, "I have a very good friend, Yan, who is a specialist in the field of psychotherapy and I am sure that he would be able, and willing, to advise you."

"And where can Yan be found?" I broke in.

"As a matter of fact, I expect to see him tomorrow evening at the University. I am giving a performance and I know he will be present as he is intensely interested in my work. Come along, if you are free, and I'll introduce you. Then after the show we can all come back here and try to sort out your problem. How does that strike you?"

I agreed enthusiastically and after a good lunch that was put up by Dinah, I departed, with renewed thanks and impatiently awaiting the next evening.

I was at the University Hall in good time and there Bob introduced me to his friend, Yan, who was to act as his assistant in the show. He was a man of about forty, tall, with a bald head, dreamy eyes and very slow of speech. I took my seat in the front row and waited for the show to commence. The stage was set very simply—a fairly large table covered with a red cloth. After a few introductory remarks, Bob invited members of the audience to participate. Those who wished, wrote their names on pieces of paper which Yan collected and brought up to the stage. Then other members of the audience, who were to check on the proceedings, took them and one read out a name. The one who was named came up to the stage, Bob took him by the hand and, acting on instructions from the other members of the audience, he "willed" Bob to do certain things. These he did without hesitation, to the astonishment of all. He repeated the performance with several others, in-

cluding a woman who "instructed" him to open her bag, take out some money and put it in his pocket. Another hid a coin and this Bob found without difficulty. The next demonstration was without any physical contact at all. The subject merely thought the instruction, Bob concentrated on him and did what was required of him. All the time Bob shook a small bag and this seemed to impress the audience very much. His final item was one which I had not seen before. In the center of the table he placed a box of matches—a member of the audience had supplied it so there was no possibility of a trick—all the Hall lights, with the exception of one which was trained on the box, were turned off and Bob, from a distance of about five meters, concentrated his gaze upon it. To the astonishment of everyone, the box began to move towards him across the table. It was an extraordinary performance. There was enthusiastic applause and the show concluded.

Bob, Yan and I returned to Bob's home where, after drinking coffee prepared by Dinah, and a short chat with them about the show, I told Yan something of my problem. He listened attentively and at the end, speaking very slowly, he said that he had recently been in contact with a Professor Shultz of West Germany, who was an expert in psychotherapy. He had his own methods and had achieved some remarkable successes. Yan pointed out that, whereas in the Soviet psychotherapy was applied only to sick persons, in West Germany healthy people also took the treatment. The brain, he pointed out, was incapable of making an error, only our free will could influence the brain and bring it into error. This I had read in the philosophical works of Descartes and I knew what he meant. The problem, he stressed, was to make contact with the will. My position, he emphasized, was by no means unique. He had met many people similarly troubled and who suffered frequent fits

of depression.

"I'm going to suggest," he went on, "that you take a course of Yoga. I have drawn up a completely new program which is still in manuscript form. My friend, Bob, here has it and he'll show it to you. Study it and try to carry out the instructions, commencing with the breathing excercises. In a few days time come to my Clinic at the Hospital. There I shall put you under hypnosis and relax you thoroughly. Later I shall teach you my own system of relaxation and self-hypnosis." He ended on what seemed a note of triumph. He certainly had complete confidence in his methods.

"And do you think," I burst in eagerly, "that this will help me, will enable me to get rid of my fits of depression?"

"That depends entirely on you," he said very slowly, "and upon your attitude towards the course. "By the way," he added. "where are you working?" I told him that I had left my last job and had not yet found another.

"I recommend you to find a quiet job, if possible," he said, "one that enables you to be in the open air a good deal and one that brings you in contact with people. You have been too much alone. And now, I think, we have talked enough for tonight. Let us fix a date for our next meeting before we say good night."

A date was arranged for the following week. I took the Yoga manuscript from Bob and with smiles and handshakes, we parted. I was determined to get the maximum benefit from the course proposed by my new friend. On the appointed day I made my way to the Hospital where Yan had this clinic. As I approached, I saw that there was a high wire fence round the whole area and that inside were walking many people not very different in appearance from those among whom I had found myself such a short time ago. This was clearly a hospital for psychiatric cases, but I had confidence that my new friend would do me no harm.

I went up to the Reception Desk, asked for Dr. Yan Lipovsky and was directed to his room. As I entered, he looked up from a mass of papers, greeted me warmly and then asked me to go with him into the next room where, he said, he would follow. There were three others waiting–two men and a woman, all middle-aged and of normal appearance. They were talking among themselves and I quickly gathered that they, too, experienced these recurrent fits of depression but that they felt that they had benefited greatly from the hypnosis and the course prescribed by Dr. Lipovsky. The Doctor came in then, smiling, and seated us at small tables. He spoke quietly and prepared us for the treatment.

"All is quiet now," he said, "one, two, three–let your minds become blank, absolutely blank–you are sinking into oblivion, into nothingness–you are relaxed–all is peaceful and quiet. Four, five, six, seven. Now you want to sleep. Eight, nine. There is s soft white cloud floating in the sky. You feel so light. You are the cloud. Ten, eleven, twelve. It is so pleasant to be so light and airy. Thirteen, fourteen. You are so free, so relaxed, so happy." So he droned on. By the time he reached twenty-five I was asleep and I remember nothing more though I have the feeling that while we slept Yan spoke to us and became a part of our dreams. When I awoke, I had some difficulty in remembering where I was, but soon we were chatting quietly about our problems and the treatment until it was time for the others to go.

Yan invited me into his room and asked me how I felt. Really, I think, he had no need to ask how I felt, but he wanted the words from me. "I am relaxed," I told him. "I feel good."

"Yes, I think I can help you," he said, "you must come to ten sessions. I shall arrange the times and then we shall see. By the way, what have you done about a job?"

When I told him that I had not yet found anything suitable, he pursed his lips, thought for a moment and said,

"Let me see: yes, I think so. I have a friend who is working with a company that undertakes certain agricultural projects. I'm not quite sure what the work is, but I know he's out in the open air a good deal. I'll talk to him if you like, and perhaps he'll be able to find something for you."

I thanked him and he gave me his friend's address, first telling me that he would telephone him that evening and so prepare him for my coming. When I had gained sufficient confidence, I called on him, found him helpful and agreed to come to work with his company as soon as I felt fit enough.

I visited Yan's clinic another nine times, completing the first part of the course and feeling that I had derived considerable benefit from it. At the conclusion of the final session he took me into his room.

"Well," he said, "I think I have done everything necessary to enable you to carry on by yourself. Here is a schedule of psychotherapy. You must follow the instructions carefully."

He handed me all my papers and stood up, extending his right hand. "Good luck to you and good health!" he said and shook my hand warmly. "And remember, you may come to this clinic any time you like."

I left the Hospital with the firm desire, with a determination to improve. It was important to me for I knew that I must be ready to leave Russia when the opportunity arose.

I walked now with a spring in my step, with my head up and my shoulders back and I breathed deeply as prescribed in the Yoga exercises.

I started work and soon found myself with another Jewish fellow, Sasha, whom I had last seen at the Babi Yar meeting. He lived not far from my home when I was a small boy. Naturally we got into a conversation and he asked whether I knew about the recent happenings in Leningrad.

"No," I replied, "what happened there?"

"Strange," he said. "I thought everybody knew about it. Where were you on the 15th of June?"

"No," I replied. "I wasn't in Kiev at that time. I was in Kaliningrad and I didn't hear anything. Tell me what was going on."

He lowered his voice. "A group of Jewish activists tried to hijack a plane at the Smolny Airport in Leningrad but they were arrested on the spot. That's what happened on the 15th of June."

A thought flashed through my mind. It must have been about the 15th of June that I was arrested. Did the K.G.B. think I had some connection with the hijack? Is that why they were so interested in the British Embassy's telephone number? It was a strange coincidence. Perhaps more than a mere coincidence! I turned again to Sasha.

"Tell me more about it. How did it happen that they were arrested? I suppose someone betrayed them."

"I don't think so," said Sasha. "I was in Leningrad a month ago and I spoke with a number of people and they all seemed to know about it. They talked too much. The operation had a name, "Marriage", in Russian "Svadba" and those involved were mainly from Riga. There was one from Leningrad. There were, apparently, many discussions, and opinions on what they should do were divided. Eventually only twelve approved the plan to hijack the plane but the trouble was that so many had been in on the scheme and so many had attended the meetings. There were even discussions in the synagogue where men knew that because these people had been refused permission to emigrate to Israel, they were going to hijack a plane. It was absurd that they had gone about things in such a manner and I am quite sure that the K.G.B. heard all about it, that they tapped the telephones of all those who were involved and that they had the names of all those who were in any way connected with the plot.

Sasha and I looked at each other and we understood what we must do. "Listen," he said, "a few of us are forming groups so that we may study Hebrew. Do you want to join us? I'll give you my address and if you can come along do so."

I made a note of the address and told Sasha that I was doubtful that I would be able to join the group as I was out of town a good deal in connection with my work. I would however, study on my own and come to him when I could.

I thought over the fate of those unfortunate people in Leningrad. There had been too many involved, too many had known about the scheme. I wanted to get out of Russia and I knew now, that whatever plan I made, must remain with me, and with me alone. There must be not even the slightest hint of it to father, sisters or to friends. There must be nothing written down, nothing spoken, the plan, whatsoever it should be, must be in my thoughts. Whatever the difficulties, whatever the problems, I must face them and solve them by myself. I should neither expect nor seek assistance from anyone, for in a country where on every street corner there was likely to be a police informer or a K.G.B. agent, one had to proceed very carefully. I should trust no one. I had had experience of that. I must be suspicious of everyone. I decided on a program of preparation. First of all I must practice extensively, Yoga and psychotherapy and so change my way of thinking and my whole behavior pattern. I must become quiet, with a clear mind; I must develop self confidence and overcome the tendency towards depression. My will must become strong and clear. I must be prepared to meet, to surmount, all difficulties, no matter what they are. Then, when I really feel that I am ready, I shall make the attempt to escape. The formulation of my own ideas was already the first step towards their fulfillment. But there was more to it than that.

I knew from my observations in Kaliningrad that a great many of the sailors were agricultural workers from the

farms. After their army service, they would apply for work with the fishing companies and indeed such a farming background was considered a recommendation. The companies knew from experience that these farm lads were unlikely to throw up their jobs to return to the country while at the same time they saw them unspoiled by the western influences of the cities and, so, trustworthy. I was now, through my work, in close contact with the farmers and the second aspect of my plan emerged. I would learn all I could about the farmers. I would study their speech, their behavior, their mannerisms. I would identify with them and become as one of them, even to the extent of learning how to drink large quantities of vodka. When the time came, I would be indistinguishable from the typical countryman.

Next, I must take an active part in the affairs of my new company. I must join in the regular discussions on "Marxism-Leninism" and must be known to be deeply interested and concerned for I recalled the criticisms when I had applied for my character reference at my previous place of work. Then, too, I must complete my course at the College. I gave myself a year and a half for all this preparation and I reckoned that I would be ready to make the next move early in 1973. But there was no time to waste, every day was precious and every day I must advance my prospects of escaping from Russia. My hopes ran high for I was determined to succeed.

End of Part I

And now began, for me, a period of close connection with agriculture, although up till then I had been on a farm only three times before. That was when I was a boy of about fourteen, attending courses at the Technion, for every year students from the schools, colleges and from certain industrial enterprises too, are drafted to help with the harvesting. I recall that we youngsters, boys and girls, worked all day in the fields, reaping and threshing the corn, and at night slept on straw in the true Russian peasant tradition. The food was poor, consisting mainly of porridge. I was to see agriculture from a different angle—as one of a group of 5 refrigeration engineers responsible for the installation of cooling and storage facilities on the big collectives.

At first, I found the work difficult because I lacked experience, but soon I learned the job and could be sent out on my own.

My first assignment was to farm near Dniepropetrovsk. It was some 5 kilometers off the main road and as there was no public transport, I set out on foot. It was raining heavily and as the paved road ended after 2 kilometers, I was soon covered in mud from head to foot. Many cars were stuck and had to call on tractors to pull them out. I trudged along, but was fortunate enough to be picked up by some people in a horse-drawn cart and, half-an-hour later, I arrived in the village. I reported in at the office of the District Supervisor of Farms who soon found me a furnished room.

After cleaning up, I went out—the rain had stopped—to look around the village which I had seen some ten years before. I had to admit that there had been considerable changes for the better. Tiles had replaced straw on most of the cottage roofs; several of the men now possessed bicycles or motor cycles and through many of the windows I saw television sets. There was an air of increased prosperity, yet I knew that the young people were all anxious to leave the villages for the cities where they felt that their opport-

unities for advancement were so much greater.

I had seen many in Kiev and knew something of their struggles. The more fortunate gained places in the Technion schools, the colleges and universities for these are theoretically open to all Russians, but others found work in the building industry as laborers. The work was hard, the pay was low and the only sleeping accommodation was in dormitories. It would be from five to ten years before they would qualify for flats–but yet they all tried to get away from the villages.

They were generally a rough crowd, lacking the polish and the culture of the town bred. Their speech was coarse and their manners unpleasant. This struck me with even greater force in the village in which I now found myself. There the people spoke only Ukrainian, while in the cities Russian was used; here they made their own vodka which the locals called "Samogon". It was a potent drink distilled from sugar which had replaced barley, as the main constituent Their favorite delicacy appeared to be a soft lard made from pig's fat. Yet the villagers seemed friendly enough.

At the farm where I reported next day, I found two other men from the Company. We were to put into operational order a plant for the refrigeration of milk. The plant had been installed sometime before during a drive to modernize the dairy industry. All milking had been done by hand but when Krushchev visited the USA and saw what was being done there, he decided that Russia too must have up-to-date machinery on her farms. And so the order went out. Some of the richer farms were now using a centralized milking system, but many of the collective farms had bought the equipment which was now lying idle because there was no one to install it or service it. Many parts had rusted and many had been stolen and the hand milking continued. Many of the farm managers told us that they did not need this equipment. They had it because it was an order from the Party committee but they had no use

for it. I looked around one and was shocked at the disorder that I saw and the inefficiency of farming methods.

The particular equipment in which I was interested, was for the milking of cows, "Impuls" imported during Khrushchev's time from East Germany. It was originally intended for new farming areas being developed in Kazachstan but later much was sent to the established collectives where it was either still in storage or being installed. It was not in working order, yet it was easy to regulate the "Impuls" and I marvelled at the lack of interest and the waste. Soviet agriculture, it was clear, was in a bad way and I wondered why.

I made some inquiries and I read whatever I could find on the subject. When collectivism was first decided on and the "Kolkhozy" or collective farms were created, Stalin sent 25,000 of his best communist industrial workers to the towns and villages. There, they were "elected" (or installed) as heads of the Kolkhozy even though no one knew anything of agricultural science and some even could not read the alphabet. This was the age of mass starvation when millions of Soviet citizens perished from lack of food, but Stalin achieved his purpose and today there are more than 60,000 collective farms in the U.S.S.R. I met and talked with many of the 60,000 managers who had replaced the 25,000 of Stalin's day. All appointed by party committees, they still lacked knowledge of agriculture but they were literate. Many were retired army officers or party officials. Some, indeed, were quite competent and were interested in their work but because of the system, under which all instructions came from a central source, there was no chance to show any initiative. I heard complaints that in some areas there was insufficient food for the cattle, the pigs, and the other livestock because the order had come to plant wheat and to sell a stated quantity to the Government. In consequence there was not enough ground for fodder crops and the cows lost weight and gave less milk. It was

a story often repeated that trucks were lying idle because there were no spare parts or new tires, and that expensive refrigeration plants were not used because no one had been correctly trained for their operation.

Yet I found life in the country very pleasant and very relaxed. Due to the trials through which I had passed I had developed some very disturbing habits—and often talked to myself even in the presence of other people, I would bite my nails down almost to the quick and often, when an evil recollection came to me, I would drop my head and squeeze it hard between my two palms. Now I began to feel whole; I woke early and every morning I did my Yoga exercises. I would sit in the Yoga position, close my eyes and relax. I imagined myself in the steam room of the bath house and with every rise in temperature I could feel the tiredness and the strain flowing from me until I was no longer conscious of my body at all. I realized my weaknesses and was determined to rid myself of them, using a simple imaginative device. As the temperature in my make believe bath house rose so my weaknesses passed out through my left hand. Then with my right hand I grasped positive character traits and holding them firmly I brought the temperature down until I was near freezing and the positive qualities were sealed within me. It was an experience which brought me calm and strength and confidence. In the evenings, I turned on my transistor radio and having listened to the music of such jazz exponents as Bill Evans, Gershwin, Duke Ellington and Gillespie, I slept peacefully to awake refreshed from worry, stirred with the appreciation of the beauty around me and thrilled to the trees and the flowers, to the sun in the morning and the moon at night. Lights and sounds of which I had been completely unaware before, completely crowded in on my consciousness—the world of nature was a riot of music and color which no man could reproduce. I recalled the words of Romaine Rolland in his "Jean-Christophe" suggesting that all composers and artists

tried to find in nature her varied sounds and colors and have tried to reproduce them—but without success. They can but approach them for truth lies in nature above. In the evenings I took long walks in the forests and communed with nature trying to catch the sounds of the passing hours. There was truth, and beauty, and a constancy not subject to the dictates of a changing political system.

I had never before experienced such a feeling of relaxation and happiness.

My thoughts ran on. Oh, to leave the world as I had found it! To go back to nature, to instruct others in the beliefs of Yoga. How pleasant to put behind me and to forget completely the unhappy past, the sufferings, even that I am a Jew. To the forest that meant nothing. Here I was just another creature of nature. Oh, to forget, to forget and to enjoy, to forget my goal, to forget Israel, to be at one with the music of the woods, the colors of the leaves, the skies. But how can man live without a goal, without planning for the future without the trappings of civilization. I realized the impossibility of it for I am the product of civilization of which I am part. I have been fashioned by both the good and the bad for which man is responsible. Communism had not brought me happiness. This I knew—there must be another way. If I could not get away from the Communist system, then it would be better for me to withdraw from society and to live with nature. My mind was made up. I would not forget my goal, but while I could, I would enjoy nature to the full. The past I would forget and I would replace it with the present joy in feeling things.

I lay upon my back on the sweet smelling grass and looked up at the sky. How imperfect is man! How mighty is the Universe! Happiness is rising. Poverty and wealth. Whence do they come? Are they the natural products of the Universe? Are they ordained by the Almighty, that mysterious being who is thought to control our destiny? Or are they merely the creations of our minds? Why do we

love, hate, fight, kill and make wars? What is the real reason for this? Are we ourselves responsible? I looked up at the constellations. How perfect they are! In their constant and regulated movements they shine with equal splendor for all. They have their laws which have nothing in common with those of human kind. The mystery of life and of human behavior. How can one live in harmony with the Universe? One cannot escape from the world to be at one with the elements for one is a member of human society, but there must be a way to harmonize the two—the world of man and the world of nature. The sun, the moon and the stars: these are constant and from them I will draw my strength.

Thus my thoughts ran on and then I knew that the sun would be my salvation. I would make it an essential part of the new technique of my physiotherapy. From my left hand would go out all my weaknesses, my bad habits, my evil thoughts to be dissolved by the rays of the sun, while with my right hand I would grasp the good, the truthful and the noble, to bring them within my inner being, there to be consolidated by the warmth of the sun. So every day as I sat in my Yoga posture, quiet and relaxed, I concentrated on this. I knew that before I could achieve my goal I would encounter many difficulties but with the new inner strength that I was gaining, I knew I would overcome them. Slowly, I would move towards fulfillment. I would master fate and not let fate master me.

And now I began to consider more closely the people around me. What constitutes a human being? What are the mind, feelings, emotions? Is everything purely materialistic? I remember reading of a debate on that which took place shortly after the Socialist Revolution, between the first Soviet Minister of Education, Lunacharsky on the one side and a very high official of the Greek Orthodox Church on the other before a large audience of students. It is well known that the Marxist doctrine denies the existence of God, and it was on this that the debate hinged. (I thought

how times had changed and that such a debate would be impossible now.) Lunacharsky opened the debate.

"I have visited the operation theaters many times in our various hospitals", he said, "and I have seen hearts, livers, kidneys—all the organs in fact, but the one thing I have never seen, my dear colleague, is the soul and you are trying to prove that man has a soul?" He paused and the Archbishop replied in slow, measured tones:

"And I, too, my dear colleague, have visited many hospitals and have witnessed many operations. One of these was a trepanning. I saw a brain opened and explored, but I did not see a mind. I don't think that you will deny that man has a mind, that he is capable of reasoning. But I did not see a mind."

I have attended in Kiev, lectures of Professor Anosov on such modern themes as "An Artificial Mind", "The Mind and the Computer" etc., and while it is true that the human mind and the computer have certain things in common, they are yet vastly different. A huge computer may have millions and millions of memory cells and with the correct stimuli will give back the information which it has stored up, but humans are different, each with his own individual approach to life. The human's reaction to stimuli will depend not only on the information stored, but on the information received and on the extent to which it has been absorbed. Then I recalled, too, the diction of Spinoza, "The perfection of the mind is dependent on the number and the difference of the situations in which the mind has been." Maybe it is not sufficient merely to experience things—we must concentrate, analyze and absorb every situation. In my 21 or 22 years of life, my mind must have been very imperfect for I lacked the knowledge to analyze situations. My mind then, was almost virgin soil, waiting still to be ploughed and reaped. From my father, from my home environment I had learned very little, only from the cruel blows that life had inflicted on me, had my mind developed.

The human mind, it seemed to me, was a vast and unknown field, a field full of mysteries and puzzles. Did the mind though work in accordance with certain laws? If I could determine some of these laws, I should be able to act more correctly in my relations with others. But what are the laws that govern human behavior? What directs their mental processes? First of all I decided that people cannot simply be divided into good and bad. Their reactions must depend on the information which they have received and on the manner in which, and on the degree to which, it has been absorbed. If I knew the background, I might be able to anticipate the reaction of an individual to a situation. I might be able to see inside his mind, and direct my actions accordingly. But I would have to be on my guard because of my Jewish appearance.

My first trial of this new approach came soon, in my dealings with labormen of the Kolkhoz which is virtually the property of those who work it, and the "Sovhoz" which is absolutely under the control of the State. Our company dealt with the latter, the Sovhoz, so consequently we received regular salaries from our employers, and had no financial dealings whatsoever with the farms themselves. It was not long before I realized the difference between the two types and that the Kolkhoz enjoyed virtual freedom in financial matters. The Kolkhoz management would employ and pay outside labor without any reference to the State. Furthermore, they paid for any services in cash, no transaction passing through a bank. I asked, for example, a group of Georgians who were building farms and other structures. They were simply a group of individuals who had made an agreement with the Kolkhoz and they would receive payment from the Kolkhoz. True, these groups carried the rather uncomplimentary name of "halturschiki" or "people from the other side", but yet the Kolkhoz employed them because they felt, they worked more cheaply, and faster than the State companies. The "halturschiki" worked 12 to 16

hours a day and worked hard and in consequence earned up to 10 times as much as the State employee in a similar occupation. This may sound very like the capitalist system, and perhaps it is, but it was effective and there is no doubt that the "halturschiki" rendered good service to Soviet agriculture. Interestingly enough, in the course of my travels, I came across many such groups and they were invariably Georgian. There were Georgian Jews, too, to be seen in the markets of the big cities selling fruit, vegetables, flowers and so forth. Distance was no bar to business and I met them even in the Soviet Far East, 10,000 kilometers from their homes. The Jews generally confined themselves to trade and seemed but little concerned with manual labor.

It was with the Kolkhoz that I found a way of making money. I had studied the mentalities of the people with whom I would deal and I was confident of my approach. First of all I approached the manager of my company and told him that I was now ready to go out and tackle jobs on my own. For three months I had worked with others and now I was sufficiently experienced and confident. He agreed.

I had decided that I would do some work on the side, and that I would do it on the Kolhoz. By this time I had learned everything I could with regard to the "Impuls" which was a machine which combined both the mechanical milking of the cows and the cooling of the milk. It was by no means a complicated machine, and I knew that I could install and activate the equipment successfully. Made in East Germany, the Impuls were originally designed for the new farms being opened up in the Soviet Middle East, Kazachstan, but when Khrushchev's plan for settling these areas failed, many were sent to other parts of the Soviet, including the Ukraine, where there were probably up to 5,000 of them. The Impuls machine includes many glass tubes and must be handled with care—but this did not happen and the incidence of breakages was very high. The machines lay in storage on the farms for two years or more

and nothing was done. Then a section of a party Congress concerned with meat and milk production decided that there must be action. A special company, "Selhoztechnicka" agricultural techniques –was formed and during the next two or three years most of the machines were installed, but most of them still stood idle. I asked why this was and was told that, in the first place, the Selhoztechnika, lacked the specialists, who could regulate the machines so that they would give the maximum efficiency and, secondly, that the Kolhoz had no skilled technicians to service and maintain the machines in proper order. These were not tractors where a blow from a hammer might be sufficient to correct an operational fault. And there was another reason, perhaps more potent than the others. The women who worked with the cows, and the Kolhoz managers themselves, distrusted the machines.

Soviet agriculture was, on the whole, primitive and the workers ultra-conservative; they were not ready for delicate machinery. No wonder that the Soviet agricultural worker produced no more than a fifth or a sixth of what his American counterpart did. That was the official figure–no doubt the truth showed an even worse ratio. I read up as much as I could find on Soviet agriculture and its weaknesses and committed to memory as many facts as I could. I was to become an expert and an authority on the subject! I had a plan and this was my first step in carrying it out.

Next I visited the Office of the Ministry of Agriculture for the Ukraine and presented myself to a senior employee as the representative of the company for which I worked. I questioned him closely on the "Impuls" machines and learned where, in the Ukraine, the machines had been installed, where they had been successfully regulated and where they were apparently standing idle. Before I left, I entered very carefully in my pocket book, the full names of the official, the exact designation of his office and his address. All this I intended to use for my own advantage

in the very near future.

It was not long before my company sent me off on a job alone, and this was the chance for which I had been waiting. I was given a month in which to complete the work but I knew I would be able to do it in a week. And this is what I did, leaving myself a full three weeks for "something on the side". My next step was to glue on to my bag a Ministry of Agriculture label–it had not been difficult to pick up one when I had visited the office–and to change my work shirt for one of typically Ukrainian design. Then I travelled to the agricultural district, (I shall not give the name for reasons of security for I should not want the farm heads there to suffer for their good treatment of me) and set about collecting all the information I could on milking equipment, for purposes of comparing it with what I had learned in the harvesting office. It was not inaccurate.

Next day, wearing my Ukrainian shirt and carrying my bag with its Ministry label, I presented myself at the District Office responsible for the supervision of all the local Kolhoz enterprises. First I saw the Chief Engineer of farm mechanization and through him, after a brief talk, the head of the office.

I represented myself as coming from my company, telling him that we were assembling a team of engineers, technicians and so on, who would not only put the milking and refrigerating machines on all the agricultural enterprises in proper working order, but would instruct selected farm personnel how to operate and to service them. I was sure, I said, that he, as Chief of Office, would appreciate the importance of this. Then I recalled the various decisions of Party Congresses on mechanization in agriculture and on the urgency of ensuring greater efficiency and productivity. I had committed all these to memory and I reeled them off without hesitation. Then I gave him the names of the top officials in the Ministry of Agriculture and told him that according to information in my possession there

were, in his district, complete milking and refrigeration plants, all of them installed but not one in use. I said this with some emphasis pointing out that the equipment had cost many millions of rubles and that it should be our task to see that the State received the best possible return for its expenditure. I added that a short time before, I had had occasion to visit the Ministry of Agriculture in Moscow and in the course of conversation with a senior official this particular district was mentioned. The official knew, I said, that I came here from time to time and he suggested that on my next visit, I should make a few inquiries and try to find out the cause of the trouble. "Now," I said, "I am sure that when I see him next, he will want to know what is going on. Your district, you see, is important, not only to Kiev, but to Moscow too, and speaking as a friend, I do suggest that you do something to improve the situation." I paused and I could see that he was worried.

I assured him that I had no personal interest, that I was not one of the "workers on the side", but that I wanted to do what was best for the Party and for the State.

He was impressed by my language and by my obvious knowledge, and no doubt he regarded me as one of the Party activists. This was exactly what I wanted. He spoke now, with seriousness: "You are absolutely right," he said, "and I agree with you entirely. Something must be done but it will not be easy. You see, the Kolhoz people are very conservative and they just don't trust and don't want these modern machines." I nodded and expressed my understanding and sympathy.

"But," he went on, "if it is the wish of the Party, I must try to do something." "It certainly is the wish of the Party," I said, "and I should like to help you."

"This is a matter I can't decide by myself," he said. "Let's go along to the first secretary of the District Committee and see what his reaction is."

A few minutes later we climbed the stairway leading to

the office of the first secretary and entered ahead of the long line of locals who were waiting to present their grievances. The first secretary shook hands with me and greeted me as an equal. I told him what I had told my companion and he thanked me for my interest.

"It is very good of you," he said, "to have told me this and I shall certainly do something about it." Over the office telephone he gave some instructions to officials in the agriculture section and then we began to discuss our next step. I was ready for his first real question.

"How are we to pay for the work?" and he suggested that it should be through the bank. Such an arrangement would not have suited me at all so I explained that up to now my company had dealt only with the "Sovhozes". What we were about to try should be regarded as an experiement. If it worked we could then approach the Ministry of Agriculture with a concrete plan and work out a proper scheme. Meantime, for this first job it would be best for them to pay cash and the company would say nothing about it. After some further discussion, the first secretary agreed. We then summoned three heads of neighboring "Kolkhozes", all of whom arrived in big cars, and we then all set off for the nearest installation. It did not take me long to see that the job would not be difficult but this I would not tell them for not one of them had the least idea of what was involved. The question of cost was raised and I put the figure very high in order to impress them with the importance of the work. They agreed and I saw myself earning money of which I had never dreamed. Thousands of rubles would come to me with comparatively little effort on my part. I had to play my cards very carefully. As this was an experiment, I said, I would work without skilled help at this stage. Later, I would invite engineers from the Kolhoz to join me and I would instruct them so that they would be able to regulate and service the machines. Meantine, I would work with two unskilled men to whom I would pay 50 rubles each—a mere

fraction of what I would receive. I set them to replacing broken pieces of the glass piping and to cleaning off the rust, while I busied myself with adjusting and testing the various parts of the motors. All day, members of the Kolhoz would stop to see what I was doing. I made similar agreements with three of the Kolhozes and soon I felt that I was in a position to be able to give a lecture in one of the club rooms, on the servicing, maintenance and operation of the equipment. There were about 50 people present from the district and they listened with the utmost attention. Most were mechanics and were able to follow what I said. For a second lecture I instructed the heads of the farms on the techniques of milking.

It was then that the Managers and the Party officials were very impressed by what I was doing and this was shown in the accommodation which was now provided for me. In the local 4-storey hotel there were two 2-room luxury flats which were kept for visiting senior officials from Kiev and Moscow. The furnishings were really quite elaborate and from each was a direct telephone line to the office of the first secretary of the District Committee of the Party. The flats remained empty virtually all the time and now one was assigned to me. I enjoyed a luxury which I had previously never experienced. One evening, I was invited to the home of the first secretary for dinner. His wife greeted me most graciously and presented me to the other guests, the Manager of the Agricultural Office and his wife. Clearly I was regarded as the guest of honor and was treated with corresponding respect. In the course of the evening the Agricultural Manager asked me to be sure when I was in Moscow next to report that everything was now in order in his district. It was clear that he was most anxious to create a good impression with his superiors, in Kiev and Moscow, and I assured him that I would submit a favorable report.

The days passed and my work was drawing to an end. All equipment was now in working order and white milk

was pouring through the glass vacuum tubes to the storage and hence to the refrigerator. Part of the agreement was that I should instruct the women in the actual milking of the cows and this, for me, was not easy for my work had been only with the actual machines. But it had to be done.

I approached a black cow and attempted to fit the apparatus to the udders. She resented it and lashed out with her hind leg. Fortunately I avoided the full force of the blow. I explained to the women that at first the cows would object but that when they were accustomed to it they would respond perfectly to the regular pressure of timing of the electric milker. My second attempt was successful and soon everything was in order and the milk flowed smoothly. Now I was ready for a demonstration and a day was arranged by the Manager of the Kolhoz.

At one o'clock precisely, which was milking time, the cows were all in their stalls, the milkers were offered to the udders and the power switched on.

The "Impuls" began its work and in a matter of seconds the glass pipes were streams of white as the milk flowed on its way to the tank and the refrigerator. I noted the pleasure and satisfaction on the faces of the guests who included the first secretary and several top officials from the local office, as well as Managers from neighboring Kolkhoz. There was no doubt that I had done a good job. Next day, according to my agreement, I was to receive the money and as I waited for the cashier I got into a conversation with a man of about 45 years of age who was also waiting. He told me that he was a photographer and a sculptor. Presently he was engaged on making large photographs of outstanding members of various Kolhoz enterprises, members who were honored at the approach of important anniversaries and events. The Kolkhoz paid well, he said, and were it not for a weakness for Vodka and women he could have been a very wealthy man—indeed, he told me with a sigh, he could have been a millionaire. In the early

days of the Revolution he used to sculpt heads of Lenin for erection in every village square and on every Kolhoz.

"In those days," he said, "I could make three or four hundred rubles a day. I would ask 1,000 rubles for a head and no one bargained with me for it was the head of Lenin. And how long did it take me? Perhaps 2 or 3 days." He sighed again, no doubt thinking of the thousands of rubles that he had frittered away. "Now", he went on, "every Kolhoz has more heads of Lenin than it knows what to do with, so I have had to find other ways of making money. Photography is a good line and I like dealing with the Kolhoz for the manager seldom has any idea of costs and payments."

Just before the cashier arrived, I told my new acquaintance that I supervised the milking equipment and naturally he accepted this without question. He took his money with a smile and I was overjoyed to receive 1,500 rubles in excess of what had been agreed upon. The cashier explained that this was being paid on the instructions of the Chief of the Agricultural office in appreciation of what he considered an especially excellent job.

I could scarcely believe my good fortune for never in my life had I seen so much money let alone possessed it. I confess I had some qualms. Would there be trouble for the top men in the office with whom I had been dealing. And they were in positions of authority and would see to it that the transaction was well concealed. I paid my assistants 70 rubles each, a little above the agreed wage of 50 rubles because I had received the extra!

Word of my success and of my availability went from Kolhoz to Kolhoz and I was in great demand throughout the district and even beyond. I now had six assistants and I supervised equipment and gave instructions on its use whenever I was needed. I found the words Party, Lenin and Communism most useful in my contacts with senior officials. One week in every month I worked for my company either

in Kiev or in the district and for the rest of the time I was, as it were, on my own.

It was at this juncture that I met Sasha, a Jew who introduced me to some of his Jewish friends, and it was at this time that I learned of the interest in the emigration movement. All wanted to emigrate to Israel and they discussed the prospects and the steps they should or might take to achieve their object. I sat quietly and listened for I had made up my mind to keep my own plans to myself. At these meetings I heard Israeli songs for the first time in my life. I discovered that small groups had been formed for the study of Hebrew and I heard the word "Ulpan". All these men and women had applied for emigration to Israel but all the applications had been rejected. Many of them had lost their jobs. Looking round I wondered what they could do. As an underground organization they were, I thought, quite incapable of achieving success. They were intelligent people yet they did little except discuss and discuss. Perhaps the best thing they could do for the time being was to study Hebrew and to wait for better times. Some had written letters to the United Nations, to prominent American politicians, to friends abroad, to the Soviet Government and so on, but the results appeared to be completely negative.

I had my own individual method. It was complicated and risky, I knew, but I was confident of ultimate success. Theirs was a group effort and this did not suit me.

Sasha introduced me to the one he called their leader, an intelligent looking man with a beard, whom he addressed as Gerolot Anatol. He looked at me shrewdly and said,

"I have noticed you sitting here during all our discussions but I have not heard you utter a single word. If it were not that you had been brought by our good friend Sacha, I might be suspicious of you." I assured him of my very real and deep interest and my complete reliability.

"I have never been present before at a discussion of this sort," I told him, "and I did not feel that I had anything

useful to contribute. But tell me, do you really think that you will be able to achieve something positive regarding emigration?"

"Yes, I think so," he replied. "We have only started but there will be results. Our first task is to attract world attention to make the world realize what our fate is, that there is a Jewish problem in the U.S.S.R." He paused. "What else can we do now? Do you want us to try to hijack another aircraft at Leningrad?"

"No, I certainly don't expect that," I replied. "A group such as yours couldn't do it and even if it did, that wouldn't solve the problem."

"You're quite right," he said, "that certainly would not, in fact it would probably make it worse for those who remained."

"But do you really expect that there will be, soon, a big immigration to Israel?"

"I do," he said with confidence. And he went on, "There is, as I see it, a very close connection between Jewish emigration and the new Russian Foreign policy of detente with America. Because of public opinion in the United States which we and others like us have helped to arouse, the Soviet will not be able to ignore the question and will probably show a willingness to compromise. And that is why we must make the world realize that the problem is acute." At this point Anatol was called away and Sacha turned to me.

"How would you like to go with me to the synagogue on Saturday?" he asked. I looked at him with some amazement.

"But I'm not at all religious you know," I said.

"Well, neither am I," he said, "but the synagogue is a useful place for us to meet and to discuss our problems."

"And how many of you are there?" I asked.

"About thirty to fifty, as a rule."

"But what is the attitude of the police to meetings of

this sort?"

Then Sacha gave me an outline of the situation. The meetings had commenced about December 1970; at first the police had taken no action, probably because they could see absolutely no reason to do anything. More recently, they had become more aggressive and had tried to introduce observers who would report on what took place.

"Come along on Saturday, " said Sacha, "and you'll see for yourself."

"When does the meeting begin?" I asked.

"At about 1 o'clock." replied Sacha. "We meet near the synagogue after the service is over."

"Do you mean that you are going to pray first?" I asked. "Are you allowed to go into the Synagogue?" It was clear to Sacha that I knew virtually nothing of Jewish life in the City.

"We are not religious," he said, "and we are not allowed to go into the Synagogue to pray. The local authorities object to the singing and so only the old Jews are allowed inside."

I was becoming interested for it seemed to be a most unusual set up.

"But what is the reaction of the Rabbi? And who are the old men who make up the congregation?"

I could sense the contempt in his voice as Sacha elaborated:

"There is no Rabbi at the ordinary service. There are always ten old Jews who are loyal to the authorities. In fact they are police informers. If a visiting Jew comes in for the service, the police soon know about it and the same is true if any "suspicious" person such as one of us, enters the Synagogue. So shall we see you at our meeting Saturday?"

I did not give him a positive answer but merely said that I would think about it. At this time, I was very careful of everything I did for I did not want to endanger my

plans. I knew that the police often took photos of such gatherings as they had done at the Babi Yar function—and I didn't want a new file opened on me. I thought that it would be safe to observe from a distance.

On the Saturday I made my way at 12 o'clock to Schekovitski Street in the district of Podol where the Synagogue was situated. At the end of the street I saw five police cars and a truck with a number of police and plain clothes men standing around. They were on the same side of the street as the Synagogue and opposite them were gathered about 30-35 young Jews, many of whom had been at the evening meeting which I had attended. The service was over, the old men came out of the Synagogue and some of the young men began to cross over. The police did not interfere but the senior officer got their attention and told them that in a few minutes the Deputy Mayor of the city, Zernitzky, would arrive as he had something important to communicate to them. There was a buzz of conversation as the young Jews milled around trying to anticipate what the Deputy Mayor would have to say. They had not long to wait before one of the big black official cars, a Volga, drew up and the Deputy Mayor descended. Through a loud speaker he announced that in accordance with a resolution adopted by the Town Council all meetings such as this were prohibited. "I advise you all," he said in conclusion, "to go home quietly otherwise the police whom you see here will have to take the necessary measures to disperse you and to restore order."

"No one has the authority to make such a decision. Under the Soviet Constitution we have the right to assemble in this way and if you try to prevent us, we shall complain."

"You have a perfect right to complain," said the Deputy Mayor, "but meantime I advise you to take note of the Council's decision and to go home without any bother."

He waited a few minutes during which there was no

movement from the crowd, whispered something to the officer in charge, then got into his car and was driven away. The young Jews gathered there did not know what to do—whether to go away or to stay in defiance of the order. The old Jews who had come out of the Synagogue advised them to disperse and I recalled my own father who had always tried to avoid trouble. I stood at some distance pretending to read a newspaper and giving the impression that what was going on was no concern of mine. Had I been questioned, I would have said that I was waiting for my girlfriend whom I had arranged to meet there.

One of the policemen remained in conversation with a middle aged Jew and I wondered what the connection was, they seemed on such friendly terms. The Jew seemed to be telling the policeman a joke for the two laughed from time to time. Then a police car drove up, the officers pushed four of the young Jews into it—and the morning meeting was over.

But after this I made a point of contacting members of the group whenever I was in Kiev which was usually during the last week in every month. I felt sure that some of these activists were under the surveillance of the Secret Police so, in order not to expose myself, I would meet them in out of the way places. One of them, Anatoly, passed me a Hebrew Beginners Manual and for the first time in my life, I saw the writing of that ancient people of which I knew I was a part. I tried to study in the evenings sometimes and in this way I learned a few words. I did not dare to carry the book on my person and I certainly would not take it with me on any of my trips, remembering as I did, the trouble that had come to me from that simple telephone number of the British Embassy that I had so innocently written in my pocket book. Some of the activists in the group were quite proficient in Hebrew and they taught others, initiated discussions on Jewish culture and on recent books—all of which, of course was illegal. It should

not be thought, however, that all Jewish youth were concerned with such matters. This was unfortunately far from being the position, for a large proportion, like their counterparts in the non-Jewish ranks, was interested only in clothes, girls, pleasure seeking and the like. Clothes especially, were regarded as a status symbol, and because Soviet industry produced only the dullest sort of clothes, there was a great competition to get hold of imported stuff. As a result there was a flourishing market, in which Jews played their part in buying and selling the most fashionable coats, trousers, ties, and so on.

One of the busiest "markets" in the country must have been in Kiev–the "Telkuchka"–where every Sunday were to be seen thousands and thousands of men, and women, mostly young people, buying and selling, driving hard bargains, determined on the one side to sell nad on the other, to acquire the latest in fashionable attire. Where did the clothes come from? In the main they came from the United States and other western countries sent as gifts to the Soviet citizens. A Russian who had friends or relatives in one of these "affluent" countries would solicit a parcel and when it arrived he would sell the clothes at the "Telkuchka" and buy food with the proceeds. Students, who often had no source of income beyond their stipends, were sometimes fortunate enough to find a sponsor abroad, and through one of the voluntary groups in the West they received stylish clothes which they did not wear but sold for their own profit. There were too speculators who bought in one market and sold in another, travelling from city to city to do so. They were often able, too, to buy up parcels in the smaller towns and villages where no markets were held. Contrary to what many outsiders think, there are opportunities for making money "on the side" in the Soviet Union but the authorities were always on the look out for the speculators and at the market in Kiev, one could pick out police in civilian dress taking photographs for inclusion

in the numerous files that are kept for possible future reference.

Not only among the "speculators" but among the buyers, too, there were Jews and I could well believe that emigration to Israel was not for them. Israel meant sacrifice and for sacrifice they would not be prepared. They were not interested in individual freedom, in books, in literature, in theater. Their interests were dress, girls, and private scandal and their main preoccupation was how to make money while avoiding hard work. Not for them was work on a building site, for instance. Manual labor was suitable for "Goyim" but not for them. I could not feel proud that these were Jews, too, and though I occasionally saw one or two of them at our meetings, I did not get into conversation with them or try to get to know them.

My aim was to get out of the Soviet and to reach Israel and if I did make money "on the side" it was for that purpose alone. I was not interested in fancy clothes and in girls—there were more serious matters to occupy my mind.

Now I concentrated on getting a visa for I was determined to get a berth on a ship that would take me away from the Soviet. But first I had to have a positive character reference. Now I knew, or I thought I knew, the pitfalls and the difficulties and I felt confident that this time my application would succeed. The first rule was that one had to be in constant employment with the same firm for a period of at least a year. This did not present a problem. During this period I made a point of attending Union meetings whenever I was in town and where I made my voice heard vehemently defending Government policy and supporting Party aims. In private conversation I would attack imperialism, zionism, capitalism, whatever was the current line, and I attended the study circles on Marxism and Leninism. I let myself be seen and heard so that when I told the Party secretary that I needed a character reference I felt

confident that he would not turn me down. I was not over optimistic, but yet I did feel that ultimately I would not be refused. I told the Party secretary that I needed the character reference in order to complete my course. I was studying at the Marine College of Technology and after graduation it was necessary for me to go to sea for a couple of months. The theoretical knowledge I would have but I must have the opportunity to put it into practice. I had to face the Party meeting of course and the meeting of the Trade Union, but this time I was not the cheeky youngster of the preivous occasion and my answers to the stupid questions put to me were satisfactory. My application was approved and I was handed the character reference.

But do not think that this was the end of the story. It was but the end of the beginning and I had still to pass through the maze of Soviet bureaucracy.

I had the form but it was necessary for me to sign it in the presence of a certain party official in the district office of Radansky. The form already had three signatures certifying the correctness of the procedure at the meeting at which my application had been approved and in addition it had the four signatures of the head of the company for which I worked, the chief of my department, the company Communist Party secretary and the Chairman of the Trade Union. It was a formidable array but apparently it was not sufficient. I presented the form to the Committee instructor. He took it and informed me that he would discuss it with the Party Secretary of the company and not with me. In due course I was informed that from his point of view it was not in order and I would have to submit another; I had no option. A new form was filled out and I collected the necessary signatures—a month later for in between I had to go to Kiev on a work trip.

The official at Radanskaya appended his signature to the precious document and sent me on to the 3rd secretary of the District Committee of the Party. The 3rd secretary

was a woman. I entered her office and greeted her politely. She did not return the greeting but snapped out, "What do you want?"

I replied that I would be obliged if she would sign the character reference which I had brought with me.

"But why have you brought it?" she demanded. "I can discuss it only with your Party Secretary, not with you."

"I need the character reference urgently," I pleaded, "and our Party Secretary is very busy."

"So am I, " she snapped back. "When he is free he may come to me and I will talk with him. I have no more time to talk with you. You may go."

I was dismissed and reported back to the Party Secretary of the company. I was, it is true, downcast but yet not surprised. The 3rd secretary was typical of so many of our Party officials—rude, abrupt and determined to make the most of their authority.

In due course the company Party Secretary saw her when she intimated that the application gave too little information on my background. There followed another round of questioning and another round of collecting signatures. But at last, a month later, all was in order and the precious document was mine. It was now August 1971 and I had to consider my next step.

I made my way to the library and there I found the newspapers dealing with ships and shipping based on Russian ports. I made a particular search for advertisement from fishing vessels and especially for those calling for refrigerating specialists. I found what I wanted and then I sat down and typed letters of application for the vacant jobs. I wrote in the name of four persons, three entirely fictitious, bearing Russian names, and the fourth my own Jewish name. I thought that such a letter would be more likely to elicit a favorable reply rather than one from a single person who was obviously Jewish. In all I wrote some 15 letters to various parts of the Soviet Union, in-

cluding the Soviet Far East, some 11,000 kilometers away. Replies, I indicated, should be sent to my address. I intimated that all four of us were interested in the possibility of working for the company.

In September I received a notification from the Marine College that I could now seek work. This indicated that I had completed my period of study. I had enrolled some 6 years and 4 months previously and had now done all that was required of me. I collected all my papers, including of course the character reference which should enable me to obtain a visa and left Kiev for Kaliningrad. I wondered how different I would find it from what it was when I first saw it six years before. Kaliningrad had not changed a great deal. On both sides of the main street leading from the station were the ruins of what had once been castles. There were, however, some new buildings, some 5 storey blocks looking like boxes piled one on top of the other. There was no pretence of architectural beauty. My first evening I spent walking around, finding the places that had been familiar to me. First of all, of course was the railway station built by the Germans before the war. Yet it was basically no different from the other stations which I had seen in many parts of Russia during the course of my business trips. There was the same long line of passengers waiting to buy their tickets at the cashiers' windows, the same restaurant hall with waiters lolling about, the same drunks, the evil smelling toilets, the baggage section and, at the entrance, the line of taxis. In the square facing the entrance—a statue of Lenin.

Yet I liked the stations. In spite of their sameness they symbolized change, for setting out from stations travellers were going to a new life, to new scenes, to new occupations, perhaps for a short time only perhaps for a long period, perhaps for the remainder of their lives. During the past four years I had seen many railway stations and many airports. Crowds of people departing and arriving: all different,

yet all the same.

From the station at Kaliningrad I walked down the main street. Some three hundred meters from the station was the Marine College dormitory where I had stayed on many occasions. It was an old building which meant quite a lot to me. I came to the center of the town. There were many sailors on the streets, with the same basic needs and purposes—to find a seat in an already overcrowded restaurant, to find a place where one could buy a bottle of vodka and to pick up a girl with whom to spend the evening. They were a carefree lot—some having just returned from a fishing expedition, some ready to leave. How I envied them: they had no problems with regard to references and visas. Every ship was open to them—and closed to me.

Ah! Here was my college and next to it the prison where I had spent those long, dreary days and nights, not knowing what my fate was to be. I found the window opening onto that corridor which I had paced so often. I shall never forget that window, for in a manner of thinking, it looked out on to the new life which was to be mine. From the prison I went to the insane asylum and another chapter of my life opened. As night closed in I went back to my dormitory.

night closed in I went back to my dormitory.

Next day I was told the subject on which I was to write in order to receive my diploma and I set to work. Walking in the street, quite by chance, I met an old friend, a man whom, six years earlier, when I first came to Kaliningrad, I had assisted to pass his matriculation examination. He told me he had graduated in the previous year, that he was married, had received an apartment and was working as second mate on a fishing boat. He greeted me enthusiastically and asked me what I was doing now in Kaliningrad.

I told him that I wanted to go to sea: that I had all the necessary documents including my character reference, but

that I did not know which company to approach nor where to go. Voloday, for this was my friend's name, said that he would go with me to the offices of PURP, the organization which embraced all the fishing companies, and there he would introduce me to a senior official with whom he was well acquainted. Full of optimism I went with him to the offices of PURP where we met his contact. Voloday explained what I wanted and the official reacted positively.

"No problems," he said, "no problem at all for one of your profession. We are always looking for specialists in your field. Let me write down a few particulars and I shall send your name forward."

But as soon as I told him my name, his expression changed and the smile left his face.

"Tell me," he said, "what is your nationality?"

"I am a Jew," I said.

He looked at me attentively for a moment.

"Let me give you some friendly advice." he said. "Forget it and try something else. You will never work at sea. This I know for a fact. Jews are not given visas and without a visa you cannot work at sea." He was quite definite and for him that was the end of the matter.

"But, I have a character reference," I protested.

"And that is as much use to you as a blank piece of paper," he replied. "I'd like to help you—you seem a decent enough fellow—but it's quite impossible. I know what the position is and I advise you to look for something else." He turned to speak to Voloday to indicate that as far as I was concerned the interview was over. We left the office. I thanked Voloday for his effort on my behalf and said goodbye. I suppose neither of us was surprised. I had felt, even before the interview, that my visa would beunobtainable but I thought that there would be a chance that because of my specialist training and the college which I had attended, the authorities might let me through. Well—I had been stopped at the first hurdle. But I had my character reference

which I had obtained with so much effort and it would be a great pity if I could not use it and profit from it. But how?

I knew I could not leave Russia legally without the necessary visa and I determined to make one more attempt. A couple of days later, I left Kaliningrad for Klaipeda, a Lithuanian town on the Baltic Coast about 100-150 kilometers from Kaliningrad. There I called at the offices of one of the fishing companies where I applied for a job. I left copies of all my papers, including the character reference, and was told that I would hear from them within three to four months. At least it was not a flat rejection. Returning to Kaliningrad, I set to work on my thesis.

I worked steadily on my project along with several other young fellows, but we still had time for some card playing and for visits to the cinema. By the end of the year I was finished and ready for the examination which was set down for the 1st of January. But earlier the group decided on a celebration for Christmas, or the New Year, what you will, at our hotel, the "Moskowa" in the center of town. To help us pass the evening the college recommended some young women who joined us ready armed with the essential vodka. True to my custom I drank very little and was thus able to observe the others who were all drunk by midnight.

I drew one of the girls aside for I was interested to learn more about her. She was quite ready to talk although she had had more to drink than was necessary. She told me that she shared an apartment with a girl friend in Odessa. She had no regular work and appeared to me to be of below average intelligence. Yet she wore expensive clothes and it was not difficult to deduce that she was a prostitute. Keeping in touch with the companies, these girls learned when the ships were coming back from the expeditions and they were at the ports to meet them. Sailors were their best customers—they had plenty of money, they were not stingy and, after a six months' period of abstenance they were more

than ready for women's company; so these women enjoyed a good income travelling between the various ports—Kaliningrad, Klaipeda, Riga, Tallin, Odessa and the rest. You will find them there at the dockside and in the restaurants.

On January 1st, 1972, I presented myself for examination and as I came out my eyes lighted on Victor, the Victor who had so decieved me two years before. I looked straight at him but said nothing and we passed without a word. For me Victor no longer existed. Three days later I received my Diploma and the next day I left Kaliningrad for Kiev. There I found a batch of letters, replies to the job applications which I had written before going to Kaliningrad. There was no letter from Klaipeda, so I decided to telephone the company. I was told that as I did not have an open visa I could not go abroad and consequently there was no position available for me. They promised to return the various papers that I had left with them. So, that avenue of escape seemed closed and I must think of another way.

I looked through the letters. All replies were negative except for three from the Soviet Far East. It was however a condition of employment that there was no disembarkation at any foreign port. After a year's satisfactory service in the Far East an open visa would be issued. With this I would have to be satisfied. My plan for escape would not have to be postponed. I knew that there were few Jews in the Far East and no antisemitism and I decided that I might have a chance of success there. I wrote to one of the companies accepting a position on the conditions stated and asking for the necessary permit to enter the zone which was designated as a "closed area". In due course the permit arrived and I prepared for my departure. But first I had to break the news to my father who was an old man now of 73 and to my sisters who still retained an interest in my welfare.

I had prepared a story for them which I felt sure they

would accept. I told them that I wanted to continue my studies in order to obtain a "candidate degree" which was above the grade of an engineer. It was impossible for a Jew to obtain such a certificate in Kiev but it would be comparatively easy in the Far East. I convinced them but I saw tears in my father's eyes and I knew that he would mourn for me. But the break had to be made.

On my last day in Kiev I walked along the main street and pondered the events of the 2½ years during which the dream of leaving Russia had not left me. I recalled the unhappy and painful years and wondered whether I was indeed ready for what must be the final effort. Was I prepared psychologically? I could not tell but I thought that I had done everything possible. I had avoided mistakes—I had not spoken "out of turn", I had not been seen in the wrong places, I had not given my confidence to anyone. I was sure that no one knew of my intentions. I felt that in myself I had changed. I had matured and had gained self confidence. I would never obtain an open visa—of this I was sure so whatever plan I made would be difficult to carry through.

To jump ship in the cold waters around Alaska to Bristol—but when the time came perhaps some other plan would suggest itself. Whatever it would be, it would be unusual, perhaps unprecedented, but certainly it would be dangerous and might entail the loss of my life. Such thoughts ran through my mind as I walked the streets of Kiev for what I hoped would be the last time. Here I had lived for 25 years and I would leave it with no regrets. I had visited the cemetery and had communed with my mother who lay in that cold grave. I had said "goodbye" to her and now there was nothing else. These buildings, these streets, the greyness and the darkness of it all, my first love—all were of the past.

Next day I left Kiev.

On the 23rd of February 1972, I landed at the airport of Vladivostok and was immediately struck by the nature of the surroundings. Here were mountains which in Russian we call "sopky"–in profusion. Indeed, the whole area was mountainous, the type of country to which I was by no means accustomed, but yet which it gave me pleasure to behold. I made my way into the city and at the first hotel to which I came, I inquired for accommodation. I was not surprised to be informed that there was none. By this time I had had considerable experience of travelling in the Soviet Union. I knew that unless one had friends or relations willing and able to accommodate one, one could pass the night "comfortably" on a chair or bench in the waiting room of an airport, or railway station or a bus terminal–or on the ground or on a bench in the open air. Some people did have a way of opening doors–when they presented their passport at the reception desk of the hotel they passed with it 15 or 20 rubles or they placed beside it a box of candy or some other desirable gift. Then the "presiding genius" who was usually a woman, would suddenly remember that there was a spare room!

As I was not prepared to throw away the little money that I had on unnecessary bribes, I had evolved a method of my own and it invariably worked. When I arrived in a new town I would go to the nearest public telephone box and call up a hotel. In a rude, official voice I would present myself as the head of some state department operating in the area–there were always many of them–or as the head of some party committee, and instruct the hotel administrator to provide accommodation for an important official–and I would give my own name–who was due to arrive within a very short time. An hour later I would present myself at the hotel reception and I always received the best available room. The system worked in Moscow, in Leningrad, in Dniepropetrovsk, and again in Vladivostok. As I checked in I looked with a sensation akin to pity, on those

men and women, many of whom were certainly much more important than myself, who were sitting there in the lounge, as they had sat for hours, waiting for accommodation which they would not get. I had even worked out a "cover-up" story if the receptionist had expressed curiosity regarding the precise identity of the person who had telephoned. It was a good story, I thought, and I was a little disappointed that I never had occasion to use it.

When evening came I went to the railway restaurant for something to eat. It was a dirty place that reeked of alcohol. A lot of the men were obviously sailors and most were obviously drunk. One in a crumpled suit fell heavily into a chair beside me and because I had worked out my plan of action, I got into a conversation with him. A bottle of vodka easily opened his mouth and he told me that he held an important post in the port administration.

While I was still in Kiev, when I had decided that my only hope of getting out of Russia would be by way of Vladivostok, I had tried to learn something of the place and its people. The first thing that I did learn of the Soviet Union's Far East was that drunkenness was rife there—indeed it was almost a religion. Yet I didn't realize that a bottle of vodka meant so much to the average Russian there. It was a star that he constantly pursued and if he failed to capture it life was indeed dark and meaningless. The population was for the most part made up of drifters from all over Russia—from the Ukraine, Central Russia, Siberia, Belo-Russia, men who were failures at home, men who had abandoned their families, who were divorced and who now gave themselves up to vodka. This they all, or nearly all, had in common. And because the Soviet Far East was close to the Chinese border the Government held out all sorts of inducements to attract these misfits and these "ne'er do wells". There were higher salaries, often to the extent of three to one, tax remissions, easy loans for housing, and so on. In addition, there were young men, graduates of the

universities and the technical schools who were sent there by the State and were required to put in three years of compulsory service. They, too, quickly acquired the vodka habit and I wondered how they would adapt to a life in a more civilized community at the conclusion of their three years' exile. I had decided that when I came to Vladivostok I would come as a man dissatisfied with life and with a distinct taste for vodka. And so I quickly got into a conversation with my table companion.

"Life in the West is hard these days," I complained. "There is little opportunity to drink and for a sailor what is life without vodka?" and I drained my glass. "What is it like here?"

"Here we have freedom," his speech was already slurred and he had difficulty with some of the sounds. "You have come to the right place, buddy. Vodka is easy to come by here. You can get it in the cafes and in every shop." I passed him the bottle and he poured himself a full glass. "I'm drinking now," he said, "because I'm depressed." He sent on: "My wife has left me because she says I drink too much! Have you ever heard of anything like that! As though any man could drink too much!"

I offered him my sympathy and he opened his heart to me. The average Russian will give you the shirt off his back after a few glasses of vodka and my new friend was no exception. He told me that he had been working for a long time at the port of Nabodka, and that though he would not be able to help me to get a posting to go to sea, he was sure that his wife's brother who was a "high-up" in Vladivostok would.

"Wait a minute," he said, "I'll go and telephone him and we'll see what he can do." He was back in a few minutes to tell me that he had left his pocket book at home and didn't know his brother-in-law's number.

"No matter," he said, "we'll take a taxi and call on him." I protested that it was too late for me to call on

someone whom I didn't know but he brushed my objections aside. I was, it is true, a little suspicious. I had only just met my new sponsor and in a public dining room, but I decided to take the risk. I paid for the meal, we went out, called a taxi and were on our way. As I looked back on the railway building I wondered whether or not I was again walking into the lion's mouth, yet inspite of my preoccupation with my own affairs I could not help admiring the structure so different from the grey uniformity of the Stalin area. Here was a fine edifice in green in the baroque style, a reminder of the Russia that was no more. I wondered whether I would have been any less unhappy under the Czars than I was under the Soviets. But now we were at the door of the apartment which was opened by a short, balding man dressed only in his underwear. He must have been in his middle fifties and he seemed surprised to see us at this hour. He invited us in and my new friend put his request without waiting even to introduce me.

"Grisha, you must help my friend here to find a job. He wants to go to sea and he's got all the qualifications."—the word gave him quite a spot of difficulty. He clapped me on the shoulder and pushed me forward.

"That shouldn't be a problem," said Grisha, "but I don't see any bottle." He laughed, "How can we arrange anything like that without a bottle?"

"That's not a problem either," I replied in the same tone and put fifteen rubles down on the table. Ivan scooped up the money and was out of the room in a flash. Glasses were filled and we settled down to the serious business of drinking and talking. While he was still sober enough, Grisha told me that he had many important connections and that it should be easy enough to fix me up with a job. He gave me his work address and telephone number and told me to contact him. By this time the bottle was almost empty, the stories were becoming more and more "rough" and the laughter louder and louder. I slipped out and made

my way back to the hotel thus ending my first day in the Soviet Far East.

Back at the hotel I decided on my next moves. I had a contact now in Vladivostok but I wanted to know what conditions were like in Nahodka and Preobragenie, both within 150 kilometers of Vladivostok. During the following couple of days I visited both places, obtaining all the information I could and I was pleased to find no evidence of anti-semitism among the officials. One matter, however, was worrying me and that was the question of my Army service. Normally the Draft was at 18 but I had been able to get deferment on the grounds of my studies. I was now 26 and if I could keep out until I was 27, I should be safe. I knew that men were called up in the Spring and in the Autumn and that it would be difficult for me to get out of it. In Kiev I had heard that in the Soviet Far East exemption was granted to highly qualified personnel who had posts at sea and I wondered whether my qualifications would be considered high enough. The clerk at the reception office at Nahodka from whom I made inquiries directed me to the military office and there a Captain Alisov told me, after he had studied my case, that I should probably be drafted in the Spring. Certain categories such as First Mate and radio operator could be granted deferment but my profession was not listed. I knew that it was difficult to avoid military service and I knew, also, that if I tried to evade the draft I could be imprisoned. But perhaps I could think of something. I returned to Vladivostok, telephoned Grisha and arranged to meet him the following day at lunch time. He took me to the reception office of the Fishing Company, "Vostokholod" where he introduced me to his friend, the chief, a man of his own age, a Colonel in the Reserves.

The Colonel read through my papers and then, fixing me with a cold stare, he rapped out, "Why do you want to work in the Far East? This is not the most pleasant area of

the Soviet."

I had known that I would be asked this question and I had long ago prepared an answer. I explained that I had graduated at the Marine College at Kaliningrad and that I wanted to gain practical experience at sea so that I could pursue my scientific studies with a view to gaining my master's degree.

"Furthermore," I said, "the last Party Congress called on young specialists to offer themselves for service in the Far East and I think I can be more useful here than anywhere else."

I saw that this impressed him favorably and he began to tell me of the conditions of work. If I did obtain a post on a ship I would have to serve for a period of one year and without the special visa which was granted only after the production of the character reference. I would not be permitted to disembark at any foreign port. I knew perfectly well that being a Jew I would never be able to obtain such a visa but I let that pass.

Then came his next question, "Have you done your Army service?"

"No," I replied, "I have only now graduated from college and while I was studying I was granted deferment."

"In that case," he said, "there is really nothing I can do for you. Before I can offer you a job at sea you must either do your Army service or get the permission of the local military authorities. Go along and see what you can do."

With that he dismissed me and I made my way, still with Grisha in attendance, to the Headquarters of the local military which was nearby. The colonel in charge was not prepared to discuss anything and in a loud, rough, voice, told me that I would be called up in the spring and until that time I could work only on shore. I could not go to sea, and that, he stressed, was final.

I thanked Grisha for his help, said goodbye, and

returned to my hotel room to consider my position. My mind was in turmoil, nothing I attempted would succeed and now I would have to serve in the Army for one or two years with teenage youngsters--and I was 26, almost 27. Almost 27 and then I would be free of the threat. But there was no escape. It did not depend on me. Wherever I was in the Soviet, the Army would find me. I paced the room from corner to corner and a deep depression descended on me. But now I knew what to do. I must concentrate, relax, and get my thoughts in order.

I sat down, lit a candle and gazed at the flame steadily for an hour. As time passed I became relaxed. Bad thoughts flowed out of my mind, my breathing was quiet and steady and now I could think clearly. I would go again to the village of Preobrajenie and perhaps there among all those drunkards I would achieve something. I waited for three days and then took a helicopter flight to the village. This was my last hope. I must act deliberately and carefully. I must spy out the land, learn local conditions and then make my approach.

I made my way to the Sailors' Hotel, a five-storey building, usually referred to as the"crazy house" or "Durdom". Here were sailors on leave and those working at the local ship repairing yards. I paid my fee at the administration desk but when I approached the entrance to the rooms, I was stopped by a fat coarse woman who rudely told me to open my bag..

"Open up," she said, "I want to see if you have any bottles in there." I assured here that I had none. "I know you," she sneered, "you're all the same. You're all a lot of drunkards."

But finding no bottles in my bag she let me in and I took the elevator to the fifth floor. As I got out the strong smell of alcohol almost knocked me over so I knew what to expect. I opened the door of my room and was pleased to find it empty. I lay down and was soon asleep. A very loud

hammering on my door awoke me.

"Come on out," cried a voice, "I want to drink with you."

I opened the door and saw there a fellow in his underwear. I thought it best not to raise any objections and with as good a grace as I could muster, I said,

"Sure I'll drink with you." And followed him to the next room where three men were already drinking at a table laden with bottles and glasses.

They hailed me with a shout, invited me to sit down and one of them handed me a glass of vodka. They were apparently men of position on the ships for one of them wore the badge of a captain. I could see that they were waiting for me to drink, so although I certainly did not like vodka, I took up the glass, drained it in a gulp, and banged it down on the table. The captain nodded his approval.

"You don't look like a sailor," he said, "with that white complexion, but if you can drink like that, you'll do and you'll be a real sailor yet!"

Then they turned again to the serious business of drinking and didn't worry about me. They sang, they wept, they argued, and when they reached the fighting stage, I slipped quietly from the room and left them to it. In the corridor it was the same—men in their underwear reeling around, obviously drunk, their eyes expressionless, their tongues loose, their arms swinging, hitting whatever came in their path. There was shouting and fighting—it was like bedlam. I locked myself in my room and tried to block my ears against the noise. With my head swimming from the effects of the vodka, the noise and my natural anxiety regarding my position, I decided to get out into the open air.

My walk was not without interest for I was able to learn something of the village. The houses were of brick or wood and were simply built; at the back were mountains and forests grew almost to the edge of the bay on which the

village stood. It was a picturesque sight from which, in happier circumstances, I could have derived much pleasure. Now my thoughts were elsewhere but I was able to observe—I could not avoid it—the streams of people who thronged the street. Indeed there were two streams—one to the shops, the other away, bearing bottles of liquor in bags and baskets, in pockets and under the arms. Liquor seemed to be the principal purchase and many could not wait to reach their homes before opening the bottles and draining them of their contents. Soon the street resounded to the noise of crying, shouting and quarrelling, and in the fading light I made my way back to the dormitory building. A strange sight met my gaze—men on the upper floor hauling up bottles attached to ropes by their friends below. If bottles could not be brought in by the front door, there was always another way. The fat woman at the reception desk assured herself that I had no bottle on my person and I went up to my room in a fog of alcohol fumes. The days passed slowly. I learned that in ten days time the big new ship "Sovetskoe Primorije" would be in the front port to prepare for her 11 month expedition to the Gulf of Arnardir near Chuckchee. If, somehow, I could join the crew of this ship, I could evade the Spring call-up. But how could this be done?

I had learned that the head office of the military commander of the area Preobrajenie was in the district center of Liazo, some 90 kilometers from where I was. There was no bus between the two places but once a week a courier drove over with any important papers. I decided that during the coming days I would undergo certain medical tests and make all my arrangements to join the fishing vessel. Then a couple of days before the ship was due to leave, I would present myself at the local military office and inform the officer in charge that because of my bad sight, I would not be able to go to sea but would have to work on shore. I felt that the heavy glasses that I wore would give credence to this. The local military man, I figured, would swallow the

story and send his report by courier to the company headquarters. By the time it had been noted there, I hoped to be 1,000 kilometers from the shore. This I thought, was my only chance.

I had with me an eye-testing chart that I had brought from Kiev. I knew that the same chart was used through the Soviet Union so I learned the symbols by heart and their positions. Consequently when I presented myself before the doctor, he found that my eyesight was perfect and he endorsed my medical certificate to that effect. So from that angle, I was fit to go to sea.

On the ninth day the "Sovetskoe Primorije" docked and immediately began to load provisions, water and all the gear necessary for the fishing expedition. She was a fine vessel, built in Poland and this was her maiden voyage. She was to remain in harbor for only one day.

Next morning, early, I was at the office of the military commander, Colonel Malikov Even at this hour the Colonel's breath smelled of alcohol and he was in a hurry to get rid of me. He took my papers, stamped them, filled in the blanks and listened impatiently to my story that my sight was so bad that I would have to work on shore. He took down a new file, labelled it "Fishing Company" and, telling me that he had no time then but that he would look into my case later, he dismissed me.

I returned to the village and made my way to the quay where lay the ship on which all my hopes were based. I applied at the reception office for a job, showing my medical certificate and military papers which I had received in Kiev when I was a boy of 16, and when deferment had been granted me. The papers were accepted and within a very short time I was installed in a comfortable cabin with all my belongings. At last I felt safe. That night the "Sovetskoe Primorije" weighed anchor and slipped out of the harbor.

The "Sovetskoe Primorije" was the mother ship of the fishing fleet carrying a crew of about 250, including many

women.

The small ships transferred their catches to the "base" ship which received them and prepared them for the market, doing no catching itself. I was employed as a refrigeration mechanic in the refrigeration department in which there were seven of us in all.

During the first three days crew members put down considerable quantities of vodka which they had brought with them from the shore and some of the sailors were even sacked for drunkenness while on duty. One of these worked alongside me and he came to my cabin in a very unhappy state, pouring out his sad story—when he had gone I noticed that he had taken from my shelf a bottle ofeau-de-cologne which no doubt he drank as soon as he was back in his own cabin.

My own stay on board was not to last much longer. On our tenth day out I was called to the cabin of the Captain's mate, who had received a cable, he said, ordering me to return to Preobrezenie to report to one Malikov. Who Malikov was he did not know, but I did and I knew I dared not ignore the command. Three days later I, together with the five sacked sailors, including my mate, Serge, was put on board the "Amark" which was returning to its home base. That night I could not sleep. I tossed and turned and tortured myself with thoughts of what would become of me. My situation could not have been worse for I did not expect any mercy from the Colonel whom I had decieved. When eventually the sun rose I went on deck and walked around, thinking, walking and rejecting a hundred wild plans and seeing nothing. Suddenly I realized that we were tied to another base ship and I read the name and port of origin. She was the "Iasenko" out of Nohodka and in a flash I knew what I should do. Others had done it and so should I. I raced to my cabin and without anyone seeing me I slipped a bottle of vodka under my jacket and made my way back to the deck. Moments later I was on board the "Iasenko".

No one had seen me and I knew that the bottle of vodka could prove to be my passport to freedom.

I found a refrigeration mechanic and persuaded him to take me to the chief mechanic. At first he told me that there were no vacancies and that he had no use for me, but at the sight of the bottle of vodka his attitude changed and he discovered that there was a place after all as mate to the refrigerator mechanic.

I slipped back to the "Amark" and down to my cabin where I saw Serge, the young man with a liking for eau-de-cologne. I gave him my last bottle of vodka—what can one not do with vodka—and he agreed to circulate the rumor that I had gone back to Kiev. I thought that if this came to the ears of the Colonel he would set up a search for me in Kiev and if I could keep out of the way until after the date of the Army call-up I would be safe. I took my suitcase and slipped back aboard the "Iasenko". A few hours later we untied from the "Amark" and headed for the fishing grounds. I felt reasonably safe for I had been only one night on the "Amark", few had seen me and I had not shown my papers to the chief mate.

The "Nikolai Iasenko", built twenty years before, in Japan was, by modern standards, a very primitive vessel, with really out-of-date equipment. She was engaged in the processing of a fish called "Mintay" which is found only in the Pacific off the Soviet Far East coast and in the neighborhood of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. In the U.S.S.R. this fish is not considered fit for human consumption—though I believe it is fed to the unfortunate inmates of labor camps—but is fed to animals particularly to the sable, the mink, the ermine, fox and others from which the expensive furs come. The little ships delivered the mintay to the mother ship—in this case the Isaenko—where it was processed at the rate of about 1,000 to 1,100 barrels a day, each barrel weighing from 100—120 kilos. The men worked twelve hour shifts, seven days a week

and there was no respite. We were docked at Kamchatka and the work was hard. Often, though, I went on deck and gazed over the white mountains of the peninsula. Every day I expected to be called to the office of the Captain's mate to be told that he had received a telegram about me, but the days passed and none came. Every day that passed was a day nearer to my freedom from military service.

In addition to his normal duty, every man had to do an additional shift when we ripped open the mintay and removed the liver. This after preliminary preparation as the fish was packed into metal containers for export to Japan. Among the fish, too, were often crabs, lobsters and such like creatures I had not seen on shore and which were, apparently, normally exported. These we boiled to eat, supplementing our otherwise monotonous diet. But the time came for us to return to our home port. Five days sailing from Kamchatka we pulled up anchor, gave a "good-bye" whistle and were on our way. With each mile covered my anxiety grew for I was not yet safe. Then the blow fell—the Captain summoned me and told me that he had received a radio message ordering me to report to the office of the military headquarters immediately on my arrival in port.

The Colonel had found me. It was now 27th May and until 31st May I could be conscripted. And we were only three days out. I was lost for I knew I could expect no mercy from the Colonel. He would be furious and somehow or other I must keep beyond his grasp. But how could it be done? Once we touched shore it would be impossible for me to escape. Whatever could be done would have to be done at sea, but what? Twice I sighted Japanese ships but they were too far off—too far off for me to reach them. Yet I knew that my only way of escape was to jump ship. We were now in Japanese waters, in the straits of Laperuzo and I must look for an opportunity. Even if on my return to Russia I managed to evade the military I knew I would never get a visa to work on a ship which called at foreign

ports and so I would have to escape at sea. It would be a perilous undertaking but it was the only way. Even so the prospects were not good. I recalled previous attempts which had received wide publicity in the Soviet.

A Lithuanian sailor had jumped overboard near the American coast. Picked up by an American border patrol vessel, he had sought asylum but he had been returned to his ship and back in the Soviet he had been tried and sent to jail for 13 years. Kurbatov Balery had been even less fortunate. He was a Russian who jumped ship near the Canadian shore. After eight hours in the water he made dry land but two years later he was killed at Hunter House in the U.S.A., no doubt by K.G.B. agents. This was what I knew of jumping ship but on the other hand I knew what to expect from the Colonel if he laid hands on me.

Suddenly, as I was walking on the upper deck and brooding on the hopelessness of my situation, I saw what appeared to be a Japanese ship approaching. It would, as I heard the Captain say to the lookout, cross our line of sail and would come very close to us. Was this the chance I had been waiting for?

I ran down to the engine room to see what the temperature of the sea was. It was 9 C.—very cold—and my heart sank. But perhaps I would be in the water for only ten minutes before the Japanese ship picked me up. Surely I would be able to endure ten minutes! And then I remembered the Baltic Sea near Kaliningrad. There although the temperature was 16 C. I had not been able to stay in for more than a minute or two because of the pain in my leg muscles below the knee. My body could withstand the cold but the pain in my legs would be unbearable. If I jumped I was afraid I would lose consciousness within minutes and would drown. But yet it was my only chance. I pushed the thoughts of water temperature from my mind and ran to my cabin. Quickly I put on my belt containing all my essential documents wrapped in waterproof paper prepared for just such

an eventuality as this, pulled on a woolen jersey which would protect my body from the cold, and climbed back on the deck.

I went aft and there standing were half a dozen sailors anxiously watching the Japanese ship which was fast approaching. It would, indeed, pass very close to us. Perhaps they, too, were thinking of jumping overboard! I must decide now. There was no time to lose. A thousand thoughts flooded my mind—could I retain consciousness in that cold sea? And if the Japanese picked me up, what would they do? Would they hand me back to the Russians? And if that happened, my fate would be too horrible, too horrible to contemplate. Now was the moment of decision. A sweat broke out on me, all the color drained from my face. I hesitated whether to take the plunge or not. I closed my eyes and braced myself and at that moment someone tapped me on the shoulder. I opened my eyes. It was the refrigerator mechanic. I looked at him uncomprehendingly.

"Say mate," he said, "what's wrong? You feeling ill?"

"Not exactly." I gasped, "but I'm not too good."

"Better go and lie down a bit," he said and passed on.

I steadied myself and saw the Japanese ship drawing even further away. I had lost my opportunity. To jump now in the wake of a disappearing ship would have been more than madness. Yet if I had known the ordeals that still awaited me on land as a result of my efforts to escape the draft, perhaps I would have jumped.

I lay on my bunk and smoked one cigarette after another until my head swam. How depressed I was then! I had not the courage to jump into the sea. I was a coward. And how would I ever escape from Russia if I lacked courage. A black gloom enveloped me and in those hours I hated myself. I was back where I had started—a wretched puppet, the plaything of fate with no control over my own destiny! I shook myself partially free of this burden of despair and

sought relief in my Yoga exercises. If I had lacked the courage to jump, I must at least summon up courage to face Colonel Malikov and his reception would be the reverse of friendly.

On the 29th of May the "Nikolai Isaenko" docked at Preobrajenie. I was fully conscious of the date and as I stepped ashore two clerks from the Reception Office handed me a paper—an order to report the next day at the Military Headquarters. There was no escape. Next morning I reported and was immediately directed to the Colonel's office. He looked at me fixedly, demanded my passport and my military papers. which he placed in an official folder and then commenced to interrogate me. I had thought out my plan of campaign in advance. I sat there, my head bowed and my eyes cast down as though I were guilty. I would say as little as possible so as not to provoke him. First he showed me about ten telegrams which he had sent to various ships in his search for me, then copies of letters that he had sent to my father in Kiev. Poor innocent man who had no idea what his son was doing! In the letters the Colonel threatened that I would be sent to prison and that if he, my father, did not produce me, a countrywide search for me would be undertaken and he himself would be in danger of prosecution. Now that I had reported he told me that the present call-up had been completed two days before but that if he so decided he would bring me before the Court on a chage of evasion of Army service. I wasn't afraid as I felt sure he had insufficient evidence against me.

He put all my papers in a box and dismissed me. Until the Autumn call-up, I was to remain in Preobrajenie and only after I had completed my military service would my passport be returned. It was an appalling prospect. Preobrajeniewas a border village and without a passport I could not move. For six long months I was condemned to remain in this dreary place of drunkards. It was a situation I could not endure, but what could I do. The Colonel was

a power in the area and there was no one to whom I could complain.

But I had to do something. I called on the Chief of Police. There was a letter for me at the Post Office, I told him, but without my passport I could not get it. He gave me a note to the Postmaster! Then I told him that without my passport, the shipping company would not pay me my wages. He gave me another note! Again and again I called on him until finally he lost patience.

"The Colonel had no right to impound your passport," he said angrily, " a passport is a civil document, not a military one."

"I know that," I replied, "but what can I do? I cannot complain to the Public Prosecutor because the Colonel is superior to him."

"But you can complain to the Military Prosecutor," said the Police Chief. "His office is in Nahodka and you should go there. Put your case to him and you'll get your passport back."

As luck would have it, the "Iasenko" was sailing to Nahodka and they took me on board. To my surprise I had no trouble with the Military Prosecutor. A telephone call to Colonel Malikov was sufficient to elicit from him a promise to return my passport—and this he did on my next visit.

I breathed a sigh of relief though I knew that the respite was likely to be of only short duration. I had escaped the Spring call up but with the reputation which I had now established, how could I avoid the Autumn conscription? Nor did I see much hope of being permitted to go to sea. But I was determined to try. Until I saw that every door was closed and barred to me, I would not give up. On the "Isaenko" I had made friends with a sailor who, as he boasted, had a friend at the military office at Nahodka and he promised to help me. He was going to Nahodka for his summer holiday. So I drew all my pay from the "Isaenko" and

decided to go along with him. With Saturday pay and holiday pay, the amount was not inconsiderable and so I had no fears for the immediate future.

After a few visits to a restaurant at Nahodka with all that that implied, everything was arranged. As I was a specialist, the military office, through the influence of my new friend, registered my name and gave me a clearance. I was engaged at the Nahodka office of the "Company for Active Sea Fishing" and was asked to wait a few days while the remainder of the crew was recruited. This was not always easy in summer for this was the sailors' regular holiday period, but I was confident that the sailing would not be long delayed. This was the biggest fishing company in the Soviet Far East with some 80 odd vessels and the trips usually lasted for about six months. Some of the vessels put in at foreign ports and it might be possible for one to go ashore even without a visa, but actually I was not so much concerned about that. The main thing was to get away as soon as possible and if I could be away for six months and so miss the Autumn call-up, I should be safe. In the following April I would be 27 and 27 gave one release from military service.

Finally the day came when I was to go on board. As I stepped on the deck the First Mate, without a word, handed me a paper. It was an instruction for me to report, the next morning, to Military Headquarters, to the Colonel-in Chief, Staschuk. It was as though I had been struck by a heavy blow. What had happened? Was this the end of my hopes? I staggered and almost fell, my head swam, my sight was blurred. That evening I called on my friend who worked at Military Headquarters and asked him what had happened. All he could tell me was that his Chief had received a letter from Colonel Malikov at Laso and that in the letter I was referred to as a criminal. This being the position there was nothing he could do for me but nevertheless he wished me good luck!

Next morning at 8 o'clock I presented myself before Colonel Staschuk, He at once told me that he had received a letter from Colonel Malikov and he demanded that I give an explanation of my behavior. I stood in front of him with my eyes fixed on the floor and answered as briefly as I could. Any fact which I knew had not been confirmed in writing, I denied. My experience of Soviet officials had taught me that the less one said, the better it was for one. Consequently the interview did not last long but before dismissing me the Colonel pronounced his decision.

"You will be here under my control," he said, "you will not be permitted to go to sea, and in the Autumn you will be called up for Army service. I advise you to behave yourself and not to try any more tricks. If you don't go into the army you will go to prison. I hope you understand."

I could see no way out. Fate had caught up with me and my future was decided. But I did have four months before the Autumn draft began and perhaps something would turn up. Perhaps, perhaps. I went again to the office of the Shipping Company and was told to report to the "Kolisto" which was laid up in port for repairs. She would be there for three years so I was not troubled about lack of employment. The "Kolisto" had been built in East Germany especially for the Soviet, but now after only one trip she was out of service. The reason for this was the ignorance and incompetence of the crew members who had succeeded in virtually wrecking the automatic systems of which they had no experience. Repair work, though there was a full crew aboard, proceeded very slowly because there was a lack of spare parts and an even greater lack of experts able to fit the parts that were procured. Those accepted for service were very lucky for a meal a day was provided, there were cabins, and wages were some twenty percent higher than for the usual repair jobs. The officers' main concern was to find work for the men to do and believe me, they had to use their powers of invention! So sailors scraped and repainted,

a dozen times those parts that had become rusty while we refrigeration engineers swabbed the decks and opened and closed the covers of the compressors which were in any event quite unfit for use. So the days passed and gradually I became calmer. But because of the lack of spare parts and sober specialists, the works of repairing the vessel moved on very slowly. The ship became as a stagnant pool in which virtually no movement of any value could be seen. Yet, surprisingly enough, the wages paid by this particular company were about twenty per cent higher for the jobs than those paid by others and there was consequently keen competition for the work—where the pay was good and little was demanded. Every morning the officers wracked their brains to find work for the engine room personnel, while sailors scrubbed and painted, rescrubbed and repainted numerous parts of the vessel. Certainly there was no rust to be seen anywhere. As for me and the other refrigeration mechanics, we cleared the floor space around our machines and every day opened and closed the covers of the compressions which, in any case, were quite useless owing to the lack of certain essential spares.

The chief engineer appeared to be a very businesslike man and every morning, half an hour before the time for starting work he marched on to the deck with his two chief assistants. All three were armed with note books in which they wrote most conscientiously the work assigned to the twenty members of the engineering staff for that day. This assignment in itself was no easy task. At 8 o'clock precisely we all lined up: we were told our assignments and then with an almost audible sigh of relief the three withdrew to their cabins. For our part we would be done as soon as all the officers were out of sight. And so it was—the chief mechanic and his two subordinates went to his cabin, locked the door and played cards; the first and second mates and the radio operators sat around and read what seemed to be engrossing books, while the Captain went alone to shop at a little

distance where he passed the time pleasantly enough working on his private car. Other officers went to their cabins where they lay around and no doubt tried to figure out how they could come by a few drops of the precious vodka. Sailors stretched themselves out on the deck and gave themselves up to sun bathing.

We three refrigeration mechanics spent a good deal of time playing cards but if perchance we heard anyone approaching we quickly swept the cards from the table, picked up our tools and pretended to be very busy. In that way the morning hours passed. After lunch some of the officers would go to the beach while crew members strummed on guitars and sang. The situation was well known to the company but nothing was done to upset the rhythm of our lives. It was rumored that the ship was eventually to be handed over to the Academy of Science but meantime nobody seemed to know just what to do about it.

At this time, I began the serious study of English, inventing my own system. I would buy a book, a novel, in English and then from the local library I would borrow a copy in Russian. Then for hours at a time I would sit down and compare the two sentence by sentence and almost word by word. Undoubtedly I was learning something but it was a slow and laborious process. My cabinmate was a great reader but like most Russians had a weakness for vodka. One day he suggested to me that he should read to me the Russian text while I checked it against the English, and that for his service I should give him 3½ rubles for a three hour session—for this was the price of a bottle of vodka. I agreed; my English improved considerably and he was happy to get his regular bottle of vodka.

For the time being the life seemed good, but I never allowed myself to forget that even if I quit my job I would not be able to leave Nahodka as I was under the control of the military authorities. Yet somehow or other I must find a way of avoiding conscription into the army. But how?

I finally decided that I must simulate some mental disturbance. It would not be easy, I knew, to deceive Colonel Staschuk who was familiar with every trick in the book. And if the doctors decided that there was nothing wrong with me I would be brought into court and committed to prison instead of to the army. Then in truth, there would be no hope of escaping from Russia. The decision had to be made and I felt on safer ground with a mental complaint for I had some experience of mental institutions and had studied the actions and reactions of the patients.

Every evening, I read medical books which I borrowed from the library. I had to take a chance on the librarian's reporting the unusual interest of a mechanic in certain aspects of medicine, but there seemed no other way. Then, when I was ready I acted.

Through the village there ran a railroad and this would provide me with the entry to the institution which I sought. I took a piece of metal and with it I scraped a spot on the back of my head so as to draw blood. Then, having carefully disposed of the metal, I hit my head on a rock beside the track and saw to it that there was some blood on it too. Then, from a low parapet above the line, I fell, making certain that I came down near the rail and next to the stone on which I had already smeared my blood. I chose a time just before the end of the day when I knew there would be people going home from work and as I had anticipated, someone saw me lying there, assumed that I had fallen and summoned an ambulance. A nurse arrived and seeing blood, bandaged my head. Now was to come the real test of whether I could simulate a mental disturbance sufficiently well to be able to deceive the doctors. A neuropathologist examined me and diagnosed concussion. He recommended my hospitalization but as there were no beds available and as my injury did not seem serious, he compromised by giving me a certificate to be absent from work and told me to report to him the following day. I knew what to do. I returned

to my cabin where I made the night singularly unpleasant for my room mates by groaning, vomiting and generally performing during the night. I am sure that I put up a most convincing show and the next day I was able to give a full report to the doctor. He opened a file, made copious notes and sent me to a small clinic near the ship repairing yards for various tests, injections and medication. My "treatment" continued for some ten days after which time I decided that I should take the next step. From my reading of the numerous medical books I knew what to do, so, on my next visit to the Doctor, I told him that though the pain had gone, I felt a sort of blackness descending on me from time to time. I was depressed and unhappy. He would sieze on this as a psychiatric disturbance resulting from the fall and would have more to add to the file. My doctor, however, was a neurologist so he referred me to a psychiatrist who would of course open a new file. I felt I was building up a valuable record.

In due course I reported to the psychiatrist. A man in his middle fifties he was seated at his desk and he had my record before him. He eyed me keenly.

"Tell me, my man," he said, "have you ever before had similar sensations?"

I confessed that I had. Once, as a child I had accidentally split my head open, and because of a disappointment in love I had tried to commit suicide. Both experiences, I told him, had left me in a very depressed state.

"After my unsuccessful suicide attempt," I told him, "I consulted a professor who gave me a set of psychotherapeutic excercises based on the Shultz system." I paused for effect. "I carried out all his instructions and was greatly improved. But now, as a result of my fall, I feel dreadful—and beg you to help me."

The interview lasted for two hours during which time the doctor wrote down my symptoms and my history as I had told it to him. I felt that I had made, from my point

of view, a favorable impression. He gave me a prescription for amenazine and allenium to counteract the depression and in dismissing me, he closed my folder with a look of satisfaction and said,

"Now I am responsible for you. Take your medicine and report back in five days."

I thanked him and left his office walking slowly and with my head bent. I was to visit him on several future occasions and my record grew and grew. I realized now that my "acting" might prove my undoing. If I succeeded too well, I might be declared unfit not only for military service, but for duty at sea also. This would be a terrible blow for I was building all my hopes of getting out of Russia to Israel on being able to get on to a ship sailing to foreign waters.

I must not be so unfit as to be debarred from the sea also. I read more and more in the medical books and decided that I should suffer only from severe depression. I had seen the effect of this during my stay in the mental institution and I felt confident that I could carry it off. I began to move more slowly and heavily, my reactions became slower, my speech was slow and often I talked to myself. I studied the sailors who came from the nearby country districts and I modelled my movements on theirs. They were dull witted but quite capable of working at sea. Whenever I found an opportunity I told the doctor that I was interested in scientific research, particularly in the field of fish refrigeration but that without experience at sea, I could make no progress. Meantime I let him know that as a result of the fall my headaches and the fits of vomiting recurred. But every day I took my medicine and I saw my doctor regularly so that he would be in a position to report on me when I should be called again for military service. There were still three months to wait, and I must not waste my time.

Every day I did my physiotherapy exercises for I

knew there would be difficult situations to be faced in the future. Some of the fellows were keen on underwater swimming and they were quite ready to accept me as one of the group. I had done a fair amount of swimming in Kiev when I was a boy and one never forgets the strokes one has learned. Three times a week I went with one of my shipmates and tried to swim from 2 to 2½ kilometers. In addition, we attended a theory course on underwater swimming and I learned as much as I could on all aspects of it for I still aimed to jump ship at some time. I learned how long one might expect to be able to survive in water of specific temperatures, how to overcome cramp, how to deal with wild fish and particularly sharks. I read up everything I could about sharks, about a powder that could be used to repel an attacker; about a special anti-shark knife and how best to use it. In addition three times a week I would run about three miles over the most uneven ground in order to increase my powers of endurance. And in spite of all this exercise and the consequent improvement of my physical condition, I had to preserve the fiction of depression and of dullness whenever I visited my doctor. It called actually for extreme alertness for I dared not let him trip me up.

A very welcome relief for me were the long walks in the country which I took with one of my swimming friends, a young fellow called Michel. He was keen on nature and on hunting and he often invited me to go with him. The local forest, the "Usuriskaya taiga", as it is called, is indeed beautiful, covering the slopes of the characteristic "sopkeys" or mountains with trees of medium height and of many different species. There was a luxurious growth of grass and low bushes all so typical of the Soviet Far East.

I learned that there grew a very rare and valuable root, usually called by its Korean name of Jasmin, which means "root of life". Distilled, it makes, so I was told, a wonderful medicine for old people. There were lovely streams, too, and fascinating caves into some of which

we entered. There were long corridors and labyrinths where we had to be most careful not to lose our way. These were the homes of ancient peoples and many were being investigated by teams of archaeologists.

It was then that I wrote to my sister telling her that I proposed to pursue my studies in science. It was in line with what I had told them when I left Kiev so I knew they would accept it without question. Meantime I continued to prepare myself for whatever would arise. Every evening I did my exercises in psychotherapy. To help me sleep I would turn on my transistor at about 10 o'clock and listen to jazz music. This helped me to relax so that I would repeat a long sequence of questions and answers so that they became a part of even my subconscious self. I was determined not be caught off my guard.

At the beginning of October I received an instruction from the military authorities ordering me to report at Headquarters on the twentieth of the month. I knew what this meant—though I was determined to get out of military service I knew that I must present myself in the company of a group of young men all of whom were aged between 18 and 19. We stripped and passed from one doctor to another for the physical examination. The physical test was over, I came to the neurologist and to him I told a long story of my illness and that I was presently under the care of a local psychiatrist. He told me that I must bring a letter from my own doctor certifying that I had undergone the required treatment and then report back to him for further interrogation and examination. He made the requisite entry on my card and dismissed me.

Finally I came to the Commanding Officer, Colonel Staschuk. He read my card carefully, glared at me for a moment and then rapped out,

"Just remember, my man, if you're trying any tricks with me, and I find out, you'll go before the Judge—and you'll regret it."

I said nothing, just turned around and went out for I knew that he did not have the authority to commit me without the signature of the doctor—and the doctor was convinced I was ill. Nor could he induct me into the Army without the doctor's consent for if he did and I fell ill, he would be held responsible.

I reported next to my own doctor and told him what the military doctor had said.

"Why didn't you tell me before," he said crossly, "that you had not done your military service?"

"You didn't ask me," I replied simply and looked at the floor. I knew that there was a doubt in his mind and that he was uncertain what to do.

"I must consult my colleague," he said. "Come back to me in three days' time."

I went out feeling reasonably confident. Even if he was not sure of my motives he had a thick file, written in his own hand, in which he had set down my symptoms, his own diagnosis, and the treatment he had prescribed. All this he could not disregard. After three days I was back to receive from him a certificate to the effect that I was well but that I must report to a mental institute for further tests. I noted that it was signed by the head of the clinic for my own doctor clearly did not wish to accept the full responsibility.

Armed with this report, I returned to the Military Headquarters where I saw a Captain Alisov who was the head of Department Two. He took the file, examined it carefully, held the stamp up to the light to see whether or not it was genuine and then, turning to his Deputy, he said, "Take these papers to the doctor and see that they are carefully checked." With that he dismissed me and instructed me to return in a week's time. So another hurdle had been crossed.

A week later to the hour I was back in Captain Alisov's office. He looked none too pleased for while he could find nothing wrong with the papers before him, he suspected me

of some sharp practice.

"I have decided to send you to the Mental Institute at Usurisk," he said. "Take these papers with you and I warn you that if you have been trying to trick us, I'll have you in court and it'll be jail or a labor camp for you."

Together with my file he handed me a sealed envelope addressed to the Head of the Mental Institute and bearing the official stamp of his Department. There was no doubt but that it would be read and studied. I could only guess at the contents and on this guess I based my strategy.

I knew that tests take time, that the period of observation in a mental instutution is not hurried. So I must insure that I should be kept long enough in order to be retained until the final conscription date was passed. I had observed procedures carefully during my earlier detention and I admit I knew what to do. I would not admit that I was ill for that would make the authorities suspicious. They would assume that I was fit and that I was trying "to get away" with something and this chance I could not take for I would then certainly find myself in prison instead of in the Army. Rather I would tell the doctor in charge that indeed I had been sent for mental observation. I would assert that I was completely cured of my illness.

The following day I reported at the Mental Institute at Usurisk and after a brief interview with the Director I was sent to the ward for the mentally ill. And now I recalled all the torture I had endured during my first incarceration and a black despair enveloped me. This was an old three storey building and it was obviously overcrowded. In the ward to which I was taken a quick glance showed me that there were about 20 inmates. The beds were grouped in pairs with three patients to each and with a very narrow space between the pairs. The nurse placed me between two men one of whom was little more than a boy and since I was in the middle, I was on the frame of each bed and in quite the most uncomfortable position. My neighbor on

my right certainly clicked his teeth and, as I soon learned, frequently masturbated. This was evidently a common practice and, what was most amazing, was that every morning, as though acting on a command, a considerable number of my companions indulged. It clearly meant nothing to them that others observed and soon I took no notice at all.

I had brought with me some books in Russian with exact translations in English for I was determined to continue my studies. It was not difficult to find someone to read to me in Russian while I followed in English and here there was the added advantage that the service was free. This gave me great relief from my present unhappiness and I found myself paying some attention to those with whom I came into contact. The ward doctors were young and obviously very interested in their work. The Head of the Department was a woman, young and beautiful, as was her deputy, and one could find no complaint regarding their attitude and approach to the patients. My case was an unusual one and I was called for many interviews. I had decided on my plan of campaign and I was not to be moved from it. While asserting that I felt fine except for frequent headaches, I tried to impress on them that I was in reality ill and this puzzled them greatly. My two years of concentration on psychotherapy and self-hypnosis enabled me to fall asleep anywhere—in any position and at any time of the day and I often paused for long periods during the interviews. Answers to all questions were almost dragged from me for I was determined to give nothing away and not to contradict myself. I knew that they were looking for a chance to convict me in my own words and so I chose my words with the utmost care.

Without saying anything I would convince them that I really was ill even though I asserted that I was not. So I slept at odd times. I read for long periods and remained absolutely motionless. I pretended not to hear when people addressed me. And so the days passed. The doctors seemed

convinced that I was mentally ill and they began to trust me. I felt safer now for I figured it out that the last date for conscription into the Army must have passed. I asked for and was given permission to walk from the ward to the yard; I sat for shorter periods with my book; and one day I was asked to repair the refrigerator in the kitchen. My situation was certainly not as bad as it had been.

At last the day came when the Commission sat to consider the "cases" sent for observation. The Chairman was the Head of the Clinic, a middle aged man with considerable experience in his field. I was called in; the Chief had my record before him; I felt that he had already studied it. He greeted me politely and put a few questions to me. I answered carefully and quietly for I had made up my mind that I would make no complaints about my health or about the treatment. I appreciated the difficulty of the Chairman's position. He could see that I was apparently well and therefore fit to serve in the Army. On the other hand, he had before him the report of the doctor at Nahodka who had treated me when I was really ill. If he ignored that report and discharged me as completely fit and subsequently I fell ill again he would be held responsible. Perhaps, I thought, he would find a compromise solution. And so it proved. The next day I was called and my own doctor told me that it had been decided that I was a psychopath and that I would not be required to serve in the Army except in an emergency. I would be discharged from the clinic that day. It was with difficulty that I restrained myself from shouting aloud for I had won a great victory. I forced myself to speak quietly,

"Thank you, doctor," I said, "I understand that I am not fully well, but will I be permitted to go to sea? I am a marine refrigeration engineer and that is my chosen profession. Will I be able to go to sea?" I spoke anxiously but yet with a degree of confidence.

The doctor looked at me keenly and replied, "I don't

recommend it but there are no restrictions. You may go to sea if you wish, there is no danger from the point of view of your health."

This was exactly what I wanted. I was not regarded as fit enough for peace time Army service though, in the event of war, I could be called for service behind the front lines. On the other hand, all employment avenues were open to me. It seemed indeed that at last I had gained what I had striven for and suffered for for so long. Telling me that my file would be sent to the Military Headquarters which had sent me for observation, the doctor dismissed me.

Dinner was over and I was given my clothes and other possessions. I left the clinic a free man, walking on air. I had time to spare before the departure of the night train so first I visited the barber's for a smart haircut. Outside there was a heavy frost but I felt warm, what a wonderful feeling it was. It was an occasion for celebration so I went into a restaurant and though I didn't really like vodka, I decided to order a bottle. The restaurant was filled with men in uniform—I really felt sorry for them—for Usurisk is close to the Chinese border and here were military headquarters, an army hospital, a theater and shops for the military personnel. I sat at a table with three officers and by the time I had finished my meal, they were quite drunk and their speech was loose and almost incoherent. It was clear that life was hard for them and their only pleasure and relief seemed to come from vodka. I compared my position with theirs. Poor souls whose only topics of conversation were their service conditions and women, and whose sole pleasure were women and vodka. I was more than pleased when I boarded the train which took me away from Usurisk, from its mental institution and its drunkenness.

Early next morning I arrived back at Nahodka and now that I was not preoccupied with thoughts and fears of Army service, I could look around me. Nahodka is a city of 140,000 inhabitants, with one fine street, the Nahodkinsky

Prospect which runs for 14 kilometers along the edge of the bay. The other streets were secondary and did not merit attention. Unlike most towns in the Soviet Far East, Novalka was a "free city" which meant that it was not in a military sensitive area and that anyone who wished could come there without a permit. Consequently, there were men and women from every part of Russia, the failures, the drunkards, the prostitutes. The drunks could be seen on the beaches, on the sidewalks, at the dockside at all hours of the day and night; the prostitutes were at the restaurants waiting for their "victims", the sailors back from months of deprivation at sea and with money in their pockets. Yet, in spite of the drunkenness and the general air of moral laxity and promiscuity—the town had two syphilis clinics, I liked the people of Nahodkawho were, on the whole, simple folk and friendly.

I called at the Military Headquarters several times before my papers arrived from the Institution and it was easy to see that the Captain did not believe that I had been certified unfit for ordinary military service. But I kept the style of my previous behavior—I stood with drooped head, I spoke slowly as though weighing each word with extreme care and, a new trick that I had learned from one of the inmates of the mental institution, I shifted my balance from one leg to the other continually. It must have infuriated the officer to see before him a man obviously physically fit and well developed who asserted that he was not able to serve in the Army. At last the file arrived and when I reported one morning he rapped out, "Come back at 6 o'clock this evening and you will receive your discharge ticket!"

He was sick and tired of me while I, for my part, had difficulty in retaining my hang dog expression. It was the 28th of December, 1972 and I was a free man.

I had succeeded in persuading the authority that I was not a "front line" fighter! My discharge card stated simply that I was unfit for peace time military service and quoted a code number as the reason. The nature of my illness was

not stated and this would be a great help to me in seeking work as the normal employer would not have access to the code key and I could give any answer if I were asked.

And now I began to plan for my escape from Russia on the assumption that I would be able to get work on one of the fishing boats. There appeared to me to be two alternatives or possibilities. I might be able to get on to a ship making for the north to Alaska or the Bristol Gulf near the American shore. Here I might be able to slip off the ship and on to the ice floes and so to make my way to land. There were, however, obvious dangers. Concealment on the ice would be difficult and I might be discovered by members of the crew and brought back and there were so few inhabitants in those desolute regions that there was every likelihood that if I did succeed in getting a safe distance from the ship, I would die of hunger and exposure to the cold. The alternative was to seek a berth on a ship sailing for warm waters and at a suitable point, to jump ship and try to reach shore by swimming. Here, too, were obvious dangers—the warmer waters attract sharks and if I escaped them would I have the strength to swim to dry land? I had to prepare for either possibility. I bought warm clothing and various accessories that I thought I might need and then I sought work. It was not easy. There were many ships sailing for the American waters for it was winter and crews were easy to obtain. A lot of the regulars made the winter trips so that they could spend the summer at home with money in their pockets. Finally on the 23rd of January, 1973, I was given a place on the "Baikal" sailing for the fishing grounds off Alaska.

"Baikal" incidentally, was a very old ship, one of the first of this type to come to the port of Nahodka. She was a large refrigeration ship but her equipment was by present standards primitive for as the saying is in Russia, everything had been done "under the axe" in the most economical way possible. But this did not worry me, I had been

given a job and I had made the next step forward. I was the only Jew in the crew, as far as I could judge, though it was not always easy to pick out a Jew, to such an extent had Jews been assimilated in this part of the Soviet. Work now went ahead repairing, cleaning and loading the ship with all the necessary gear and supplies. I was overjoyed to see and to share in the preparations for departure.

Next day I was instructed to report to the cabin of the political Commissar. I went in to be assailed by the familiar smell of vodka. The Commissar was seated at a table, his skin yellow from over indulgence, his beady eyes grey and bloodshot turning this way and that so it was difficult to tell where he was looking at any particular moment. He was a tall man, between 45 and 50 years of age and was dressed in a black suit. I noted at once the magazines scattered about, "Communist", "Party Life", "Agitator", etc.–the magazines which were compulsory official reading but which no ordinary member of the public would dream of buying. In the corner of the room was a big radio set on which, as I learned later, he would listen to the Imperialist "Voice of America", and "Liberty". While the Commissar had obviously had a good deal to drink he was yet able to talk coherently and I knew that I must be on my guard. He told me that he was from Kiev too, but that he had left there some years previously. He had graduated, he said, from the University of Kiev and now he began to recall all the restaurants there and the times that he had had a drink with friends.

With that he looked at me solemnly and said, "I very seldom take vodka,"–one look at his face was enough to tell anyone how often he really did–"but today I am making an exception." He went on in most friendly tones; "It is very necessary for me to know as much as possible about everyone on this ship–it is my job after all –and I think you can help me. You look more like a lawyer to me than a sailor and it shouldn't be difficult for you to get

information." He paused. He certainly didn't look like a sailor either and I could feel that he had his suspicions about me so I would answer his questions as briefly as possible with a "yes" or a "no" or "I don't know". I would let him think that I was a simple, stupid fellow—the best kind of sailor from the point of view of a political Commissar.

"Tell me," he said with a smile about his lips, "why are you working here, on this ship?"

My answer told him very little. Generally I stood with my head down, looking at the floor, a pose I had learned from village boys who, when guilty of some offence, however slight, tried to avoid the eyes of their interrogators. When he realized that he could get nothing more out of me, the Commissar invited me to sit down and play checkers with him. I played without imagination, being careful to see that he won and at last he was called to the Captain.

I was to observe the Commissar closely while I was on that ship for although he was seemingly not busy, and although he was often referred to as a parasite by rank and file members, he nevertheless had very important duties. I had heard about these commissars from others whom I had met on the docks and in the restaurants and now I added to my knowledge. I noted that certain of the sailors sneaked into his cabin fairly regularly taking care that they were not observed by other crew members. No doubt they were doing what he had suggested I should do—reporting on individual sailors, on the general atmosphere in the crew's quarters, on conversations, on free time occupations—on everything in fact, which would enable the authorities to have a complete picture of every man on board. I could imagine the files that would be kept under lock and key but available if ever they were needed by the Captain or the K.G.B. Periodically the Commissar would call meetings of all the crew and address us on some aspect of State importance.

Men who had been to sea often and who kept their eyes open were convinced that the Commissar had other more important duties too, duties which took him out of sight where he worked behind locked doors. It is well known that many of the Soviet fishing boats are "spy ships" as well. They sail to all parts of the world and are equipped with the most modern radio electronic devices which are used to collect valuable information while the very innocent occupation of fishing is being carried on. This collection of information was the responsibility of the political commissar who, at the end of a trip was in the position to carry reports to the Company heads on every member of the crew and to the K.G.B. on all matters of political importance whether affecting internal or external security. An important man then was the Political Commissar, ostensibly taking his instructions from the Captain but, in fact, the Captain's superior in many fields and answerable only to the K.G.B.

All this I was to gather during my stay on the ship but meanwhile work proceeded. At last we were ready to sail. The crew came aboard, the anchor was raised and the "Baikal" glided from the dockside to the middle of the outer harbor where the anchor was again dropped. Now the medical authorities took over, checking both the ship itself and the medical passport of every member of the crew. My own papers were carefully scrutinized, but nothing occurred and I passed on down the line. Then all members of the crew were ordered to assemble in the dining room and while some military officials checked passports, others searched every section of the ship for stowaways. At last it was all over. The ship's siren sounded a "good bye" whistle and the six months' voyage began.

On board were approximately 100 men. When the fish were caught they were immediately cleaned, frozen and packed in cartons ready for distribution. Ordinary crew members worked 12 hours a day, in two shifts of 6 hours

each. We, who were on the machines, worked two four hour shifts each day, every day, with no free day at all. Our first destination was Alaska, off the American coast and for this point we were headed when the Captain received orders to make for the Kurile Islands, a Soviet possession where a fishing fleet was already operating. This was a great disappointment for me for I could see no chance of being able to put my plan into action. Would I have to spend the next six months in the Kuriles with no hope of escape and then have to try again next year with another expedition? The fishing fleets did go to Hawaii, the American coast off Washington, to San Francisco. Why did our captain not take the opportunity to go to one of these fishing grounds? Six months would be hard to endure and I knew that many crew men could not take it. But what must be, must be. I must not give up now when I had come so far.

Life on the "Baikal" was hard—the food was bad and after a couple of months, I was continually ill. There was little to do in our free time. True, there were movies but these were old films of the Revolution, of Lenin and such like —blatant propaganda and indoctrination. There was a liberty of sorts but I could find little of interest.

My workmates were unfriendly, the senior was rough, uneducated, uncultured, a man who continually complained and with whom it was impossible to have a conversation. I became more and more depressed as day succeeded day. At night I went on deck and gazed up at the stars and gradually I attained calm. Four years had passed since I had commenced planning for my escape but because the day of achievement seemed no nearer I had no reason for giving up. I must live no matter what the circumstances were: I must prove myself stronger than the conditions around me, and I must not lose hope, for success would come in the end. So, I mused and so I was able to endure. I continued my study of English and found myself reading more fluently.

I listened to music on my transistor radio, I practiced my Yoga and thus attained a certain quietness of spirit, a certain inner strength.

One day I remember—it was the 9th of May, the anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany. This was a holiday and the Captain and the Political Commissar decided that we should have a celebration. A small boat was sent to the Kurile Islands to obtain vodka—for there could be no celebration without it, and that evening we all assembled in the dining room. The commissar made a speech to which few paid much attention and then came the eating and especially the drinking. It was not long before, in the true Russian tradition, the fights commenced. I took no part but sat at a table near the cabin of the chief mechanic. Presently the Political Commissar appeared. He was already very drunk and had difficulty in retaining his balance. In his pockets were two bottles of vodka so that it was evident that he was planning a big drinking session. After a good deal of fumbling, he found the knob of the chief mechanic's door, turned it and lurched into the cabin. I could easily picture the scene, when half an hour later I heard voices raised and the crash of dishes and furniture.

Next morning on my way to my work I passed the door just as it opened. The Commissar staggered out, his eyes bleary and swollen, two blue marks on his cheeks, his clothes soiled and creased. I imagine that after a fight with the chief mechanic he had collapsed on the floor and spent the night there. He must have been very drunk. He took no notice of me for as the months passed he had lost all interest. Several times, at the beginning of the trip, he had approached me but as I always answered in monosyllables and looked so stupid, he had concluded that I had nothing to hide and he had nothing to get from me. Every couple of weeks the Commissar posted up on the Chief's Bulletin Board in the Director's room, the names of those who had registered some outstanding achievement "to the honor of

such and such a Party Congress". I was glad that my Jewish name never appeared to draw attention to me. I wanted to remain as anonymous as possible. Every so often, too, the Commissar called meetings and addressed us on political matters and on decisions taken by the Government and by Party Congress. The "education" of "the people" was never neglected!

When four to five months had dragged by our supply of frozen meat was exhausted and we were put on to tinned stuff. The quality was very poor and most of us suffered acutely from stomach trouble. When the tinned food began to show obvious signs of deterioration, we took to catching sea gulls by means of special nets which we made. These and some of the "Mintai" fish which we took from our own nets constituted our diet. It was a dreary time but at last July came and by the middle of the month we were on our way home. For the whole of the expedition we had been in cold waters and near the Soviet shore and consequently there had been no possibility of my escaping.

In five days' time we should reach the port of Nahodka and then I would have to look around for some other vessel which might in due course bring me to warmer, more favorable waters.

Some two days later, we approached the Straits of Laperuza which separated the Russian held island of Sakhalin from the Japanese island of Hokkaido Even here it would have been impossible to jump ship for the temperature of the water lay between about 11 and 13 degrees C. Yet, in spite of the coldness I saw many "Kasatkas", a very dangerous species of shark found in large numbers around the Kurile Islands.

Passing through the Straits of Laperuza we entered Japanese waters and here it was warmer. For the first time we were able to be on the deck and sunbathe and it certainly was a welcome change. There was another variation too, for the Captain had received instructions to offload

his fish at certain of the "Sovhoz", the farms where the furbearing animals–sables, foxes and minks–were reared. We were to make three stops and it was interesting to note that the off loading was done by university students keen to make a little money during the summer vacation. Of even greater interest to most of the crew members than the beauty of the scenery and the opportunity to go ashore and walk on firm land, was the fact that the stops meant vodka and the chance to get drunk. At one of the off loading points I went ashore with the chief refrigeration mechanic, my boss. We had never been on particularly friendly terms, but on the other hand I had never annoyed him. We found a small restaurant, sat down and ordered vodka. After a few drinks, my companion mellowed and began to tell me the story of his unhappy life. Frankly, I was not interested, but I did prick up my ears and take notice when he said,

"You know, the Political Commissar changed the character reference which I wrote for you."

I tried not to show any particular concern when I replied, "Oh, what did he change?"

"Well," he said, "it was not much. I had given you a good reference and he merely cut out the parts referring to your loyalty to the Party. This is important for you, you know, if you make an application for a visa."

"When I asked him why he had cut out those parts, he told me that he could not sign it because you are a Jew. I have had instructions from my headquarters about character references for Jews and I'm not going to take the risk of going against them. So that's the position," he concluded.

I thanked him for his support but told him that I wasn't really concerned as I didn't need a visa. I knew full well that even with the best character reference in the world, I wouldn't get a visa but I was certainly not going to tell him that. My history was my own affair.

On the 23rd of July, exactly six months after we had

set out, we docked at Nahodka. There were many women on the quay and there were many apparently happy reunions with hugs and kisses and tears. How many were genuine, I wondered. How many of these women were wives and how many not? How many of the husbands had been faithful to their wives and how many of the wives faithful to their husbands? And when all the facts were known, after all, six months was not a short period to beseparated. There would be divorces, I knew. But for the moment all was friendliness and good fellowship and, of course, the inevitable vodka. The next day it was worse. The crew members were paid and with money to spend they gave themselves up to really serious eating and drinking. One man fell and broke his leg, but the hard drinking proved too much for my cabin mate. He collapsed on his bunk, his face turned blue and before I could summon help, he was dead. Naturally, the police were called but it was some time before the Political Commissar had sobered up sufficiently to be able to talk to the representative of the law. The body was removed to the mortuary and a post mortem revealed that the unfortunate young man's liver had collapsed. I was anxious to get away from the ship as soon as possible, but it was a week before I could be cleared. However, I had a fair sum of money. Our pay was 300 rubles a month for six months and this I took. It was not good pay for the work we did, but on the other hand we did not have any living expenses while we were at sea. It was good to feel the firm land under one's feet, to enjoy the beauty of flowers and trees and to breathe the different air.

Summer had come and with it fresh fruit and vegetables. How appreciated after those six months of deprivation were potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes and apples which were everywhere in abundance. I realized too, that I had been deprived, of the company of women during that whole period and I was torn now by opposing forces. July and August

were warm months and many ships would be sailing to waters where I might have the opportunity to escape. I heard of an expedition about to leave for Hawaii which would pass near the American coast of Oregon and San Francisco; what should I do? Should I go ahead with my plan to escape, submit to another period of voluntary imprisonment on board ship in the hope of a successful outcome or should I rest a while and let the future take care of itself? It was a difficult decision for I was very tired.

I went to the shipping office and inquired about a job. It was not difficult to find a post for most men preferred to spend the summer months on shore. I could join an expedition to the Hawaiian Islands, due to leave in two weeks' time. Well, at any rate, I would have two weeks of freedom, two weeks in which to make what might be the most important decision of my life.

I chose the tourist resort of Lazovoie, a truly beautiful spot on the coast set amid trees and with every facility that the holiday maker could wish for. The tourists lived either in tents or in double storey buildings and I felt that here I could really relax. On my second day there I met a woman at the center and it did not take us long to agree to spend the holiday together. I rented a tent at the lake side and we moved in and though she was ten years older than I, we thoroughly enjoyed each other's company. Every morning I ran for 2 miles on a nearby track and now I began to plan positively for my escape from Russia. If I hoped to succeed I must go overboard when we neared some foreign shore for I knew that it would be hopeless for me to obtain a visa to disembark. But supposing my jump from the ship was heard and I was hauled back on board? How would I be able to explain the money and the papers in my belt? And if I allowed them to fall to the bottom of the sea, how to explain the fact that I had none in my cabin? I would have to claim that I had fallen overboard and the absence of my papers would arouse the suspicion of

the K.G.B. I went to the police at Lozovoie and reported that my papers and my cash had been taken. At the end of the two weeks, I said "good-bye" to my lady friend and returned to Nahodka to be told that I had been assigned to the "Armolensk" which was at the time at the Island of Hawaii. I was to replace a mechanic in the refrigeration department who had been taken ill and I would be taken there on board the fishing boat "Poet" which was to join the fleet at Hawaii. The "Poet" was to sail in a week's time and so I decided to make the best of my week of freedom. I joined up with my former friend from the "Kalisto", the 3rd mate and we had a wonderful time sunbathing and swimming. We found a place where we could dive 10 to 15 meters and gather sea mushrooms. Fried in large shells which we gathered among the rocks, they make a very tasty dish. One afternoon, as we were sitting in a restaurant, a familiar figure approached. It was the political commissar from my former ship, the "Baikal"; for a moment my heart beat faster but he greeted me in a friendly manner and without waiting for an invitation he sat down and began to tell me a long story about the Captain, who he said had been dismissed from his post. It seems that he was found drunk, with a prostitute and then, on being questioned, had assaulted a police officer. It was a story that held little interest for me but to the Political Commissar it seemed worth the two bottles of vodka that he asked me to order. Clearly he had drunk away all his money without satisfying his thirst. I ordered the vodka for him and he went away. Clearly, he trusted me now and that was all that concerned me. Next day I left Nahodka. It was a day which was to mark a turning point in my life.

I shall never forget that date—the 18th of August, 1973—when I sailed from the Russian port of Nahodka on the fishing vessel "Poet". She was due to be away for six months fishing off the Hawaiian Islands but if my plans worked out, long before those six months were over, I would have entered into a completely new life. I was tense with excitement as the vessel moved from the shore. We anchored a little way out and the border patrol came aboard. Would they notice anything strange about me? I must not give myself away now. Having come so far I must not fail. The ship was searched for stowaways, papers were checked, the patrol returned to their own motor boat, the anchor was raised and, with what seemed to me to be a triumphant whistle, the "Poet" moved out of the bay.

I saw the shore line receding and I told myself that it was not I who had rejected the country of my birth but the Soviet that had made life impossible for me. The next night we were to fish near the Japanese shore and it was then that I would make my escape. I though of it calmly. This would be the consummation of my four years of planning. of harassment, of degradation. As I sat on the upper deck in the moonlight, the events of these four years and of the years before, flashed through my mind. Events, people, and places presented themselves as though in the Cinema. The hours went by as in a dream. But it was no dream. I was here, on the fishing vessel heading for the warmer waters of the Japanese Sea and I was to drop off and to make my way to the shore. Put like that it seemed so easy. The Japanese would receive me with kindness and soon I would be in Israel among my own people in the land where I belonged. This I accepted with confidence—nothing could go wrong.

When had I taken this decision? When had I realized that life for me in the Soviet was no longer possible? The scenes flashed back. How strange it was to see again that gathering at Babi Yar on the 29th of September, 1969

when the Police and the K.G.B. men had broken up that assembly of Jews gathered to remember the 80,000 of their slaughtered brethren; when I had heard the officer express regret that "the Nazis had not killed all the Yids." That was it. That was what finally convinced me that I had to seek a new life outside of Russia. I suppose the seed of discontent had been planted in me when I was at school, and my days in the gymnasium and on the track team and in the swimming pool had nourished it and prepared me for the conscious decision which I took at Babi Yar.

From that day there had been conscious planning with full realization of the difficulties that would somehow or other be overcome. Now I knew that the struggle had been worthwhile—the insults, the period in prison and the two spells in the mental institutions. I had avoided conscription into the Army; I had collected a not inconsiderable sum of money—that was safe in my belt—I was still sound in body and mind, and I was sailing away from Russia to freedom! There were still difficulties to be overcome, to be sure, but I knew I could not fail now.

Somehow I got through the next day and at about 10 o'clock that night I made my way to the top deck. We were heading then though the Sugar Straits from the Japanese Sea to the Pacific Ocean. On my right I could discern the Island of Hokkaido and on my left the Island of Honchu and I realized that I could not delay too long. I checked every detail. My belt, with my papers, money, an extra pair of glasses and a child's frog-shaped float, was well secured but yet I would be able to release it if things went wrong and it had to go to the bottom of the sea. Between my swimming suit and my body was the knife which I prayed I would not have to use but which I could not afford to leave behind.

Time was passing. I had to get off before we entered the Pacific Ocean. I must not miss my chance. I had checked the temperature of the water. The gauge in the engine room

showed 21 degrees—it would be tolerable. On the deck below me the Captain and the Party boss were talking. Would they never go to bed? In my cabin my mates were playing cards. If they noticed my absence at all they would assume that I had gone up on deck and had fallen asleep. And this would fit in exactly with my story if I were hauled back on board. I would say just that—that I had fallen asleep and that a sudden roll of the ship had sent me into the water.

At last, shortly after midnight, the Captain and his companion went to their cabins. All was quiet. I waited another twenty minutes and then tensed myself for the final effort. The waters below were dark and menacing. I felt my heart pumping and the sweat breaking out from every pore. I closed my eyes, clenched my teeth and with no conscious effort, rolled silently from the deck. The cold water struck me like a blow, but automatically I commenced to swim.

I put all my strength into those first powerful strokes in an effort to put as great a distance as possible, in the shortest possible time, between myself and the blades of the ship's propellors. There was no sound from the ship. In a few minutes I felt safe. I relaxed and began to swim with slow steady strokes: I could not afford to expend all my strength in those first few minutes. The ship disappeared from view. My wool suit and my sandals were impeding my progress. I threw them off and continued to swim slowly and steadily. I had calculated that I was about 15 miles from the nearest shore and that I should be able to swim at the rate of about one mile an hour. That would mean that I should have to face 15 hours in the water. I was a good swimmer, and reasonably fit, but would I be able to endure that long? Would I be strong enough? But surely I would be picked up long before the 15 hours had passed. I was, after all, in busy waters. And so I cheered myself.

The Island of Honchu, I thought, was to the south and

I decided to make for that since the water there should be warmer. I could not wear my glasses while swimming but the lights from the island should be my guide. The sea was calm and I rested on the waves which carried me forward. The sky was clear and now I swam easily using the breast stroke so as to conserve my strength. An hour must have passed.

Suddenly a slight sound ahead of me brought me out of my reverie and I was immediately on the alert. I knew that the waters around here contained dangerous sharks and I knew from my reading that sharks were most dangerous at night. I had my knife within reach but I prayed I should not have to use it.

The water was becoming colder; the stream must have carried me into the colder waters of the Pacific: I developed a cramp in my left leg. But I must not fail now. I pricked my leg with a needle which I drew from my belt, and restored some feeling to it. Suddenly, about 200 meters ahead of me I saw a small vessel. I cried out again and again but my words were lost in the air. The vessel moved away and I realized that I must not attempt to approach too close to any other lest I be sucked in by the propeller. I swam on and with every stroke my body became more tired. I ached in every muscle, just as I had ached in those first days in the gymnasium.

Again came a slight noise in the water. Had the shark returned? Ahead of me I made out the dim outline of that vicious body. Blood rushed to my head and my body tensed with fear. I grasped my knife firmly and waited for the creature's next move. It disappeared from sight and as suddenly reappeared some 25 feet to my left, swimming around me in ever narrowing circles. When she felt she was close enough she faced me, turned over on her back and dived beneath the surface. I had anticipated this, as sharks always attack in this way. I dived below her and remained under water as long as I could. When I surfaced, the shark had

made off. I breathed more freely.

It was then that I realized that I could no longer see the lights of Honchu. Panic seized me. I had been swimming in the wrong direction and had been moving further from my goal. What had happened to my luck? My mind was in a whirl and I could scarcely think. Overhead the stars twinkled as they had always done. I must regain control of myself. I could not fail now. I turned on to my back and allowed myself to float. As I gazed upon the firmament, gradually calm returned and my anxieties drained from me. My years of planning, the self discipline that I had practiced, were not in vain. I would come to the haven that I sought.

So my thoughts ran on, when again came the telltale sound of a great body moving though the water. The shark had returned and now I knew that I would have to fight for my life. There she was, circling nearer and nearer. I dived beneath her and felt her fins scratch my body. But her attack failed and she moved away. Summoning up my remaining strength, I pulled out from my belt the child's frog float which I had brought for just this eventuality. Somehow I managed to inflate it and insert the plug while the shark was yet preparing for its next dive. I held the knife firmly and waited for those few seconds which seemed like an eternity. The great beast turned over on her back and dived and as she seized in her vicious jaws the rubber float, I struck out with all my strength. I knew that I had made contact—and more than that. I floated to the surface and lay on my back with my eyes closed—exhausted physically and nervously. When I opened my eyes, I saw in the dim light, blood upon the water. That danger was past.

The sun was rising over the Island of Hokkaido and I could already distinguish the vague outlines of mountains and of houses. I was a long way from shore for the current had taken me off course. My hopes of reaching safety began again to fade, but I could not give up. Surely all those years

of preparation would not come to naught? I lay on my back and prayed that the end might not be too long delayed.

I sighted another fishing vessel and heard the sound of human voices. I waved and shouted with what force I could, but the vessel moved on and I wept with the utter frustration of it. Another two ships passed me by and it was then that I realized that they had all headed in the same direction—to their fishing grounds of course. Why had that not occurred to me before?

I felt somewhat rested now and I was encouraged by my own deduction. I started to swim across the line of the ships' course and it was not long before another approached. I shouted as loudly as I could and this time I was heard. Strong arms lifted me out of the water and laid me on the deck. I fainted.

When I came to I saw Oriental faces peering at me and for a moment I could not understand what was going on. Then in a flood it all came back and I could have wept with joy. I was safe on a Japanese ship. I had achieved my aim. I was out of the Soviet. I was given something hot to drink, dry coverings had been placed over me and there was a pillow of sorts beneath my head. I looked around me and wondered what would come next. There seemed to be a crew of three only, and the tiny vessel was equipped only for the catching and temporary storing of the fish. I must attract their attention and somehow or other make them realize that it was a matter of urgency that I reach the shore for I could not be absolutely certain that my absence from the "Poet" had not been noticed and that she was not looking around for me. From the watch on the wrist of one of the seamen, I saw that it was 6:30. I had been in the water for approximately 5 hours—a good deal less time than I had feared.

It was then that I simulated a faint and as I came to I began to moan and to pant. The captain must have felt that I was ill from my long immersion and he gave orders for the vessel to be put about. We made better speed and soon we

tied up with a larger vessel and made for the shore of Hokkaido. The fishermen did not cease their activities, however, and I was impressed by the speed with which they disemboweled some of the larger fish which they had pulled aboard. They were certainly much more efficient than their Soviet counterparts.

Within an hour the ship had docked and I felt firm land beneath my feet. The captain must have radioed to shore that he had an unauthorized "passenger" aboard for there were several cars at the jetty and several men approached me with cameras and with questions. I had decided that I would speak only to men in authority and I ignored all the questions, which, in any event, were put to me in English. I was put into a car, in the care of a policeman who had been summoned to the scene, and driven to a nearby hospital. There the doctor examined me, took my pulse and my blood pressure, and, I am sure, decided that I was not badly affected by my ordeal.

We left the hospital and I was driven along a road that ran parallel to the shore. It was an exciting journey for me for it was the first time in my life that I had been outside the Soviet. I compared the Japanese architecture with that of Russia and I was intrigued by the glimpses that I had of the eating houses with their brightly colored tables and cloths. Men there were in abundance, but none of the drunkards who are so conspicuous in every Russian city.

I assumed that I was being taken to Police Headquarters and in my mind I tried to assess my chances of being granted asylum on political grounds. In the first place, I argued to myself, Japan was a democracy and was likely to be ready to aid one who was escaping from totalitarian rule—and I had proved my sincerity by jumping into shark infested waters far from the shore. I counted this as a very definite point in my favor. Then, I wanted to go to Israel and with the Lod Airport massacre still fresh in everyone's mind, the Japanese authorities might want to help me to show

their goodwill towards Israel. In some small way it might compensate for the terrible loss of life. I recalled, too, that it was only recently that a Japanese ship that had inadvertently entered Soviet waters, had been detained with her crew for some months. On the other hand, I knew that negotiations between Russia and Japan designed to facilitate trade and scientific cooperation were at a critical stage and Japan's helping me might jeopardize her position. Then she might follow the example of America who had returned to his ship a Russian sailor who had jumped overboard and had been picked up by an American Coast Guard vessel. On his return to the Soviet, he had received a 13 year prison sentence. Thinking of that, my spirits dropped somewhat.

We stopped before a plain, four storey building and the elevator took us up to the third floor where we entered a fairly large room. Here my escort left me and I found myself in the presence of several police officers. The one who appeared to be the Chief, for he sat at the head of the table, addressed me in careful English and I was able to reply in the same language. He asked me who I was and where I had come from. When I replied that I was a Russian sailor and that I had jumped from my ship, there was quite a stir in the room. When he produced a map and intimated that I was to show him where I had entered the water and where I had been picked up, I made as accurate a guess as possible. I said that I had been in the water for 5 hours and they were clearly surprised. The atmosphere was not unfriendly but these men were obviously not in a position to make any decisions regarding my disposition. I was given a cup of coffee and some biscuits and led to an adjoining room. Incidentally, I was wearing the clothes that I had been given on the Japanese fishing craft and I was carrying my precious belt in my hand.

Three tables had been joined together to form a horseshoe. I was seated at the apex, an interpreter next to me, and the other places were filled by men, some in uniform and

some in civilian clothes, but all with notebooks and pencils. I could not help recalling my interrogations in Russia and I suppose I must have shown my anxiety. I asked the interpreter for scissors so that I might open my belt which was stiff from its long immersion in the sea. All eyes were on me as I opened it and placed my papers on the table.

Then the questioning began, the interpreter translating from Japanese to Russian and back again. I stressed at all times my desire for political asylum and I was not sure of the diplomatic relations between Japan and Israel, I asked that I might see someone from the American Embassy.

The session lasted about two hours and at the end of it I was no nearer knowing what would be done with me than I had been at the beginning. Four of my questioners and the interpreter joined me for lunch and while we were eating, a number of photographers came in. I assumed that Japan was going to tell the world of my coming and in order to show their goodwill my companions put on broad smiles. As soon as the photographers withdrew, they assumed their normal impassive appearance.

Lunch over, I was informed that I would be detained on a charge of illegal entry into Japan and I was placed in a small room—I shall not call it a cell at this stage—I had not been committed to prison. I was left with my thoughts for an hour after which there came in three men, one seemingly a security man, the second a senior police officer and the third, the interpreter. An electric fan was placed in such a way as to blow directly in my face and my second interrogation began. It was clear that the Japanese were not entirely satisfied with my story and for hour after hour they grilled me. But now I could speak with confidence, for I was speaking the truth and I could go beyond my former "Yes", "No", "I don't know" routine that I had practiced so strenuously in the days that were now past. Nevertheless, I did feel some anxiety and I refused to sign the report which was drawn up at the end of the session

on the grounds that I did not understand Japanese. They did not press the point and finally my visitors left and I was alone.

The room was fairly large: it was well lighted: in one corner was a sink with running water, but the only furniture, if one may call it that, was a Japanese sleeping mat. Truly my range of experiences was expanding rapidly. I was given a reasonably palatable meal and with an armed guard at the door, I settled down to consider my present situation and my future tactics. Before I finally fell into a restless sleep—on the sleeping mat—I had decided that I would hint that I possessed some important information but that I would communicate it only to an official of the American or Israeli Embassy. With the morning light, I woke, did some Yoga exercises, which calmed me considerably and renewed my confidence, and washed myself to the waist.

The policeman brought me a simple breakfast and accompanied me to the toilet. After a few minutes, I was visited by two men who told me that they were from the Ministry of Justice. They produced a document which they assured me, set down only the essential facts of my life and the manner of my coming to Japan and asked me to sign it. I did so. They spoke in simple English and I replied in the same language conducting a conversation in this manner for the first time in my life. Those long hours with the English books and their Russian translations, and those many bottles of vodka which I had "paid" to my cabin mate had not been wasted. I did not mention to them anything of the "important information" which I possessed. This I would save for someone higher up.

My next visitor was a middle-aged man, very correctly dressed. He introduced himself as a Chief Clerk in the Foreign Office and he spoke slowly weighing each word with extreme care. A shrewd smile played about his lips and his narrow eyes gave away nothing of his thoughts. Carefully he removed a folder from his brief case and laid it on the

table before him—the police guard had brought in a table and two chairs so that we could both be seated. I concentrated on that folder in order to steady my nerves for I was determined to make a good impression on this obviously important official. His report of the interview would carry considerable weight and might decide my whole future. To him I could reveal my "information".

In his unhurried manner, he explained that the Japanese Government was giving the most careful consideration to my case but no decision had yet been reached. Meantime he invited me to tell him of any specific worries that I might have. For my part I spoke slowly also, for two reasons: because I was not at home in English and because I wanted to impress on him that what I said I considered important. I wanted him to believe that I was not just an ordinary simple sailor, but that this was, perhaps, a role that I had assumed in order to conceal something of much greater moment. And so I spoke of the position of the Jews in the U.S.S.R., of the importance of Israel in the world scene, of American Jewry, of the Jackson Amendment and so on, and then, with an added seriousness, of the supply of oil to Japan and of the construction, in Russia, of the harbor of Wrangel, built with Japanese capital.

It was then that I hinted that I might know something of value to his country. He was impressed and tentatively suggested that I might like to tell him about it. I replied that I would be happy to do so but I should first like to be put in touch with the Israeli Embassy. With the promise to arrange such a meeting, he rose and with the utmost friendliness, bade me "good bye". I felt sure that we would meet again.

My guard entered the cell, handcuffed me and led me to the elevator. Television men accompanied us and took many shots. To me this was most puzzling. What was the purpose of it? In the restaurant I had been photographed seemingly on the best terms with my Japanese hosts—here

I had all the appearance of being a criminal. For whom were the pictures intended? What impression were they to convey? It was beyond me but I accepted the situation without question and without comment.

We came to an office in which were a Public Prosecutor and an interpreter. The Prosecutor, a man in his middle thirties, asked me the same questions that I had been asked before but at no time did he favor me with so much as a glance. My answers he recorded on a printed form. In the hope that I might gain some clue as to the official attitude towards me, I asked for a copy of the latest English language newspaper. My request was refused.

Next the interpreter took me to the Judge's chambers where, after reading the file, he sentenced me to 10 days imprisonment for illegal entry into Japan. One would have thought that my prison sentence would have commenced right away, but it was not so. Instead I had to wait in an ante room with two policemen and the interpreter until such time as the Clerk of the Court should come to read out to me the sentence. Meantime, I got into a conversation with the interpreter who was a friendly soul. He told me a good deal about himself and his family and what was of greater interest, that I had been featured quite prominently on the local T.V. I was already something of a celebrity and I was amused to learn that many people had noted my facial resemblance to the famous Henry Kissinger and that they were already referring to me by that name. Had the Doctor arrived in Japan I don't think that he would have experienced the same difficulties as I.

In the evening the clerk came and the formal sentence was read out, and I was placed in a prison cell. Compared with the cell in Kaliningrad in which I had spent so wretched a time, this was luxurious indeed. There was a cot, with a sheet, a table and chairs, and in one corner there was a glassed in toilet area and in another, cleaning materials, for, I was told, the prisoner had to keep his cell clean. How

different from the dirt and the misery of the Russian jail. Most of the cells seemed to be unoccupied—I saw few faces as I walked down the corridor and this, too, surprised me. The guards were quite polite and whenever I was handed anything through the small aperture in the door, I was addressed as Mr. Kissinger. It was really quite amusing so I fancy that the guards had been told not to treat me as an ordinary prisoner.

That night I slept well. Although I was in jail I could not feel that I was in a dangerous position. Next morning, I was greeted by a representative of the Ministry of Justice, who after I had signed some official paper referring, as I supposed, to my imprisonment, informed me that we were now to go to Tokyo. Now things happened with dizzying speed. First I was handcuffed and taken once more before the prosecutor. This time he informed me with his nearest approach to a smile, that I was now a free man. The handcuffs were removed and we were whisked outside to a waiting car. Word had apparently got around that I was to be released and there was quite a crowd to greet me—senior officials, policemen, warders, as well as members of the public. There were friendly smiles everywhere and as we drove off, cheers, handclaps and cries of "Good Luck," and the Japanese equivalent. I really felt quite important and certainly greatly relieved.

We drove to the airport—there were two plainclothes security men with me—and boarded a helicopter which was to take us on the next stage of my journey. As we flew over the Sugar Straits, I tried to pinpoint where I had jumped overboard and where I had been picked up, but it was really rather a futile exercise. Waiting for us at the Sappoura airport were news photographers and more T.V. men. When asked, I declined to make any statement for I didn't want to embarrass the Japanese authorities in any way. Here we boarded the regular passenger plane to Tokyo.

From the airport we were driven to the Ministry of

Justice building—I was ever ready with questions and I must acknowledge that I was always given polite answers—where, for the first time in my life, I met two Israelis, young men from the Embassy. Our meeting was most cordial and there were tears in my eyes when officials of the Justice Department told us that I would be free to go to Israel! How can I describe my joy? And I believe the young men from the Embassy were as pleased as I was. They measured me for new clothes and said that they would call back for me. There were still matters to be attended to at the Ministry, but my new life had begun. A great weight seemed to have dropped from me and I felt entirely different.

I was taken now to the office of that senior Foreign Office official who had visited me in the prison and to whom I had hinted that I might have some information of value to him. He greeted me with such kindliness that I felt a twinge of conscience when all I could tell him was a matter that I am sure he had read in the newspapers. He was disappointed but did not upbraid me even by a gesture. He congratulated me on my release and wished me well. Then he told me that on their insistence I was to meet representatives of the Soviet Embassy at 10 o'clock that evening. I felt no apprehension for I knew that I had not only the goodwill of the Japanese Government but the actual protection of the Israeli, for the Israelis from the Embassy had told me that I had already been granted Israeli citizenship. How thrilling it was for me merely to say that over in my mind!

I spent the remainder of the day in the company of the Israelis from the Embassy and at 10 o'clock that evening I was back at the Ministry where I was taken into a fairly large room, which, I imagine, must have been used for conferences. Three Russians were seated at a long table and opposite them there were Japanese officials, including my acquaintance from the Foreign Office. The Russian in the center, a tall man who wore glasses, rose and courteously extending his right hand to me, said "Leonid

Friedmanovich, I believe. I am pleased to see that you are well. We three are from the Soviet Embassy—I am Sharov the First Secretary, my colleague here, is Kuzikov, the Second Secretary. He introduced the third man whose name I did not catch. The two others extended their right hands and I had no option but to do likewise. As we sat down Sharov offered me a cigarette. As I took the first draw, I wondered what the Russian's approach would be.

My friend from the Japanese Foreign Office was the first to speak. Very politely and in a soft voice he said,

"Gentlemen, I am pleased to be able to inform you that my Government has considered this case very carefully. Mr. Friedmanovich has sought political asylum and has expressed the wish to proceed from here to Israel. On humanitarian grounds my Government has decided to grant his request."

He sat down and immediately the Russian Second Secretary burst out in a decidedly undiplomatic tone:

"On humanitarian grounds! Then why, after this man has been released from prison is he still virtually in custody?" Couched in such language, the question did not merit an answer, nor did it receive one. The Second Secretary turned to me:

"Leonid Friedmanovich, how are you? You have caused us a good deal of anxiety for until a few hours ago we did not know what had become of you. We are indeed happy to see that you are safe and well. Your dear father has been most anxious about you. What are we to tell him?"

In spite of myself I could not help smiling at the man's insincerity, but I replied:

"I do appreciate your concern. Please convey my respects to my father. Tell him that I jumped ship, that I am in Japan and that I am on the point of leaving for Israel. I shall communicate with him as soon as I can." And I added, "My father, as you must be aware, knew absolutely nothing of my intention to leave Russia. He did not know,

even, that I shipped aboard "The Poet". Sharov regarded me steadily.

"You are a young man," he said, "with no proper appreciation of the possible results of your own actions. A wrong decision now may well ruin your whole life. I have in mind the story of a young man, not unlike yourself—it is related in the magazine "Novoe Vremia", Like you, he left Russia and did not want to return. I saw him and succeeded in convincing him that his future lay in Russia. I saw him again a few weeks ago. He is very happy that he took my advice and is most grateful to me."

He paused for a moment to let the moral of the story sink in. I made no response, so he continued:

"Everyone can made a mistake but not everyone is given the chance to correct it. It is not too late for you to turn back. You are, as I said, a young man, and a wonderful future awaits you in Russia if you decide to take advantage of it. You have two excellent professions and you could work anywhere in Russia that you choose."

The pictures of my persecution flashed before me but I said nothing. Then the Second Secretary took up the tale:

"I am authorized by Ambassador Troeanovsky to tell you that you may return to Russia now, without any fear of punishment."

The First Secretary, looking at me fixedly, as though trying to hypnotize me, said,

"I have here a paper which you will be required to sign if you decide to return. But think it over."—and his voice grew harsher—"And I must warn you that tomorrow your position will not be as strong as it is today, and that every day that you delay will make your position so much weaker."

Comrade Sharov seemed to have forgotten that which had been said by the spokesman for the Government of Japan for he pressed on:

"If, in your folly, you tell me that you will not sign

at all, then I tell you that the consequences may be very serious. So, I do advise you to sign now."

I was really amazed at his speech—and I think the Japanese must have been too, for he spoke as though he were in Moscow and not in Tokyo. Perhaps, from the information which he had of me he had learned of my periods of detention in the mental institutions and he thought I could be intimidated and pressured. What he did not know, of course, was that I should never have been committed to such institutions. I turned to him and looking at him, straight in the eyes, I said:

"I am afraid that we are completely at variance. Russia, today, means nothing to me. It is true that I was born there and that I grew up there, but Russia has rejected me. I cannot regard Russia as my fatherland any longer! My fatherland is Israel and that is where I belong."

"You are speaking like a madman," said Sharov, "you may go to Israel if you wish—as any Soviet citizen may—but the sensible thing to do is to go through official channels."

Kuzikov broke in: "You know perfectly well that anyone who wishes may go to Israel, provided he makes his application in the proper way." And I thought of my struggle to obtain a visa!

"Don't waste time." said Sharov, "Sign this paper, now. It will be your last chance!"

I shook my head for I could not trust myself to speak.

"You are fully aware," he went on, "that you are only doing yourself harm."

I could not restrain myself further:

"You are fully aware that it was not possible for me to leave Russia legally," I retorted. "If I had been permitted to do so, do you think that I would have chosen to risk my life by jumping from that ship? Do you think that it was a pleasant prospect to face 15 hours in a shark infested sea? Do you think I wanted to die?"

There was no immediate response to this outburst, but, as though to round off the proceedings, the third Russian who up to now had said nothing, looked up. He was a non-descript character in his mid-thirties and I felt sure he was from the K.G.B. He had been making copious notes, trying, I am sure, to gather some evidence against any friends or relatives of mine, if by chance I should inadvertently say something out of place. But when he spoke I was ready for him.

"What was your first place of permanent residence in Russia?" he asked.

"I don't know." I replied. I was back on my old routine.

"Where did you learn Hebrew?"

"I don't know any Hebrew," was my reply.

Then again, "What shall we tell your father? Does your father know what you have done?"

"Tell my father I am well. My father knows nothing of what I have done. No one knows anything about it."

The Russians rose. The interview was over. A weight fell from me and I felt free.

My Japanese host provided me with accommodation for the night and the next morning one of the men from the Israeli Embassy called for me and drove with me to the Airport. Eighty one long hours after I had jumped into the sea, I took off on my flight to Israel and home.

Two weeks later, when I was already comfortably installed in an Immigrant Hostel in Tel Aviv, I read of a Chinese sailor who had jumped ship quite close to where I had. He was not as fortunate as I was. The sharks got him.