

**“Red Terror” in Russia
1918 – 1923**

2nd Edition, Enlarged

S. P. Melgunov

Berlin, 1924

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Translator's Preface

The works of S. Melgunov are not a popular reading matter, not now, not in Europe and North America. They are not nearly so well known as the works of A. Solzhenitsyn such as “Gulag Archipelago”, “Red Wheel” or “Cancer Ward”. Published in 1924 last time, “Red Terror” was translated to English and published by Hyperion Press only in 1975. It appears to be out of print, never re-printed since.

I came across “Red Terror” when researching material for an article on contemporary religious, political and ethnic terrorism in the 21st century and did use many quotes from S. Melgunov’s writing. But also I realized that it was my civil duty to the peoples of Europe and North America to translate his book into English for the very first time.

The motivation for translating originated from realization, that many methods of the Bolsheviks are being more and more applied in today’s Western hemisphere: cynical lies in mass media, confiscation of property, disarming of population, alienation of the young generation, re-defining the language. Even though I was intimately familiar with the methods of communist regime in Russia, the book was an eye-opener in many areas. I even recognized some of the facts and could correlate them to the stories my grand-mother told me, even though she was only 8 years old when “Red Terror” 2nd edition was published in Berlin. Her stories were from the more recent late 1920s, but they were frightfully similar: searches by night, arrests, disappearance of people, executions, tips by the informants, poverty and suppression of rights.

Then there were Soviet era movies, such as “Ours among them, theirs among us”¹: rittmeister Lehmke telling Che-Ka operative Shilov that “you will return this gold, but your own will shoot you for that!” Only after reading “Red Terror” I realized what message the movie was trying to covertly convey: the story of captain Schastny – the saviour of Baltic navy from capture by German fleet (see p. 37).

One of the sources that S. P. Melgunov extensively quoted from – “Vessel Of Death” – is worth adding to this book as an appendix. At some point I will probably translate the entire “Che-Ka” almanac if time and resources permit.

Translation Issues

Let us address some translation issues that arose when I researched mainstream sources of Russian-English translation of the matter used in “Red Terror”. I did

¹English title “At Home Among Strangers...” in my opinion does not convey the idea of the movie at all.

not agree with some translations.

The civil war of 1917-1922 was fought between the communist regime, with its military force called the “Red Army” and the forces, loyal to the Intermediate Government called “White Army” or “White Guard”. Generally, everyone supporting the Bolsheviks was referred to as “reds” and the opposite side as “whites” (except for the anarchists or – without drawing any parallels! – common banditry). Many different categories have been lumped into the “whites”, not necessarily the soldiers and officers of the “White Army” usually associated with Generals Denikin, Kornilov, Admiral Kolchak and Baron Wrangel, etc. Throughout the book I will be referring to either side as “reds” and “whites” respectively.

Traditionally, *Che-Ka* is translated as “Emergency Commission”. There are several issues with that. Although Russian word “Chrezvychnaja” carried a hint of emergency to a degree, it did not correctly convey the meaning. The root of that word is “vych”, used in such Russian words as “habitual”, “ordinary”, “custom”. The prefix “chrez” means “over” or “extra”. Thus, it would be more correct to translate it as an “Extreme Commission” (not “Extraordinary”, though!). Rightly, “Extreme” is more often and more naturally used in Russian in combination with, for example, “Important”, but you could not do the same with “Emergency”.

The acronym “*chekist*” was widely used to refer to the Che Ka operatives. I will be referring to them as “excommer” (plural “excommers”) as per above.

Bourgeois as it refers to an individual human being in English cannot convey its new meaning in itself. It is important to understand, that the word’s new meaning in Bolshevik practice since 1917 was pejorative, used to incite hatred to the “privileged” class. Its correct form was not used in Russia since, by the way – it was truncated and received a different postfix, to make it sound more Russian and more humiliating.

A word “*rasstrel*” as it describes prisoners being executed is very specific in Russian. It is used to describe killing with firearms execution style, rather than aiming a firearm at someone and firing a shot, as in English. Therefore it will be more appropriate to refer to them as “executions by firing squad”. Wherever I omitted the last part, execution always meant that, except where specifically noted different method of ending life (such as slashing with a sword or other method).

“*Proletariat*” is another word that earned a different meaning in Bolshevik practice. Proletariat were not workers. The worker class in post-1917 Russia suffered the brunt of communist repressions just as bourgeoisie did; slaughter of Astrakhan protest rally being prime example (see p. 52). For the purpose of this translation “proletariat” are the low-skilled, low-educated workers, often part-time and on hourly pay prior to the revolution – they are so-called “Lumpenproletarii” defined by Karl Marx as those unlikely to be useful in building of his ideal classless society. The real worker class that existed in Russia prior to the communist turnover of 1917 was well-paid, highly skilled, and well-off category of population. The peasants left their properties for a chance to be hired at the factories to earn much more and often used the savings from their wage to buy more land for their families back in the country side. As you

will see very often in “Red Terror”, proletariat waged a Civil War against the workers (and peasantry!). They were not one and the same.

A term “*kulak*” is relatively well known in English press. It is used to describe the better-off, or affluent peasants, who owned more land than the others and were generally more successful in agriculture and business. Those affluent peasants often hired the rest of the village population for part-time jobs. “Kulak” is a root of the term “*raskulachivaniye*” which meant not just confiscation of land, livestock and tools, but complete destruction of farmer’s economy. I am very well familiar with the term, as my own grand-grandfather fell a victim of it. What happened to him and his family was very typical: while an only supporter of a family of 11, he lost everything but one cow, a couple of goats and one pig. His land (10 acres in total of his own and rented land) became a part of a collective farm. Confiscation does not adequately convey the meaning of the process. Confiscation is a one-time removal of property from someone, while the Bolshevik term meant much more: it was a permanent shift of the victim from one social category into another, a complete deprivation of wealth. It should be translated as “dis-endowment” instead of “confiscation”.

The book mentioned and quoted from a number of soviet and immigrant newspapers. Traditionally the press outlet names are not translated, but in this case they are integral to the story and often carry certain meaning. I will translate them as appropriate, except for some titles that existed until recently or still exist, such as “*Izvestiya*” (Russian for “News”).

It is easy to become lost in the countless, similarly named political parties and groups of the post-revolution period. Several parties will be mentioned extensively throughout the book. They are:

- All-Russia Communist Party (of the Bolsheviks) or RKPb. Will be referred to as Bolsheviks.
- Russian Social Democratic Labor Party or RSDRP. Will be referred to as Mensheviks.
- Left and Right Socialist Revolutionary Parties. Will be referred to as Left SR and Right SR (perhaps mentioned once or twice).
- Constitutional Democratic Party. Will be referred to as Cadet Party or Cadets (not to be confused with the para-military Army Cadets).

An important point, very seldom addressed and researched, was who were those hordes of faceless, anonymous Red Army men and sailors, who committed the atrocities of the Civil War and subsequent democide? Where did those monsters in human body come from, and why was their cruelty so non-human and horrible? Well, this was a lost generation of youth, conscripted to fight in the World War I, which fell easy prey to the Bolshevik propagandists. Russian Empire did not bother caring about those young people. The officers (almost 100% nobility) considered it not worth their privileged situation to converse with the soldiers and sailors and isolated themselves

in the headquarters and quarters. The officers had families and pastime, while the soldiers and sailors did not. Young people, removed from their families and communities, and locked in the barracks became angry. They did not have access to women for making sex, no one talked to them about their issues, they were simply locked out of life and severely punished for any wrongdoing. Enraging them by playing on their envy was not too difficult, not after the military defeats in a war with Japan of 1905 and a series of defeats by the Germans in 1914-1917. If we looked at the pictures of the “revolutionary sailors” we would see the angry young men.

Holocaust or Not?

Reviewing the book “Red Terror in Russia...” by S. P. Melgunov one cannot help but notice a grave injustice.

While Jewish holocaust was widely recognized, condemned on personal and institutional level and lead to virtual banning of organizations (Nazi party, neo-Nazi affiliations, assemblies), press, symbols and even gestures, the more numerous, widespread and just as systemic democide by the communist party did not result in any kind of prosecution whatsoever. While Mossad was hunting down and even kidnapping the Nazi and their collaborators around the world, the crimes of communism were shoved under the rug. Soviet Union remained a recognized country for over 70 years that followed. That country was ruled by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party Central Committee (and not by the Soviets of the People’s Deputies as they would want us to believe – the soviets were powerless puppets). In other words that was a Communist party ruling the country. Thus the world recognized Communist party as a legitimate government despite multi-million genocide it committed.

One after another the “enlightened” democracies of the world first turned a blind eye and deaf ear to the plight of Russian population, than basically embraced thuggish psychopathic communist regime by recognizing Bolshevik government. While red terror was ravaging Russia and millions were executed in cruel and grotesque manner, tortured, intentionally starved to death, deprived of medical assistance, raped, robbed of all property, exiled to remote areas with severe cold climate, the world celebrated demise of a powerful emerging competing economy that Russian monarchy was. Few still remember that Russia under monarchy was one of the largest exporters of wheat and rye grains, oats, hemp fibers, lumber, tar and many other commodities. Today it is the largest recipient of food aid after the African states still living in stone age... All while the Russian “oligarchs” backed by FSB sport the largest yachts in the world.

Then, however, the things started getting out of hand. Germany, that played important role in funding V. Lenin and his Bolshevik coup of October 1917, grew uncomfortable with the events that transpired after Brest-Litovsk peace pact. Russian immigrant press, operating out of the European cities such as Berlin, could not be overlooked by German establishment and the horrors of soviet rule apparently reached the top echelons of German power. Whom have they created? A jinn, that escaped its lamp? Knowing what was published by the Bolshevik official press and Russian

immigrant press, it would be impossible for the nearest West European neighbor of Russia to remain unmoved.

Another unforeseen effect of Bolshevik state recognition became known thanks to an ex-spy Igor Guzenko, who defected to Canada and opened the eyes of the Western states to deeply entrenched soviet spying networks around the Western world. USSR was actively spying on their WWII “allies”, including by financing communist parties around the globe and bribing the foreign officials. All while GULAG was operating at full speed at home, by the way.

Then Vietnam war came, Korean war, North Korean atrocities... And none of that served as a slightest hint to the enlightened democracies of the world that the entity they were dealing with – Soviet Union – existed solely due to systemic cruelty towards its population who had no rights whatsoever, needless to say a right to life.

It is true that Nazi Germany implemented a program on government level that aimed at incarcerating the Jews in the concentration camps on the premise of their undesirable status. But is it not true, that Soviet Russia implemented exactly same, but many times more cruel and long lasting program, directed at anyone even slightly more affluent than poverty level? Is one horrendous, deserving continuing persistent efforts of the states and law enforcement, while the other is acceptable and can be ignored?

I personally cannot verify the figure of 6 million Jewish victims of Nazi holocaust and will take it at face value for the purpose of this writing. The communists not just allowed to die of typhus, not just starved to death – they actively tortured to death about three times more people in the same time span as that of WWII. Keep in mind that was not the end of it – communist rule lasted for 70 straight years, 14 times longer than Nazis ruled Germany. So why is civilized world banning and prosecuting the holocaust deniers and Nazi sympathizers, but at the same time giving a free pass to the communist parties? Of course it does! Remember Joe McCarthy? That single person’s attempt to stem promulgation of communism in the USA ended with destruction of his career and unabridged freedom of the communists to roam the country, assemble, publish their literature, recruit and be elected US presidents one after another.

The US were defeated by joint efforts of USSR, Communist China and Vietcong. Not only did the Vietnamese nationals pay for that with their lives ruined in the concentration camps – the Americans did too. Have they learned a lesson? No. Communist wannabes Khmer Rouge emerged and promptly slaughtered 3 million Cambodians. Has the world learned a lesson? Not again.

I keep the count. It is at 14 now. The latest one was very recent – Venezuela. The communist government they elected confiscated property of the foreign companies, mostly American, suppressed human rights, plunged the country into poverty and committed other atrocities, but it is *still all Okay*.

The communists are walking among us. They can be sitting next to you in the office cubicles or standing at the bus shelters. They are carrying a different mentality, that dictates drastically different values than ours: “other people’s property is not theirs – it belongs to everyone via government as a proxy; other people’s lives do not

matter as long as they do not belong to worker and poorest peasant classes; the end justifies the means etc.”

Communism is not just another ideology, that was born out of freedom of thought. It is incompatible with that freedom, as once communists rise to power, they suspend *all* freedoms on the basis of their two-pillar dogma: the end justifies the means and individuals are nothing while the class they belong to is everything. That entails collective punishment and denial of rights to the “class enemies”. Affording freedom of thought and expression to one or another ideology can be practiced only on the basis of all of them subscribing to the same set of values. The idea of sleeping under the same roof with a cannibal is obviously ludicrous, unless you would be able to shackle that cannibal every night before going to bed. But in our political practice the cannibal is free to munch on your body while you are asleep. We are treating communists the same as we do the parties with hundred year old track record of respecting diversity of political opinions and the concept of majority voting, while they subscribe to taking and keeping power by armed force alone.

If you had known that a convicted serial murderer, rapist and robber was on early parole and living next to you, would you feel comfortable and carried on, or sold the house and moved the family across the city? Seeing how quickly people move out of the neighborhoods when social fabric changes to no good, I bet you would move. Local police web site with crime news would be your thermometer. But as regards to communists you do not have such tool. The governments of the enlightened democracies around the world are oblivious regarding “communization” of their populations and are not keeping tabs on that “red plague”.

Does it have to do with soviet KGB permeating the UN and using it for spreading poison seeds to the 3^d world? Does it have to do with the fiscal interests of trans-national corporations? Or is it a simple “not in my backyard” mentality of the politicians who *want* to live happily ever after and *do not want* to be involved in anything controversial, even at possible cost of the lives of all their countrymen? They are immune to prosecution for any decisions they make when elected anyway – who cares!

Cowardice is the word. Joe McCarthy had guts to recognize and acknowledge the problem. He heard tolling of the bell rang by Igor Guzenko and transmitted the message. Is there no one else? Are all millions of currently living politicians in the enlightened democracies completely gutless, spineless and what else?..

But I do believe that we should ask ourselves a question: why the deaths of 6 million Jews at the hands of Nazi regime carried so much weight, that it warranted suppression of our dearest freedom of thought and speech (won in the liberation wars and venerated in law and history) if it had to do with Nazism, but the lives of millions more victims of communist ideology carried practically no weight?

Was communist practice materially different from Nazi?

Suspension of rights? Check.

Imprisonment in concentration camps? Check².

²well, outside of prisoners of war Nazi targeted only one category with small exceptions, while the communists dispatched everybody in sight without distinction – does it matter?

Mass executions? Check.

Torture? Check.

Not sure about institutionalized rape – were the Nazis accused of that? Well, let us just put another check mark for the sake of balance – the communists are ways ahead anyway.

Denial of medical treatment? Check.

Forced labor? Check.

Starvation? Check.

Unprovoked occupational wars³? Check.

Oh, Good Lord, they are exactly the same! Only head count is different, and not in Nazis' favor. Add to that grotesque methods of execution, displacement of entire nationalities or segments of population, keeping prisoners in anti-sanitary conditions, and the Nazis would be sounding almost tame in comparison. So why is throwing Nazi salute illegal in good half of present day Europe, but flying a red flag with hammer and sickle is not? Is it because Russia was our ally during WWII? Well, it managed to outdo not yet existing Nazi Germany by a factor of 5 – 10 by that time. And while still an ally, it felt nothing about spying on you (see above).

Well, I might say something that would be perceived extremely cynical and “insensitive”, but the communists were much worse, as they helped themselves to all private and personal property of everyone in the country. They confiscated food and even seeds from the farmers, condemning the entire regions to death from starvation⁴. And that happened – remember “golodomor”⁵ in Ukraine and along Volga river valley? Those are just two most notorious cases of forced mass starvation – there were many more. We must admit with all honesty, that Nazi did not practice blanket confiscation of property. They did take possession of everything owned by the incarcerated Jews – the communists did the same to those they incarcerated, plus everyone else.

If Nazism is worth not only condemnation by the public consciousness, but violating the founding principles of the modern democracies for its sake⁶, than communism deserves no less.

My public consciousness cannot remain silent. It wants to scream:

Ban Communism!

Ban Communist propoganda, symbols and gestures!

Ban Communist parties and their rallies and congresses!

If the Jews can legitimately proclaim the principle “Never forgive, never forget, never again” regarding Nazism, the rest of the world is within its rights and under obligation to proclaim exactly the same regarding Communism.

Who knows how close USA came to a Communist turnover when the current president was a member of Weather Underground – a group of Marxist American

³Technically, they just put their puppet governments into power, but still by armed force.

⁴And those were the very peasants the Bolsheviks claimed to represent!

⁵Mass forced starvation.

⁶Freedom of speech, expression and association come to mind.

elitists, who seriously discussed execution of 25 million Americans who would not be willing to convert into Marxists at the re-education concentration camps.

We are having these close calls rather regularly. Is it enough, already?

There is a good Russian proverb (they are all good, but this is a very fitting one): *Do not abjure bag or prison*. It means that no one should consider poverty (when all belongings can fit in a bag on one's back) or imprisonment impossible. It seems that population of the enlightened democracies abjured their bag and prison, while they should never say never. Especially in the current political and financial situation, where outflow of funds to the 3^d world has starved us to a degree, where all levels of government switched from providing basic services to the people and businesses to... running highway robbery rings in the form of police (writing \$100 tickets for what previously deserved a verbal warning), by-law enforcement (barging into people's backyards and damaging property) and finally resorted to "civil forfeiture" and "eminent domain" as sources of income. Things are changing and even the small changes, when accumulated, have a potential of shaking and fracturing the very foundations of our society. Be careful with the changes – our civilization may not necessarily be immune to their untested effects.

Does communism have a chance in hell to become a ruling party in the UK, France, Germany, Canada or USA? Not right now I hope (well, except for UK, for grins). But if the small changes merge into a big stream, everything could happen. Russian monarch did not anticipate Bolshevik revolution either, and look what is left of the previously great emerging economy.

Ah, just read the book and come to your own conclusions. Or keep slumbering. It is totally up to you – we have freedom, still...

Was Nuremberg a Fair Trial?

Another stunning realization (or complication, if you like) stemmed from reading this book.

The allied forces transferred 105 Nazi prisoners of war to the Soviets on November 2, 1945. Those were under prolonged total control of the infamous SMERSH⁷ – the military wing of GPU. Knowing how Che Ka/GPU fancied torture, it would be reasonable to question validity of any testimony by those 85, whom Merkulov⁸, Abakumov⁹ and Kruglov¹⁰ selected under Laurence Beria's order for standing public trial.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn documented torture well into the last years of WWII and 1950^s and the own admissions of even today's FSB officers provide evidence, that torture and staged executions continue in Russia till this date. Needless to say that European Court for Human Rights is swamped with the recent complaints against

⁷Acronym for "DEATH to the SPies" – a telltale name for a government organization indeed.

⁸Head of the NKGB from 20 July 1943 until 1946.

⁹Head of SMERSH from 1943 to 1946.

¹⁰Minister of Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union from December 1945 to March 1953.

torture in the Russian prisons and cannot keep up issuing verdicts for compensation of the victims.

The facts, documented by S. P. Melgunov and A. Solzhenitsyn in their books, coupled with the modern newspaper publications regarding numerous torture cases in Russian prisons, cast serious doubt on those testimonies as Che Ka/GPU/SMERSH simply cannot be trusted around the prisoners. I never thought I would live to write something like that! Never say never...

Terri Fabre (Kuznetsoff)

Paris

2014

Horrible truth, but truth
indeed!

Korolenko

Chapter 1

“Ecrasez l’infame!”

Preface to the first and second editions

The peoples will be moved only when they will realize the depth of their falling.

Edgar Quinet.

“It is unlikely this would pass without notice, if only the readers and critics would be brave enough to get the gist of it (it is possible, that they will see the shootings here and take a detour)” – wrote Korolenko to Gornfeld regarding Vl. Taburin’s essay “Living Soul”, printed in 1910 by “Russian Wealth”.

I would like that those, who read this book, were brave enough to get the gist of it. I know that my work, incomplete in many areas, came out of print prematurely. But having acknowledged that, I have not had and still do not have either physical or mental strength to format it properly – at least as importance of the covered issue deserves. One would have to have truly steel nerves, to survive and devour within the horror, seeping from the following pages.

Spontaneously you recall again the words by V. G. Korolenko, that he dropped while working on “Habitual Effect”. He wrote to Gornfeld in the above quoted letter from Alupka (April 18): “worked on this horrible material of the “death sentenced”, which poisoned my nerves for several hours every day”. And when the reader will turn over the very last page of my book, I think, they would understand that depressing feeling, that the author was supposed to experience for the long days, sinking into the seas of blood, violence and unimaginable horrors of modern time. In comparison with today the epoch of “Habitual Effect” does not even pale...¹

I think, that the reader would experience some moral relief from realization, that perhaps not everything, that would pass before their eyes, would be completely his-

¹P. A. Sorokin in his testimony at Conradi hearing reminded us statistics of executions in the 1st revolution and subsequent reactionary times: 1901 – 1905. – 93; 1906. – 547; 1907. – 1139; 1908. – 1340; 1909. – 771; 1910. – 129; 1911. – 73.

torically accurate. Otherwise it would be really not worth living. One should cast away the accursed world, where such shameful reality was possible without causing the feeling of protest and anger; one should shed off culture, that could tolerate it without protest. And one would pity, like Herzen: “Accidentally killed by a bullet, I would take with me to the grave another two – three beliefs”... When thinking about the further written, one can really go insane. Some are the onlookers, others are committing something monstrous, shameful for humanity, that pretends to possess culture. The only salvation is remaining faith in future, of which perhaps Nadson said:

Trust, time will come and Baal will die
And love will return to Earth.

The historians provided and keep providing explanations and even justifications of the terror of French revolution; the politicians find explanation even to accursed modern times. I do not want to provide an explanation to an effect, that can be and must be stigmatized by public opinion in the past and in present. I only want to reproduce the picture of both past and present.

Let the sociologists and moralizers seek an explanation for contemporary human cruelty in the legacy of the past and in bloody mist of the last European war, in the fall of morale and distortion of ideological basis of human psychology and thought. Let the psychiatrists relate all that to the sicknesses of the century; let them attribute that to mass psychosis.

First of all I would like to reproduce true picture of the past and present, so distorted under the carving knife of historical research and subjective evaluation by a contemporary practical politician.

Originally my work was planned as three parts: historic review, characterization of “red terror” of the Bolsheviks and so-called “white terror”. But the circumstances motivated me to publish the second part of the work dedicated to “red terror” first.

Conradi fired his shot, and preparation to the trial in Lausanne² forced me to urgently process that part of material, which I managed to collect.

And if I am releasing my book now, than only because in this case its external architecture shifts to the background due to importance of the topic.

What is going to be published does not pretend to be a scholarly work. This is only the foundation for a summary; it is like a first, perhaps a very incomplete attempt to summarize accumulated information. That is the only goal of my book. Perhaps it will motivate me to broader collection and publication of related material. The conclusions will come on their own.

I already indirectly responded to one possible objection. I cannot take responsibility for every fact included, but I always provided a source, where it was borrowed from. Let those who bravely provided theoretical foundation for an appeal to violence and blood, but are now speaking about “imaginary” terror (see, for example the articles in “Izvestiya” on the Cornadi trial), refute, first of all, its factual side.

²See 13 for my participation.

Imaginary terror, that powers in Moscow are threatening to reinstate for an acquittal of the accused in Lausanne!

I know there will be another objection made.

What about white terror? That juxtaposition was at the base of the speeches by the public plaintiffs and witnesses for prosecution at Conradi trial. That was the main weapon of the famous socialist group. That was an argument of some West-European media. Unfortunately, that juxtaposition can be heard among the ranks of the closer like-minded people. None other than A. V. Peshehonov in his brochure “Why Have I Not Emigrated?” for the sake of his writer’s impartiality considered a series of such reservations about characterization of Bolshevik terror. Speaking about Gen. Denikin government, Peshehonov wrote: “Are you noticing no blood on this government? If the Bolsheviks have Extreme Commissions, then Denikin had counter-intelligence, that was really one and the same? Oh, of course, Bolsheviks beat the records and surpassed Denikin in the count of atrocities. But in some areas Denikin’s was ways ahead” (p. 32).

And to clarify, A. V. Peshehonov told of the horrors of the gallows in Rostov-On-Don. As Peshehonov will realize from this book, there he was wrong too – no one could “surpass” the Bolsheviks. But that was not the point. How these unnecessary reservations are weakening our moral protest! How vain becomes this protest from the perspective of historical impartiality!

I am not avoiding characterization of “white terror” – the third volume of my work will be dedicated to it. I admit, that there we could register the facts no less horrible, than those in the following narrative, for these stories tell us that “white” terror was always more horrible than “red”, in other words, that restoration bore more victims, than revolution. If the Bolsheviks were to be considered the successors of revolutionary tradition, than we would have to acknowledge deviation from this traditional historic scheme. It is impossible to spill more human blood, than the Bolsheviks did; it is impossible to imagine more cynical form, than what Bolshevik terror was shaped in. That was a system which found its ideologists; it is a *system of orderly implementation of violence*, it is such a prominent pinnacle of murder as a tool of government, which was never reached by any government in the world. Those were not the excesses that could be justified one or the other way by psychology of the civil war.

“White” terror was an effect of a different order – those were primarily the excesses from dissoluteness of power and revenge. Where and when in the decrees of government policy and even in advocacy of this block could you find theoretical justification of terror as a system of government? Where and when were made the appeals to systematic official murders? Where and when did it happen under the governments of Gen. Denikin, Adm. Kolchak and baron Wrangel?

Moral horror of terror, its rotting influence of human mentality is after all not in individual murders, and not even in their numbers, but in the systemic nature. Even though the “kossak” and other warlords in Siberia or on Don, that the prosecutors at Lausanne trial and everyone who loves to juxtapose red versus white terror spoke so much about, cemented their activity with bloody excesses often over the innocent people. Adm. Kolchak testified before the “court” in his remarkable testimony, that

he was powerless in combating phenomenon, that was known as “warlordism”.

No, weakness of government, excesses, even class revenge and... pinnacle of terror – are the effects of different magnitude. That is why speaking of “red terror”, I could consciously bypass the violence of the “white terror” at that moment³.

If our democratic press holds Adm. Kolchak responsible for Siberian reaction, than who is responsible for what is happening in Russia now?

Maxim Gorky simplistically responded in a brochure “On Russian Peasantry”:

I explain cruel forms of revolution exclusively with cruelty of the Russian people. The tragedy of Russian revolution plays among the “half-savages”. When the chiefs of revolution – a group of mostly active intelligent people – are being accused of “savagery”, I view that accusation as lie and slander, unavoidable in the struggle of political parties – and from the honest people – as an honest confusion.

“A recent slave” – noticed Gorky elsewhere – became “the most brazen tyrant, as soon as he gained an opportunity to rule over his peers”. Thus a Russian writer, not just aligned with Russian communism, but closely connected with it, removes responsibility from the creators of the terrorist system and shifts it to peoples’ ignorance. Without doubt, outspoken historic Nemesis manifests itself in a “curse over Russia that history casts on every backwards and corrupt country” – as wrote “Black Repartition” back then. What happened in Russia was not possible in any other country with developed sense of citizenship.

But obviously Gorky himself did not yet understand, that he made a powerful accusation of empty rhetoric of the presently governing in Russia party. It is unlikely necessary to defend Russian peasant, and even Russian worker of Gorky’s libel: Russian people is ignorant, Russian crowd is cruel perhaps, Russian crowd, but not people’s psychology, not people’s thought created the theories, nurtured by Bolshevik ideology...

There are attempts to prove, that red terror was caused by the excesses of the whites. Those who recognize chronology for a fabric of history, will see after reading this book, how little truth and reality is in that statement. But that is of genuine

³Prof. Timashev characterized “red” and “white” terror in “Rudder” in approximately the same terms. His article caused a heated remark of protest by E. D. Kuskova in “The Days” (27 November) against an alleged attempt to “evaluation of manslaughter”. “It must be destroyed. Destroyed without distinction of color” – wrote E. D. Kuskova. That is the only possible stance for a writer, defending a standpoint of genuine humanity and democracy. But it seems to me that respected writer attributed to Prof. Timashev something he did not say. Different qualification of “manslaughter” does not equal considering some forms of terror better than others. That is not what we call terror; terror is a system, but not just violence. Can E. D. Kuskova really call the so-called Komuch government, with all its political sins, a terrorist government? Meanwhile Mr. Mayski, a former social-democrat and a former member of that government, published in Moscow “Izvestiya” many instances of executions on the territory, ruled by the Committee Of the Members of Parliament. However the traitors cannot be completely trusted, especially those, who pronounced his accusations during the trial of the Social-Revolutionaries, i.e. when his former associates stood under a knife of guillotine of Bolshevik justice... None the less the facts remain facts. However that is far from what we call “terror”.

interest only for a psychologist, who will be trying to understand human relationships in the epoch of civil war. I avoided asking the questions of theoretical nature in my work. They are ocean-wide. I had to gather the facts first of all.

It may be that Russian public fulfills its duty in this respect other than required by true reality of life. Do not forget, that only the contemporary, contrary to the opinion of the theorists of French revolution from Olarovski school, can portray truth which is not false for the descendants.

White terror is in the past, but what is going to happen in the future is unknown. Terror of the reds, standing on its ideological foundation, is a reality of these days.

And humankind continues to look at it surprisingly calmly. Why? Just recently I responded⁴:

European public opinion as if intentionally is turning away from this truth, for its naked and undecorated appearance becomes too irreconcilable with the cultural habits of contemporary legal establishmane and widely accepted human morale⁵.

And how difficult it is under the circumstances to read the letters from abroad, that one-two years ago used to begin as follows:

Help, if only it is possible. Write to Nansen, write to Anatole France, write to apolitical Hoover – scream everywhere, where you can: S. O. S!..⁶

“It is necessary that European public opinion demanded to stop humiliation of people. Involvement of European socialism is necessary” – appeals from Russia a correspondent of social-revolutionary “Voice of Russia”, conveying untold horrors committed in 1921/22 in the conentration camps in Kholmogory and Portalinsk monastery.

Those appeals and expectations were largely fruitless back then. And what now? Not so long ago we read a statement made by the central outlet of Czech social-democrats “Pravo Lidu”:

Russian immigrants disseminate information about persecution of those, who disagree with their regime. But we believe, that those messages should be taken with a grain of salt and sometimes we raise a question: is not specific segment of russian immigrants spreading that information with a goal to justify their inaction abroad.⁷

⁴“In a Foreign Land” No. 3

⁵I am not talking about those, who, according to their commercial interests, apply a principle of “do ut des”, recently so clearly proclaimed by Mussolini. The “left” stance of the French radicals under Errio, not even veiled with social principles, is supposedly close to that. See for example an article of Charles Gide in “Le Quotidien” from 18 January 1924. I already wrote in the article “From change of landmark literature” No. 3 of “In the Foreign Land” about Errio’s book “La Russie nouvelle”, that shed bright light at his position.

⁶“Rudder” 19 October. The topic was individual rescue of the prominent public figures.

⁷Quoting from A. B. Petrischev’s article “Questions”, “Pravo Lidu”. “The Days”, 8 February 1924

“Pravo Lidu” needs verification of the information about Bolshevik regime, they need verification of the treatment of its opponents by soviet government. But only two years ago the Czech-Slovak social democrats appealed to the foreign minister Benesch based on “reliable information” about “unbearable” political conditions in Russia under the soviet government. They inquired:

1. Would the foreign minister consider diplomatically causing everything possible to be done to eliminate executions in all of the civilized countries, especially in Russia.
2. Would the minister consider taking measures within his jurisdiction, to reduce the convictions of the social democrat political prisoners, whether workers, peasants or soldiers.
3. Would the minister take as much care as possible in the existing international situation, that Russia stopped persecution of the socialists and that the socialist political prisoners were given broad amnesty⁸.

Indeed, the Czech social democrats spoke only about the socialists! They could not rise to the understanding of truth, unfortunately foreign to them, as well as to the many socialists of the Western Europe⁹ (and Russian, by the way, too), of which we were recently reminded by a decorated Czech public figure T. G. Masaryk in “Pzitomnost”:

“For a human there is no higher rule in his whole life and politics, than realization, that human life and personality must be sacred”. So what made “Pravo Lidu” to change its stance even towards the socialists now? A notorious question of recognition of the soviet state? That was exactly how French socialist party motivated its proposal to the soviet government to stop prosecution of the socialists at its last congress in 1924 – it was important so that the party could unequivocally and without reservations join the proposal for recognition of soviet government by France. The British Labor party, speaking of its supposedly new understanding of socialism, does not even make that demand... But the Czech social democrats are leaning towards questioning the very fact of persecution – and that is exactly when we received information of suicides, battering and murders in the Solovetski Monastery not from immigrant press, but from an official Bolshevik government media source (See p. 168). We notice thus far a huge adjustment that should be made to a premature statement of “The Days”: “the times, when Bolshevik reprisals could be committed in silence are over. Every new wave of red terror again and again causes protest of European public opinion”¹⁰.

Do we have an authority to state, that even the socialists, committing suicides in the horrible conditions of contemporary exile in Russia, should know that appeals to their Western-European comrades are in vain by now?

⁸“Common Business” 17 July 1921.

⁹Let us remind of Frederich Adler, who demanded “releasing of all conscious proletariat languishing in the Russian prisons, without distinction of affiliation”.

¹⁰28 December 1922.

“The horrors, being committed in the concentration camps of the North – wrote in 1922 the above mentioned reporter of “Voice of Russia” – are despicable. For a person who did not see or experience them – they could seem to be a speculation of an angered person”...

For us, who day after day in horror and pain anticipated an outcome of the tragedy in Solovetski Monastery, and know and understand that horrible reality – it was not an experiment, that perhaps was useful as an impressive experience, for proletariat of the Western Europe... For us it was our live, sick body. And it was painful to realize complete powerlessness to help even with a word...

I am not cherishing a hope, that my book will reach those representatives of Western-European public opinion, who sometimes lightly express their opinions of the events in Russia either without knowing or willing to understand. It is so easy for example to accuse Russian immigrant press of one-sided skewing of reality. But the people, responsible for their words, do not have a right to resolve their doubts so easily in front of their descendants – the times when “rude violence of the Moscow rulers” was explained, according to Kautski, with “bourgeois libel” due to complete isolation of Russia.

The articles of the supreme commissioner on the Russian refugee affairs of League of Nations, widely publicized in European press, serve as an example of such speech. I had to write about them in “The Days” in my kind of open letter to Nansen titled “Words In Vain”¹¹.

Nansen blamed Western-European public opinion for unwillingness to understand the events in Russia and recommended not to stop at the “idle rumors”. “To understand everything – is to forgive everything”... Dr. Nansen tried to explain the repressions, ravaging our unfortunate motherland, with that old proverb. The methods of revolutionary time cannot be as soft, as in time of peace. Political prosecution existed under the old regime, that also represented oligarchy. Nemesis dispenses her political revenge now.

However not everyone can take this unique historical point of view at the times when the pictures of unimaginable suffering and pity unroll.

Perhaps Russian lack of culture is to blame, perhaps tradition of Russian intelligent thought, but we – I wrote – are incapable of understanding the great legacy of humanity, in the shape drawn by Dr. Nansen.

And not just him alone...

When the murders of often innocent people are being committed, when political terror is rampaging in a country, taking at times the most brazen form, our feeling of morale cannot come to terms with a statement: “nothing great transpires without fight and suffering”. Our social consciousness demands another approach to the “bloody convulsions”, of which so epically wrote Victor Margueritte in his welcome letter to the soviet government on its 5th anniversary, i.e. on 5 years of violating human life, public consciousness, freedom of speech.

When “the teacher” and “the student”, Anatole France and Michel Cordei, bow before the power, that supposedly brings destruction of injustice and oppression after

¹¹20 July 1923.

so many centuries, when they speak about communist rule as of a herald of new face of the world for a human, we have a right to demand, that those who wrote that and those who speak on behalf of democracy, learned of contemporary Russian reality first.

Only once, it seems, rose up a voice of protest by Western European democracy against Bolshevik terror – in the days, when a noose was hanging above the socialists during the trial of the socialist-revolutionary (SR) party in Moscow. It looked like European socialism abandoned its “neutral position” towards Bolshevik violence. We heard the voices of Maxim Gorky, and Anatole France, and Henri Barbusse, and Romain Rolland, and Wells, warning Moscow government against “moral isolation” of Russia by the socialists of the whole world. The threat of death still overhung the “12 condemned”! But in only a few months Gorky wrote, that soviet government is the only force, that could motivate the mass of Russian people to the creativity of new, “more just forms of life”. Others welcomed “new face of the world” half a year later!...

However, history will have its own time! And those, who are raising their voices against the war, against its “dismal sacrifices”, must not muffle the voice of their consciousness, while the most shameful that is only possible in human civilization is being carried out. Those who are turning a blind eye to the horror of political terror, intentionally or not, are casting the culture to the epoch of barbarity of the distant past. This major crime before humanity is a crime before democracy and socialism that they are talking about. Only a reformed human being can reform the world. It cannot develop in the atmosphere of oppression, horror, blood and public corruption, that spread as a thick fog over our suffering country.

Our public consciousness decisively demands an answer to the question of how humanity and philanthropy can coexist with violence committed in Russia, with human blood being spilled before the eyes of entire civilized world not in war time, but in the torture chambers of the executioners? How philanthropy and humanity can coexist even with “sacred violence”, if only it could exist?

The supreme commissioner of the League of Nations is proud of an opportunity to aid the great people of Russia, that is building new life. But is not stopping a vengeful hand of Nemesis, stretched above the great people and great country, about time?

And that hand can be stopped in the only case if the civilized world will unconditionally express their opinion of what is going on in Russia. Lord Cecil in a letter to “Times” once proposed that English press informed public opinion of the conduct of the government “that is trying to be admitted into the number of the civilized countries”. But “lowly Falstaff cannot be a prophet Brand” replies to that appeal Steinberg – a representative of the so called left popular movement – in his recent book “Ethical Outlook Of the Revolution”. He recalls “denouncing power” of Chicherin’s note in response to the protest of the Western governments against red terror in September 1918 and says: “They, the leaders of that world, do not dare to raise their voices against “revolutionary terror”.

But those, who are not guilty of the sins of the ruling class, who dare to raise their voice, why are they remaining silent?

“We are appealing for neither military nor financial aid of the states and not requesting their interference into the internal struggle against organized violence” – wrote Administrative Committee of the Members of Founding Assembly in its address to the European public opinion. “We are appealing to the civilized and forward public opinion. We are asking it to deny moral support to the people, who surpassed the dark medieval ages in the methods of violence with the same energy and persistence as it denounced any support of counter-revolution activities.”. “We cannot be silent anymore – concluded the address – taking into account the fearful news, arriving daily from Russia. We are calling all, who live by the ideals, founded on humanity of the better future: protest against disgusting distortion of that idea, stick up for the victims, whose only fault is desire to help the tortured people and bring their grave suffering to an end”...



Figure 1.1: Kharkov. Corpses of the hostages, tortured to death by the Bolsheviks.

And yet we are facing an almost impenetrable wall!

A special committee was created in Netherlands in 1918¹² to aid the political prisoners in Russia. Its goal was informing Europe of the crimes, committed in the prisons of monarchy, and mobilizing broad public movement for protection of those political prisoners. “Not so long ago civilized Europe loudly protested against the prisons and executions of Russian monarchy. But what is being committed in Russia – reinforces the quoted address – exceeds the horrors of the old regime ten fold”.

¹²Possible error, as there was no more monarchy in 1918. *Trans.*

So why is it so difficult to breach hypocritical or indifferent refusal to speak of what has become "a kind of habitual effect" in Russia?

Why are we not hearing the Tolstoy's "cannot be silent" in Western Europe? Why Romain Rolland, so close to Tolstoy, who just recently stated (in a reply to Barbusse) that he considers it necessary to protect the moral values in the times of revolution more than in ordinary times, is not raising his voice for the "sacred demands of human consciousness"?

"The means are much more important for the progress of humankind, than the goals..." So why is the Human Rights League is silent? Could it be true that "les principes de 1879", became just a "phrase, like liturgy, the prayer words"? Could it be true that our greatest Herzen, who said it in 1867¹³.

Why do the conferences of "Christian International" (Denmark, July 1923) speak for destruction of the "spirit of war", of its perpetrators but an indignant voice, condemning something worse than a war – barbarity, discrediting the very human being – cannot be heard?

"The thought that within several thousand miles from us millions of people are dying of starvation is frightening. That must poison every slice of bread we have" – wrote Czech social democrat paper "Pravo Lidu" regarding organizing aid to the starving in Russia. But is not existence of Moscow torture chambers poisoning our consciousness every moment?

Our consciousness cannot and will not rest until the dark medieval age of XX century, that we had to witness, would become history. Life will sweep it away, when it will be finally eradicated from our own consciousness; when Western European democracy, represented by the socialists first of all, would set aside the phantoms of reaction and, horrified, will turn away from "Medusa head", when the revolutionaries of all kinds will finally understand, that institutionalized terror is a murder of revolution and introduction of reaction, that bolshevism is not revolution and it must fall "with shame and disgrace", followed by "condemnation of all proletariat, struggling for its liberation". Those were the words of renowned leader of German social democrats Kautski, one of a few who have taken a determined, uncompromising position towards

¹³Perhaps for the very first time the last international congress of the Human Rights League, influenced obviously by the address of P. I. Milyukov's, elected by the vice president of the congress, a resolution regarding the condition of political prisoners was adopted. Milyukov concluded his speech as follows: "we would request only that ... the sympathy of world democracy be not on the side of the malefactors. Let us neither morally nor judicially sanction a tyrannical government, that is never going to be recognized by its people. Let us stick up with the words only for the great nation in its struggle for the most rudimentary human rights".

But how reserved is the adopted resolution in both tone and content!

- "International congress of the Human Rights League, that was provided by a neutral 3^d party with a list of about 1000 (!) Russian citizens, sentenced since 1920 either to a capital punishment or to many years in prison and concentration camps for the political crimes, considers it its duty to insist that the soviet government commutes all death sentences and implements broad amnesty, lifting other convictions off the political prisoners. The Congress demands, that Russian government sped up the process of restoring freedom of speech and press, for those freedoms are necessary pre-conditions for development of a republic".

Bolshevik violence.

We need to make the world understand and realize the horror of those seas of blood, that drowned human consciousness.

Berlin, 15 December 1923 – 15 March 1924.

Chapter 2

Post scriptum (about the sources)

While living in Russia I considered it my duty of a writer and historian to collect information about terror. Of course I did not have access to the vaults of the organizations that dispensed so-called “revolutionary justice”. A future historian will have such an opportunity, and only as much as information will be preserved. Information vanishes and lots vanished already, when the Commissions themselves destroyed their fabulous paperwork during emergency evacuations or before a pending rebellion (for example in Tambov during the Antonov’s offensive).

Here abroad, I could use only a small fraction of collected information, such as the notes and newspaper clippings. But value of that information is in the fact that the Bolsheviks themselves are speaking about their deeds.

Abroad I could use press, unavailable in Russia. I reviewed almost entirely immigrant literature; using hundreds of publications. That level of detail (as was deemed possible in present condition of the matter) in gathering of the facts, that only in their entirety can paint a true picture of genuinely unimaginable horror of Russian reality, for the most part explains the composition of the book. All that is data, whose 100% accuracy cannot be guaranteed of course. And yet I have to admit, that the publications in foreign press very little deviated from reality. It remains a question that side they were biased towards yet. I will provide an example here. A note in “Common Business” by Burtsev spoke once of a mass shooting of 13,000 people in Crimea after retreat of Wrangel. The number sounded almost impossible for the editors at the time. But now we know with absolute certainty, that reality exceeded what seemed to be impossible.

The errors in specific events were unavoidable; the testimony of the individual witnesses were subjective, but there were no mistakes in generalized assessments. Suppose that a message in social-revolutionary press regarding 4000 deaths of workers during the 1919 massacre in Astrakhan can be criticized. Who could provide an exact figure? And who ever will? Even if it is only half of that. Could it be true that the gist of it would change even a tiny bit? When speaking of one to dozens, the question of precision of bloody statistics could perhaps be of significance; when dealing with hundreds and thousands, then we are dealing with some kind of slaughter, where precision of the figures shifts to the background. We only need to establish the fact.

The text makes reference to those foreign publications that I could use to the

moment. If there is no specific reference to a source, it means that I am in possession of the document itself.

I have to say a few words of one source, that is of importance for characterization of Bolshevism in 1918 – 1919 and is the only one that describes terror in the South in that period. I am referring to the archives of the Special Commission for Investigation of Bolshevik Crimes, established in December 1918 by Gen. Denikin government. The leaders of the Commission managed to export a significant portion of the collected information during the evacuation of 1920 and thus preserve it for the future generations at the cost of extraordinary personal sacrifice. I had an opportunity to use the Commission's archives for the 2nd edition of my book. The reader can realize the importance of historical value of those archives; meanwhile one of the reviewers of my book (Michael Osorgin in "The Latest News") made in my opinion a shallow and unsubstantiated passing remark: "the unreliable, possibly biased investigative reports, such as the data of the "Denikin's Commission", could be skipped". Reliability of documentary evidence, collected by the Commission – the authentic protocols of Che Ka with personal signatures and stamps, that we received from the Commission archive for the very first time, are indisputable revealing documents, just like the infamous "Che Ka Weekly".

Let us reiterate the old truth – the witness testimony is subjective. And yet, what theoretical basis can there be for prior dismissal as unreliable of the piles of testimonies, collected by the Commission, its searches conducted at the scenes abiding by the "requirements of the Statute of Criminal Proceedings"? One can ironically approach the common legal norms, but still they provide at least the basic legality that would disappear absent those traditional guarantees. The Commission employed the prominent public figures often with good legal background; the local government officials, trade union leaders etc. took part in its activity.

The Commission's documents will be processed and published at some point, and only then they can be comprehensively evaluated. Denikin's Commission has set not just the "investigative objectives", but mostly documented the actions of the Bolsheviks; it carried out its work within a certain program, that included "investigation of the actions by the Bolsheviks in various areas of state and public life" – its labor provided truly complete and colorful picture of Bolshevism in 1918 – 1919. Unfortunately the living conditions in Russia are such that I had to use anonymous references while using the Commission documents in the 2nd edition of this book. With a few exceptions I did not have a right to name the individuals who informed the Commission of the facts they knew, without knowing, where they currently resided. I had to resort to the references to the documents of the Special Commission, thus diminishing its weight and value as evidence. Subjective nature of the testimony obtains certain mass when associated with a specific name.

Surveying totality of the documents in the foundation of my work, I have to stress once again perhaps, that it cannot be subjected to strict critical analysis these days – there is no data, no opportunity to verify its accuracy. Truth can be established by conjunction only. I always tried to take similar information from the sources of different political spectrum. That diversity of the sources and uniformity of the testimony in itself, as I imagined, testified to the accuracy of the message. Let the

reader make the necessary comparisons.

Chapter 3

Red Terror

In a country, where freedom of personality provides an opportunity for just ideological struggle... political murder as a means of struggle is a manifestation of tyranny.

Administrative Committee of People's Will.

I lived in Russia for the first 5 years of Bolshevik government. When I left in October 1922, my first stop was in Warsaw. And immediately I accidentally faced one of the most complicated issues of contemporary public psychology and public morale.

At one cafeteria, founded collectively by a group of Polish intellectual women, one of them asked me while serving me a coffee:

- Are you a Russian just from Russia?
- Yes.
- Tell me, please, why could you find no one who would kill Lenin and Trotsky?

I was somewhat ashamed of this direct question, more so that in the last few years in Russia I got out of habit of openly expressing opinions. However, I replied that personally objecting against the acts of terror, I believed that the assassinations would not reach their goals.

– An assassination of one would probably save the thousands, dying in the torture chambers now. Why was there many of those among the socialists under the monarchy who were prepared to sacrifice themselves in the name of saving others, who agreed to a murder for the sake of avenging violence? Why are there no avengers for violated honor now? Everyone has a brother, son, daughter, sister, wife. Why none of them would raise their hand, avenging violence? I do not understand.

And I had to set aside the question of the right and morale of violence and honestly reply, that the root cause was, as it seemed, that while human life was considered worthless in Russia at the moment, everyone would be stopped by a thought, that their personal action, their personal revenge, even in the name of motherland, would cause thousands of innocent victims, while previously the perpetrator only or the immediate accomplices would have died. It is different now. And how many examples we saw in the last few years!

“Violence is only justified, when it is directed against other violence” – addressed American people the Administrative Committee of Peoples’ Will regarding the assassination of president Garfield in 1881... “I have committed the greatest sin, possible for a man, two assassinations, blood is on me – wrote George Sazonov from Bootyrskaya prison in 1906 after Pleve’s assassination in his remarkable letters to the parents, that I published in the “Voice of the Past” (1918 No. 10 – 12)... After the frightful struggle and suffering under the pressure of sad necessity we took up the sword, that we were not the first to raise... I could not refuse my cross... Do understand and forgive me... People would tell about me same as what my attorney said at trial: “Their bomb was stuffed not with dynamite, but with sorrow and tears of the people... throwing the bombs at the rulers, they wanted to destroy a nightmare, that squeezed peoples’ chest”, and acquit us, but convict our adversaries, who forced us to spill blood by violence over the people, to eternal condemnation”.

Moral justification of those “assassins” is that they do not just assassinate, but die for it, as Gershuni said. They really went to the gallows and gave up their lives for the lives of others.

Chapter 4

Systemic Hostage-taking

Terror is useless violence, committed by the people who themselves are scared.

Engels

Moses Uritski , a people’s commissar, head of the Northern Commune and St. Petersburg Che Ka was assassinated 17 August 1918 by an ex-student, junker and socialist Leonid Kanegisser. An official publication contained the following: “Leonig Kanegisser stated under interrogation that he assassinated Uritski without a decision of any party or organization, but on his own accord, in order to take revenge for the arrests of the officers and execution of his friend Perlzweig”.¹

A socialist Kaplan attempted to assassinate Lenin in Moscow on 28 August.

What was the soviet government’s response to those to terrorist acts?

“By a decree of St. Petersburg Che Ka – as stated by the official article in the “Che Ka Weekly” 20 October (No. 5) – the firing squads executed 500 hostages”. We do not know and probably will never learn an exact figure of the victims – we do not even know the names. We can only tell with certainty, that the real figure is a lot more than that recent quasi-official article stated (there was never any official release²). Indeed, 23 March 1919 English military chaplain Lombard informed Lord Curzon: “in late August two tow-boats full of the officers have been sunk and the bodies washed ashore on the property of one of my friends along the Gulf of Finland; many were tied with barbed wire two or three together”³.

Could that message be inaccurate? But that was a well known fact both in St. Petersburg and Moscow. We will realize from another source, that Bolshevik government further used that barbarian method of drowning the enemies (for example in 1921).

¹Perlzweig and his associates were executed by a firing squad a few weeks before Uritski’s assassination. M. Aldanov, “Modern West”, v. XVI.

²The contradiction stems from the fact that “Che Ka Weekly” was rather an instructional magazine for the operatives of Che Ka, than an official publication. *Trans.*

³A Collection of Reports on Bolschewism in Russia. Abridged Edition of Parliamenters Paper. Russia Nr. 1. That book was translated into French under the title “Le Bolchevisme en Russie. Livre blanc anglais”; quoting from there, p. 159.

One of the eyewitnesses of St. Petersburg events conveys the details:

“As for St. Petersburg, a quick count of the executed reaches 1,300, although the Bolsheviks acknowledge only 500, but they are not counting many hundreds of officers, former servants and private persons, who were shot in Kronstadt and Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg without any specific decree of the central government, at the will of the local Soviet; in Kronstadt alone 400 were executed by firing squad in one night. Three mass graves were dug in the court yard, 400 were lined in front of them in three turns and shot.”⁴.

One of the leaders of Che Ka Peters called those days in St. Petersburg “historic terror” in an interview to a newspaper reporter in November: “Contrary to the popular opinion – said Peters – I am not as bloodthirsty as they think. The spineless revolutionaries in St. Petersburg panicked and became hyperactive. There were no execution by firing squad in St. Petersburg prior to Uritski’s assassination, but too many thereafter and without a system, while Moscow responded to the assassination by only executing several ministers of the monarchy”.

And the not-so-bloodthirsty Peters immediately threatened: “I state that every attempt of Russian bourgeois to raise its head again will be met with such deterrence and reprisal, that everything understood as red terror will pale before it”⁵.

Setting aside a completely false statement by Peters, that there were no executions in St. Petersburg prior to Uritski’s assassination. So for an attempt on Lenin’s life by a socialist only some ministers of the monarchy have been shot! Peters had no qualms to make this statement, while a few days back the same “Che Ka Weekly” (No. 6) published a reduced list of the executed by firing squad for an attempt on Lenin. It was published two months after the execution of 90 people⁶. It included the ministers, officers, as well as the clerks of cooperatives, lawyers, students, clergy etc. We do not know the exact number of the executed. Except for the only article in the “Che Ka Weekly”⁷ nothing further was ever published. Meanwhile we know from common knowledge that more than 300 have been executed by firing squad in Moscow⁸.

Those, who were imprisoned in Bootyrskaya jail those days, when thousands of people from broad social strata, will never forget their mental terror. That was the time, called by one of the eyewitnesses “wild Bacchanalia of red terror”.⁹ It was frightening to hear at night and sometimes witness how dozens were taken away to be executed by firing squad. The trucks arrived and drove away their victims, and

⁴Livre blanc 59.

⁵“Moscow Morning”, No. 21, 4 November 1918.

⁶15 more last names published in No. 3 of the “Weekly”.

⁷By the way, these instructional and informational media have been published by a whole lot of Extreme Commissions: For example, “Tsaritsyn News of Che Ka”; a paper of all-Ukrainian Che Ka was called “The Red Sword”. A complete file of those magazines could serve as a rich source of information about “red terror”.

⁸M. P. Artsybashev in his testimony before Lausanne trial set the number at 500.

⁹“The days of red terror” – “Che Ka” almanac.

the jail was awake and shivered at every blow of a truck horn. Here they enter a cell and call someone “with possessions” to a “room of souls”¹⁰ – that means for execution. There they will be tied two together with a wire. If only you could know the horror of it! I was imprisoned in Bootyrskaya those days and myself survived those horrible nightmares. Here is one of the stories by an eyewitness.¹¹

Memory could not store all the names of many, taken away for execution by firing squad from the cell where the author of these lines was imprisoned in the August 1918, but the most heart-wrenching scenes became etched in memory and are unlikely to be erased till the end of life...

Here is a group of officers, 5 of them, summoned to the “room of souls” a few days after the “shot at Lenin”. Some of them were randomly arrested during the street raid. None of them expected to be executed, they calmly followed their fate – to be imprisoned...

And suddenly... “with possessions, for transfer, to the room of souls”. Pale as paper, they are gathering their stuff. But the jailer cannot find one of them no matter what. The 5th is not responding, not acknowledging. The jailer leaves and returns with the block supervisor and several excommers. Roll call. The 5th is found... He is hiding under the bed... They are dragging him out by the foot... The desperate sounds of his voice fill the corridor. He is struggling and screaming “What for? I do not want to die!” But he is overpowered, dragged out of the cell... and they disappear... and reappear in the courtyard... No sound can be heard any more... His mouth is gagged with rags.

A young warrant officer Semenov arrested during a large fire at Kursk train terminal in the summer of 1918 (the cars were on fire on the tracks), for noting from among the onlookers, that perhaps the Bolsheviks themselves set the cars on fire to hide evidence of theft. He was arrested, as well as his father and brother were arrested at their residence. Three months after interrogation the investigator assured him that he was going to be released. Suddenly... “with possessions, for transfer”. And his name was in the list of executed by firing squad a few days later. A month later while interrogating his father the investigator admitted, that he was executed by mistake, “among the others”.

Once a young man 18–19 years old was returned to our cell, who was earlier taken away. He was arrested during a street raid in July 1918 near the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. That youth told us, that a few days after his transfer to Che Ka, he was summoned at night and put on a truck to take him to execution (they executed not in the basement, but outside the city in 1918). Absolutely accidentally one of the excommers noticed, that they were supposed to execute not youth, but a middle aged man. They verified – the first and last name were the same, but the middle

¹⁰Previously under monarchy it was used to disinfect the new prisoners; the grim “room of souls” served in 1918 as a temporary stay for those who were going to be slaughtered.

¹¹“Che Ka” almanac, “Dry Guillotine”, pp. 49 – 50.

names were different, and the sentenced was supposed to be 42 years old, not 18. Incidentally his life was spared and he was returned into the cell.

Red terror held a sword of Damocles above thousands of people. There were cases when the prisoners refused to leave their cell when they were released, fearing that a summon for release was a ruse to coax them out of prison for an execution. There were other cases where people left the cell convinced that they were being released and the other prisoners hailed them with usual cheers. But a few days later the last names of the falsely released appeared in the list of the executed by firing squad. And there were many more whose names were never published...

Not only St. Petersburg and Moscow were responsible with hundreds of executions for an attempt on Lenin. That wave rolled over entire soviet Russia – over the big and small cities, towns, villages and boroughs. Bolshevik press seldom publicized those killings, but still the “Che Ka Weekly” made mentions of those provincial executions by firing squad, sometimes with direct reference: executed for an attempt on Lenin. Here are at least some of them.

Criminal attempt of assassination of our ideological leader comrade Lenin – writes Nizhny Novgorod Che Ka – motivates us to dismiss the sentiments and carry out dictatorship of proletariat with a strong hand”... “Enough words!”... “In the name of that” – the Commission “executed by firing squad 41 people from the enemy side”.

That was followed with a list, that included the officers, clergy, bureaucrats, a forester, newspaper editor, a guard and so and on so forth. The same day about 700 hostages were taken in Nizhny just in case. “The Worker-Peasant Nizhny Novgorod Flier” explained that: “For every murder of a communist or an attempted murder we will respond by executing the bourgeois hostages, for blood of our comrades, murdered or wounded, demands revenge”.

“In response to the assassination of comrade Uritski and an attempt on the comrade Lenin, subjected to red terror were”:

- by the order of Sumy district Che Ka (Kharkov region), three pilots;
- ...of Smolensk regional Che Ka, 38 land owners of the Western region;
- ...of Novo-Rzhevsk, certain Alexandra, Natalia, Eudokia, Pavel and Michael Roslyakov;
- ...of Poshekhonye – 31 (entire families: 5 Shalaevs, 4 Volkovs);
- ...of Pskov – 31;
- ...of Yaroslavl – 38;
- ...of Arkhangelsk – 9;

- ...of Sebezhd – 17;
- ...of Vologda – 14;
- ...of Bryansk – 9 robbers (!)

and so on and so forth.



Figure 4.1: A corpse of hostage Ilya Sidorenko, owner of a leather store in Sumy city. Hands and ribs fractured, genitals removed. Tortured to death in Kharkov by the reds.

No. 3 of the “Che Ka Weekly” published the following list too: “Among others, the following were executed for an attempt on the leader of global proletariat: a contractor Kubitsky for stealing 400,000 roubles, two sailors for the same crime, Che Ka commissioner Piskunov for an “attempt to sell a revolver to a militia man”, two counterfeiters etc. There were dozens of such lists, as to unpublished – there was no place where no one was executed “for Lenin”.

Typical was a special newsletter of Che Ka in Morshansk, issued as regards to the current events. It said among other things: “Comrades! They slap one our cheek, and we reciprocate that three fold by slugging the whole face. A vaccination was performed, i.e. red terror... That vaccination was performed everywhere in Russia, particularly in Morshansk, where we responded to the assassination of comrade Uritski and wounding of comrade Lenin with an execution by firing squad... (a list of 4) and if there will be more attempts on our leaders and the prominent figures among the communists in general, then cruelty will be expressed even worse... We must respond to a strike – with a strike 10 times stronger”. And for the first time, so it

seems, there was a mention of the hostages, who would be “immediately executed”, in case of “any counter-revolutionary action”. “For the life of one of our leaders the hundreds of bourgeois heads must roll” – stated a public notice to “all citizens of Torzhok city and the district”, issued by the district Che Ka. It was followed by a list of arrested and imprisoned “hostages”: engineers, merchants, a cleric and... the right social revolutionaries. There were 20 in total. 184 hostages have been taken in Ivanovo-Voznesensk. 50 have been executed in Perm for Uritski and Lenin¹².

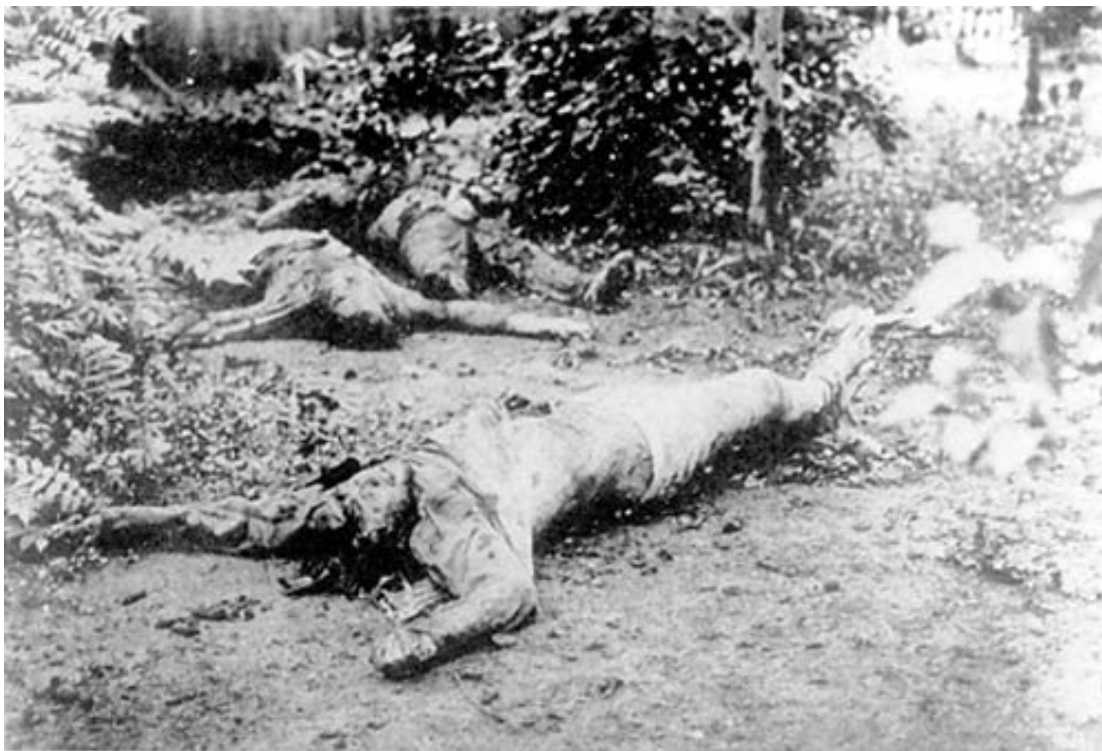


Figure 4.2: Kharkov, yard of Che Ka. A corpse of hostage retired telegraph operator I. Ponomarenko. Right hand severed. Several deep slashes across the chest. Two more corpses in the background.

Are the above mentioned facts not enough to refute the official publications? Indeed, thousands of innocents died for Uritski and Lenin. Thousands more have been taken hostages across Russia. What was their fate? Let us remind at least about the fate of Gen. Ruzski, Radko-Dmitriev and other hostages in Pyatigorsk. 32 of them have been arrested in Yessentuki “in carrying out the order of People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs comrade Petrovsky”, as it was officially announced¹³, in a decree, concluded with a threat of their execution by firing squad “for any attempt of counter-revolution actions or attempts on the leaders of proletariat”. Then hostages have been taken in Kislovodsk (33 in total) and other places. There were 160 people, gathered in a concentration camp in Pyatigorsk. The following event transpired on 13 Octo-

¹²“Northern Commune” 18 September.

¹³“Izvestiya” of the North Caucasus Central Administrative Committee, No. 138.

ber in Pyatigorsk: the Bolshevik Supreme Commissioner Sorokin attempted a coup, aimed at cleansing “soviet government of the Jews”. He has arrested and executed, among others, some excommers. “As a justification, Sorokin produced the documents, allegedly exposing the connections of the executed with the Voluntary Army – as stated the reports of Denikin’s Commissions, that we are using in this case¹⁴. Sorokin was looking for an approval of his actions and power from an emergency congress of the Sovdep, revolutionaries and Red Army representatives, summoned by him in the town of Nevinnomyssk”.

But the Sorokin’s adversaries managed to declare him outlaw prior to his arrival to the congress as “a traitor of revolution”. He was arrested in Stavropol and immediately executed... That has sealed the fate for many of the hostages, imprisoned in the concentration camp.

No. 157 of the local “Izvestiya” published on 2 November the following order of Che Ka under Atarbekov:

Due to an attempt on the lives of the leaders of proletariat in the city of Pyatigorsk 21 October 1918 and under authority of the Order No. 3 of 8 October of this year, in response to a diabolical killing of the best comrades, members of CPK and others, the Extreme Commission ordered executed by firing squad the following hostages and persons, belonging to the counter-revolution organizations.

That was followed by a list of 59 people, starting with Gen. Ruzski. There was another list of 47 right there, which mixed together: a senator, counterfeiter, cleric. The hostages have been “executed by firing squad”. That was a lie. They have been hacked with the swords. Their possessions have been declared “public property”...

The systemic hostage-taking flourished further.

A student P. killed a commissar N. in Chernihiv region. And a reliable witness told us how his father, mother, two brothers (the younger was 15), a German governess and her 18 year old niece have been executed by a firing squad.

Soon after he himself was captured.

A year passed, during which terror in Russia took horrible shape: everything, that we know from history truly pales. A terror act was carried out by a group of anarchists, who initially followed the Bolsheviks and even participated in the organization of the Extreme Commissions. That assassination was for the most part a response to the executions of a large number of the party members, declared hostages. As early as 15 June 1919 the following announcement was made on behalf of Latsis, the Chair of Ukrainian Che Ka:

As of lately a number of soviet officials received the threatening letters from a combat squad of the international left Socialist-Revolutionaries, the so called activists. White terror was declared on the soviet officials. The Ukrainian Extreme Commission hereby proclaims, that any attempt of assaulting the soviet officials will result in the execution by firing squad

¹⁴Document summary for Mineralnye Vody, p. 82.

of the activist members of the Socialist-Revolutionary party under arrest, both here and in Russia. The punishing hand of proletariat will fall equally heavily onto a “white” guard with Denikin’s ID, as well onto the activists of the left Socialist-Revolutionaries calling themselves internationalists.

Chair of the Ukrainian Extreme Commission, Latsis¹⁵.

As if in response to that a bomb exploded on 25 September 1919 in a building occupied by the Bolshevik party in Leontiev Lane, Moscow. The building was partially destroyed. Several prominent communists were killed in the explosion. The Moscow newspapers published a threat, signed by Kamshev, the day after: the “whites”, who committed a “notorious crime”, will “receive a horrible punishment”. “The killed” – added Goyhbart in “Izvestiya” article – “will be decently avenged” by the government.

And a new wave of bloody terror rolled over Russia: the government “decently” paid back for the explosion to the people, who had no chance to have anything to do with it. The government simply executed those, who were imprisoned at the moment, for the action of the anarchists¹⁶.

“In response to the Moscow bombing” Saratov Che Ka executed 28 people, among whom were several candidates to the Parliament from the Constitutional Democratic Party, a former member of Peoples Will, lawyers, land owners, clergy etc.¹⁷. That was the official figure. There were more in reality, as many as was passed in a wire from Moscow that allotted a portion of the “country-wide blood quota” to Saratov – that was 60.

We have a shiny testimony of how those lists have been compiled those days in Moscow, which was a major scene of the play, by one of the Bootyrskaya prison inmates¹⁸.

According to the supervisor of Moscow Che Ka Zakharov, pale as paper and nervous Dzerzhinski came to Che Ka right from the scene of the bombing and ordered to be executed all listed as Cadet party members, police officers, monarchy officials and all kinds of princes and counts, imprisoned at all Moscow jails and concentration camps. And thus a single verbal instruction of a single individual condemned many thousands people to immediate death.

It is impossible to determine how many they managed to execute by firing squad in one night, but the figure should be calculated at the hundreds by the most modest estimate. The order has been canceled the day after...

¹⁵“Kiev Izvestiya”. A similar announcement, signed by Dzerzhinski was published in “Izvestiya” back on 1 March: “the arrested left Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks will serve as hostages, and their fate will depend on the conduct of the both parties”.

¹⁶A brochure “Persecution of The Anarchists in Soviet Russia” published in 1922 in Berlin clearly stated, that the terrorist act at Leontiev Lane was carried out by the anarchists. A worker Kazimir Kovalevich was the instigator.

¹⁷Saratov “Izvestiya”, 2 October 1919.

¹⁸“Che Ka” almanac, “A year in Bootyrskaya Prison”, p. 144.

Another year passed and a special system of hostage-taken has been instituted by a decree of the central government.

A “government announcement” was made on 30 November 1920 stating that a number of “white army organizations intended (!) to commit the acts of terror against the worker-peasant revolution.



Figure 4.3: Kharkov, the corpses of the executed loaded onto a carriage.

Therefore the prison inmates from the various political groups have been declared the hostages¹⁹.

An old anarchist P. A. Kropotkin considered it necessary to respond to that announcement with an open letter to Lenin²⁰. “Could it be true that none among you – wrote Kropotkin – could remember, that such measures, reflecting a return of the worst of the medieval times and religious war – are undeserving of the people, who undertook creation of a future society on a communist foundation... Could it be true, that none of you realized what a hostage meant? It meant, that a person is imprisoned not as a punishment for some crime, that he languishes in prison in order to

¹⁹As a matter of fact an article by V. L. Burtsev in “Common Business” was the only justification for that announcement. He wrote: “We must respond to terror with terror... there must be revolutionaries out there ready to sacrifice themselves, to keep Lenin and Trotski, Steklov and Dzerzhinski, Latsis and Lunacharski, Kamenev and Kalinin, Krasin and Karkhan, Krestinski and Zinoviyeu etc. responsible”. Perhaps, in parallel to that article, we should mention a note, that has psychological value, made by a diplomat during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. Chernin wrote 26 December 1917: “Charlotte Corday said: I assassinated not a human, but a wild beast. Those Bolsheviks will vanish too, and who knows, will there be Corday for Trotski too”.

²⁰“In the Foreign Land”, book III.

threaten your enemies with his death. “For a death of one of ours we will execute so many of yours”. But is that not the same as taking a person out every morning to an execution and bringing him back, saying: “Hold on”, “Not today”. Could it be true that your comrades would not understand, that it is equal to a restoration of torture for the inmates and their families...”

Living already in seclusion, senile and sick, P. A. Kropotkin could not imagine clearly enough real implementation of the Bolshevik theories of violence. Hostages! Have not they been taken from the day one of terror?

Have not they been taken everywhere during the Civil War? They have been taken in the South, East, North...

Reporting of the many hostages taken in Kharkov, a chairman of the regional administrative committee Con said: “if a bourgeois snake would raise its head, than first of all the heads of the hostages will roll”²¹. And they really have rolled. There were 36 hostages executed for a murder of a local excommmer in 1921. That fact, published in “Common Business”²² by Burtsev, found a confirmation in a number of just as reliable notes, that we will find further. The rule “eye for an eye” was widely implemented in practice.

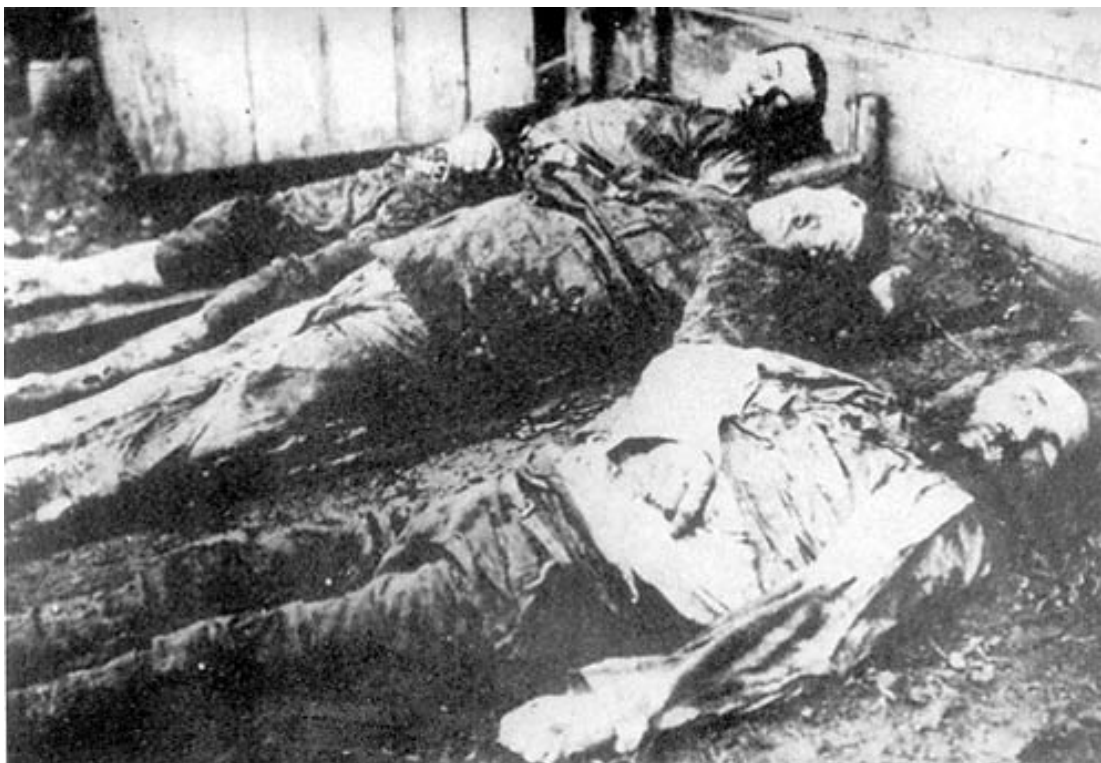


Figure 4.4: Corpses of the hostages, executed in Kharkov prison.

“The Bolsheviks re-introduced a disgusting custom of hostage taking” – wrote

²¹“Kharkov Izvestiya” No. 126, 13 May 1919.

²²“Common Business” No. 345.

Lockhart²³ 10 November 1918 – “Even worse, they are stabbing their political adversaries by avenging their wives. When a long list of the hostages was published in St. Petersburg, the Bolsheviks have arrested the wives of those they could not find and imprisoned them until the husbands turned themselves in”²⁴. The wives and children were often arrested and executed. The Kiev Red Cross officials testified of such executions in 1918 of the hostage wives of those conscripted to the Red Army who defected to the White Army. The families of the 86 Infantry Battalion officers defected to the whites have been executed in St. Petersburg in 1919²⁵. A note to the RCAC²⁶ by a prominent left social revolutionary J. Zubelevich spoke of the execution by firing squad of the “families of the officers, *suspected* of defection to the white army”²⁷. The hostages could be quickly redefined as the counter-revolutionaries. Here is a document, published by “Communist”²⁸ magazine:

13 August a military-revolutionary tribunal of the 14 army, tried the case of 10 residents of Alexandria city, who have been taken hostages (Bredit, Malski etc.), *considered those not hostages, but counter-revolutionaries and sentenced them to execution by firing squad.*

The sentence was carried out the day after.

Hundreds of hostages – the peasant wives with children – have been taken during the peasant revolts in Tambov region: they were imprisoned in the various jails, including Moscow and St. Petersburg, for almost two years. For example, an order by operative staff of Tambov Che Ka of 1 September 1920 read: “To carry out ruthless red terror towards the rebel families... arrest everyone above 18 among those families, without regard to gender, and as long as the riots continues, execute them. Impose extreme taxes on the villages, confiscate all land and property for a failure to pay”²⁹.

The official releases, published in Tambov “Izvestiya” attested to the practical implementation of that order: 5 September 5 villages *burnt*; 7 September executed by firing squad 250 peasants... Kozhukhov concentration camp near Moscow alone (in 1921 – 22) imprisoned 313 Tambov peasant hostages, including the babies as young as 1 month and children below 16. Typhus³⁰ devastated those semi-naked (with no warm clothes), starving hostages in the autumn of 1921.

We could find the long lists of hostages taken for the deserters, for example in “Red Warrior”³¹. There is a special category for some hostages here: “sentenced to a *suspended* execution”.

²³An Acting British Consul-General in Moscow at the time of the revolution. *Trans.*

²⁴Livre blanc, p. 37.

²⁵“Russian Life” (Helsinki), 11 March.

²⁶Russia-wide Central Administrative Committee (of the Bolshevik party), *Trans.*

²⁷As a result of that action, considered inappropriate by the soviet government, J. M. Zubelevich has been exiled to Orenburg.

²⁸1918. No. 134.

²⁹“Revolutionary Russia” No. 14 – 15.

³⁰Camp fever. *Trans.*

³¹12 November 1919.



Figure 4.5: The corpses of 4 peasant hostages (Bondarenko, Plokhii, Levenets and Sidorchuk). The faces mutilated by slashing. Genitals mutilated with undetermined tool. The doctors suggested that kind of mutilation must have inflicted maximum possible pain.

Both parents and children have been executed. We found evidence of the following facts. The children have been executed before the parents' eyes, and the parents before the children's eyes. A Special Department of Che Ka under crazy Kedrov was especially cruel was in that regard³². He sent whole bunches of the infant spies aged 8 – 14 from the “front” to Bootyrskaya prison. He executed those student-spies on the spot himself. I personally knew of several such cases in Moscow.

Who cares of moral torture, that P. A. Kropotkin spoke about. The Extreme Commissions not just provincial, but in the capital cities, practiced real torture. Of course Kropotkin's letter remained crying out in the wilderness. If there was no executions among the hostages that very moment, then perhaps because there were no assassination attempts...

Another year passed. Thousands of hostages have been taken during Kronstadt riot. Then more hostages have been taken after the famous trial of the social-revolutionaries. Those lived till the last day under the threat of suspended death sentence!

And perhaps the fact that assassination of Vorovsky occurred in Swiss territory, too openly for the whole world, explains that there were no mass executions in Russia, i.e. they were not officially publicized. We have no way of knowing what happens in the basement of the State Political Administration, which replaced the Extreme Commission in the name only. The executions continue, but press does not publish information, or does but in reduced format. We do not know the truth.

³²By some accounts Kedrov is presently committed to a psychiatric clinic as incurable.

But we do know for certain, that after the acquittal in Lausanne the Bolsheviks unambiguously threatened to resume terror towards those they considered hostages. So Stalin – as published by “The Days” and “Vorwärts” – stated in the meeting of the Moscow Bolsheviks:

The voices of all workers demand from us retaliation to the instigators of that monstrous assassination.

As a matter of fact the assassins of comrade Vorovski are not the miserable hit-men Conradi and Polunin, but those social traitors, who, having escaped people’s vengeance beyond reach, are still continuing ground work for a fight against the leaders of Russian proletariat. They forgot about our foresight, expressed in suspending the verdict of the Supreme Tribunal in August 1922, contrary to insistence of all worker masses. We can remind them now, that the verdict is still in force and we can bring to justice their friends under our control for the death of comrade Vorovski...³³

“The hostages are capital for exchange”... That phrase of the famous excommer Latsis, perhaps applied to the foreign nationals during the Polish-Russian war. Russian hostage is only a form of psychological pressure, instilling fear, that entire domestic policy, government system of Bolsheviks is based on.

Remarkably, that the Bolsheviks implemented in practice what seemed impossible even to the most reactionary circles in 1881. A. Kamarovski wrote in a letter to Pobedonostsev 5 March 1881³⁴ about collective responsibility. He wrote: “...would it be considered practical to declare all discovered members of revolutionary party outlaw for the despicable crimes committed by its members and hold them responsible *in corpore* with their lives for any minor new attempt against lawful order in Russia”.

Such is a grimace of history or life... “Unlikely there could be more direct expression of barbarity, or rather power of rude force over the basics of human civilization, than systemic hostage-taking” – wrote an old revolutionary N. V. Chaikovski regarding hostage-taking these days. “One would have to not just emancipate self of the ages worth of human cultural values, but internally submit to Moloch of war, destruction and evil in order to sink to not only applying it in practice, but its open declaration.”.

The humankind spent a lot of efforts in order to win... the first truth of any justice:

“There is no punishment for no crime committed” – reminds us an appeal regarding the same issue, published in 1921 by “The Union of Russian Writers and Journalists in Paris”:³⁵

³³Just recently Georgian Che Ka declared 37 social democrats hostages and issued a warning, that the first 10 on the list would be executed should anyone attempt an act of terror in Georgia. According to “Socialist Messenger” 11 February 1924 (No. 3) the decree has been canceled by an order from Moscow (keep in mind that recognition of the soviet government was being decided those days). An odd argument was supplied for a justification: as the Mensheviks turned into a “small group of bandits”, and the government institutions are strong enough for carrying out their delegated functions “there is no need to resort to such extreme repressive measures as declaring certain members of Menshevik party hostages”.

³⁴“Letters and Notes”, vol. I, p. 181.

³⁵“The Latest News”, 9 February 1921.



Figure 4.6: Captain Fedorov with the signs of torture on the arms. Bullet wound on the left arm received during torture. Escaped the execution in the last moment. Below: the sketches of the torture tools by Fedorov.

And we reckon, that no matter how heated is political party struggle, that is burning in Russia like a frightening fire, but this basic, this first commandment of civilization cannot be suppressed under any circumstances:

- No punishment for no crime.

We protest against the possibility of killing the innocents.

We protest against this torture by fear. We know how horrible are the nights of Russian mothers and fathers whose children have been taken hostages. We know just as well what the hostages themselves feel in anticipation of death for a crime they have not committed.

And thus we say:

- Here is cruelty that cannot be justified.

- Here is barbarity that has no place in human civilization...

“Cannot be”... Who heard that?

Chapter 5

“Terror Foisted” Restoration of Death Sentence and Bolshevik Rhetoric

Proletarian coercion in all its forms, beginning with execution by firing squad... is a method of developing a communist human from the material of capitalist epoch.

Bukharin.

The Bolshevik figures often portray terror as a consequence of people’s anger. The Bolsheviks were forced to use terror under the pressure from worker class. More so, institutionalized terror only introduced unavoidable lynching to the official legal norms. It is hard to imagine more holier than thou point of view and it is simple to demonstrate, how far from reality that was.

A note of People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs and simultaneously the creator and administrator of “red terror” Dzerzhinski to the Soviet of People’s Commissars 17 February 1922, read among the rest: “Under assumption, that an age-old hatred towards the slavers by revolutionary proletariat could be forced to express itself in a number of spontaneous bloody episodes, and the excited elements of people’s anger would wipe out not only the enemies, but the friends too; not only the adversaries, but the strong and useful elements, I rushed to bring a system into executive branch of revolutionary power. During those times “The Extreme Commission was nothing, but *smart direction* for the punitive hand of revolutionary proletariat”.¹

We will further demonstrate what that “smart” direction for the punitive branch of government was. A act to establish Russia Extreme Commission, drafted by Dzerzhinski 7 December 1917, based on “historical analysys of the previous revolutions”,

¹Apparently the first commissioner of justice under the Bolsheviks, a left social revolutionary Steinberg, who recently published a book against terror titled “Moral Outlook of Revolution” and comprehensively whitewashed his party from a part in bloody business of terror, was wrong, stating that Che Ka emerged from “chaotic events of the first burning days of October revolution”.

was in agreement with the theories, created by the Bolshevik ideologists. As early as spring of 1917 Lenin stated, that social revolution is not so difficult to implement: it would be enough to *destroy 200 – 300 bourgeois*. Famously Trotsky responded to a book "Terrorism and Communism" by Kautski with "ideological justification for terror", that boiled down to "the enemy must be disarmed; in the times of war that means – destroyed". "Intimidation is a powerful means of politics and one has to be a hypocrite to not understand that".² And Kautski was right referring to Trotsky's book as to a "hymn, praising inhumanity". Those bloody appeals constituted, according to Kautski, a "pinnacle of revolution's depravity". "The planned implementation of designed terror cannot be confused for the excesses of aroused crowd. Those excesses originate from the least cultural, marginal segments of society, but terror was implemented by the intelligent, educated people". Those words by the ideologist of German social democrats referred to the epoch of great French revolution.³ They could be reiterated in the XX century: the ideologists of communism restored the obsolete past in its worst forms. Rhetoric agitation of the "enlightened", supposedly filled with "humanity" people disgracefully carried out the bloody acts.

Without regard to the facts of reality, the Bolsheviks contended that terror in Russia was used only since the first terrorist attempts on the so called leaders of proletariat. One of the most cruel excommers, a Latvian national Latsis, had audacity to speak in August 1918 about exceptional humanity of soviet government: "they are killing thousands of us (!!!), but we constrain ourselves to an arrest" (!!). And Peters, as we read above, stated in public with extraordinary cynicism, that there was no execution in St. Petersburg prior to Uritski assassination.

Starting their government activities with abolishment of capital punishment for rhetoric purposes⁴, the Bolsheviks immediately restored it. As early as 8 January 1918 an announcement of the Soviet of People's Commissars decreed "to create the battalions for digging trenches from the ranks of bourgeois men and women, under the supervision of red guard". "The resisters will be executed by firing squad" and further: counter-revolution agitators "to be executed on the spot".⁵

In other words, capital punishment without investigation and trial has been restored. A month later an announcement of the subsequently infamous Russia Extreme Commission read: "...counter-revolution agitators... everyone attempting to escape to Don for joining counter-revolutionary armies... will be ruthlessly executed by the squads of the Commission on the spot". The threats poured like from a horn of plenty: "the baggers⁶ to be executed on the spot" (if offering resistance), those posting the bills "to be executed immediately"⁷ etc. Once a Soviet of People's Commissars

²Dzerzhinski has borrowed an argument for "people's anger from the Trotsky's book: "It is difficult to teach the oppressed masses good manners – wrote Trotsky – under class slavery. When aroused, they use a club, a rock, fire and noose".

³Kautski, "Terrorism and Communism", p. 139.

⁴No. 1 of the "Paper of Intermediate Worker and Peasant Government" 28 October read: "Russian Congress of Soviets enacted: capital punishment, restored by Kerenski in the army, is hereby abolished".

⁵"Izvestiya" No. 30.

⁶Street merchants. *Trans.*

⁷"Izvestiya" No. 27.

distributed an order to all railroads regarding some special train, traveling from the Staff to St. Petersburg: “in case of a delay in transit to St. Petersburg, those responsible for it to be executed”. “Confiscation of all property and execution by firing squad” is awaiting those, who would try to circumvent the acts of the soviet government on trading, buying and selling. The threats of execution are very diverse. It is peculiar, that the execution orders are published not just by the central organ, but by all kinds of revolutionary committees: Kaluga region declared, that those guilty of unpaid taxes imposed on the rich would be executed; in Vyatka “for being outside after 8 in the afternoon”; in Bryansk for intoxication; in Rybinsk – for *gathering in the streets* and notably “without warning”. They threatened not only with execution by firing squad: a commissar of Zmeyev city imposed a tax and threatened, that those not paying “would be drowned in Dnester with a rock around their neck”.⁸ Here even more expressive: the Supreme Commander Krylenko, the future head prosecutor of the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal, the guardian of law and order in soviet Russia, 22 January announced: “Proposing that the peasants of Mogilev region deal with the oppressors as they see fit”. The commissar of Northern district and West Siberia in turn published the following: “if the perpetrators will not be surrendered, then for every 10 people one will be executed by firing squad without regard to the guilt”.

Such are the orders, decrees, appeals and announcements of capital punishment...

Quoting them, one of the champions for abolishment of capital punishment in Russia Dr. Zhbankov wrote in “Public Doctor”⁹ “Practically all of them provide broad powers of arbitrary decision to the individuals and even to an angry blinded crowd”, i.e. legalized lynching.

Capital punishment was restored back in 1918 within the limits it never reached even under monarchy. That was the first result of bringing a system into executive branch of “revolutionary power”. The center was ahead in suppressing the elementary human rights and morale and served as an example. 21 February due to the offensive of German troops a special manifest declared “socialist fatherland” endangered and simultaneously enacted capital punishment for an extremely broad range of actions: “enemy agents, speculators¹⁰, robbers, street criminals, counter-revolution agitators, German spies to be executed by firing squad on the spot”.¹¹

⁸Compare further with a speech of Bolshevik Supreme Commissar Muraviyev in Odessa.

⁹1918, No. 9 – 10.

¹⁰The merchants. *Trans.*

¹¹Steinberg noted in his book “Moral Outlook of Revolution”: “We unanimously denounced with indignation that rusted tool of barbary, dragged again to the clean (!?) arena. We energetically protested in the central government... we unanimously rejected there all proposals of the sorry Bolsheviks, (such as Lunacharski), who tried to establish “control” of death... We did not compromise in that matter”. But “when the majority rejected our proposals, we did nothing further” – issues a late apology the former Commissioner of Justice. “We failed to notice, that through that narrow gate the same old world returned to us with its feelings and tools”. “By the will or revolutionary power a class of revolutionary murderers was being created, that was destined to soon become the murderers of the revolution”. That occurred earlier, when the left socialist revolutionaries participated in founding of Che Ka. Belated was the later softening, that the former Bolshevik commissar of justice tried to introduce into the practices of Che Ka. The representatives of left socialist-revolutionaries did not compromise, but spoke of the executions by firing squad as represented by Dzerzhinski’s assistant Zaks!

There could be nothing more disgraceful, than a trial of Captain Schastny, conducted by the so called Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal in Moscow in May 1918. Captain Schastny saved the remainder of Russian navy in Baltic sea from surrender to a German fleet and brought it to Kronstadt. He was accused of treason no less. The indictment read: "Schastny, acting heroically, made himself popular with the intent to use that against Soviet government". The main and only witness against Schastny was Trotski. Schastny has been executed 22 May for "saving Baltic navy". That verdict established a precedent of capital punishment. That "bloody comedy of cold-blooded manslaughter" caused a strong protest from the leader of Menshevik social democrats Martov, addressed to the working class. It did not receive much response, as the policy of Martov and his followers at the time was constrained to a call to work with Bolsheviks against future counter-revolution¹².

Capital punishment in judicial or administrative order, as was practiced by Extreme Commission on the territory of Soviet Russia up to September 1918, i.e. to the moment of official declaration of "red terror", cannot be considered isolated incidents by a wide margin. Those were not dozens, but hundreds of cases. We are referring only to the deaths by one verdict or another. We are not talking about those executions by firing squad, that followed crushing of all kinds of unrests, a multitude of which occurred in 1918, of firing on the rallies etc., i.e. of the excesses of power, of the slaughter (back in 1917) of Finnish and Sevastopol officers. We are not talking of the thousands, executed on the front line of the civil war, where the above decrees, orders and announcements of capital punishment were implemented on full scale.

Later in 1919, when a historian of Che Ka activities Latsis summarized official execution data in a series of articles (published earlier in Kiev and Moscow "Izvestiya", then re-printed as a book "Two Years of Fighting on Domestic Front"), he shamelessly wrote that within the borders of the Soviet Russia at the moment (i.e. 20 central regions) only 22 people have been executed in the first half of 1918. "That situation would have continued further, – stated Latsis, – if not for a wave of conspiracies and most brazen white terror (!) on the part of counter-revolution bourgeoisie"¹³.

That could be said only under complete public gagging. 22 capital punishments! I too tried to summarize the executions by the Soviet government in 1918, using mostly data, published in the Soviet newspapers. Marking what appeared in print centrally, I could use only rather random data from the provincial newspapers and seldom used reliable data from other sources. I already mentioned in my article "Medusa Head",

Were it not the Left SR who supported "necessity of class, organized terror" in a session of St. Petersburg Soviet 8 September? Were it not the Left SR who stated in "Will of Labor" 10 October that "as regards to counter-revolution Che Ka completely justified its purpose, "proved its efficacy"? That party of "October revolution" stood then "on a Soviet government platform". Rightly so the presiding judge noted during the trial of Left SR in June 1922: the Left SR take responsibility for October revolution and creation of Che Ka.

¹²See below an article "Why?" Steinberg again intentionally or not makes a chronological error, attributing granting the tribunals official power of capital punishment to the time of "founding movement of the Right SR", a riot organized by Savinkov in Yaroslavl. According to the former Commissar of Justice, those counter-revolution actions "convinced the government that those methods of power were necessary".

¹³Kiev "Izvestiya", 17 May 1919.

published in several of the socialist papers of Western Europe, that based on those random data my archive included not 22, but 884 notes!¹⁴ “There are many witnesses of those events here among us, mentioned by the staff historian of Che Ka” – read “Voice of Russia” in Berlin (22 February 1922.) regarding the statement by Latsis: “We perhaps, just as well as Latsis, remember that officially Che Ka was founded by a decree of 7 December 1917. But we remember even better, that “extreme” activity of the Bolsheviks started earlier. Were that not the Bolsheviks, who drowned an Assistant Minister of defense prince Tumanov in Neva after the storming of the Winter Palace? Was it not the Supreme Commander of Bolshevik army Muraviev who officially ordered lynching of the resisting officers the day after capturing Gatchina? Are not the Bolsheviks responsible for the killing of the generals Dukhonin, Shingarve and Kokoshkin? Was it not for a personal permission of Lenin that the student brothers Ganglez were executed in St. Petersburg only for wearing shoulder loops? And did not Bolsheviks create a Military-Revolutionary Committee prior to Che Ka, that used emergency powers to eradicate the enemies of the soviet government?”

Who is going to believe Latsis that “those were mostly criminals”, who is going to believe that there were “only 22”?...

Latsis’s official statistics did not even take into account data, published earlier in the Che Ka own publication; for example, “Che Ka Weekly” announced, that Ural region Che Ka executed 35 people in the first 6 months of 1918. Does it mean there were no more executions at the time? How can we reconcile such soviet humanity with an interview of the Che Ka leaders Dzerzhinski and Zaks (Left SR) to a reporter of Gorky’s “New Life” 8 June 1918, that stated; “We know no mercy towards the enemies” and continued, that the executions were carried out via the unanimous verdicts of all members of Extreme Commission. On 28 August “Izvestiya” printed official data of the executions by firing squad of 43 in the 6 of the regional cities. The figure of executions in St. Petersburg was set at 800 in a report by a member of St. Petersburg Che Ka, Uritski’s deputy Bokiy at October conference of the Extreme Commissions of the Northern Commune since Russia Che Ka moved to Moscow, i.e. after 12 March, while the number of hostages in September was 500, i.e. in other words 300 were executed according to the calculations of the Che Ka leaders in the mentioned months.¹⁵ Should we not believe a note in Margulies diary: “The Secretary of Danish embassy Peters mentioned... how Uritski bragged to him about signing 13 death sentences in one day”.¹⁶ And Uritski was one of those, who attempted to “bring terror under control”...

Perhaps the 2nd half of 1918 varies only in open propaganda of terror.¹⁷ After an

¹⁴“Justice”, Juin 28, 1923; “La France libre” 13 July; “The Days” etc.

¹⁵“Che Ka Weekly”, No. 6.

¹⁶M. S. Margulies “A Year of Intervention” II, 77.

¹⁷As a matter of fact, propaganda was openly used earlier. Kokoshkin and Shingarve were not killed by the government on 6 January 1918 – it just declared the Constitutional Democratic party outlaw. “The shots were fired by the sailors and reds, but in reality their rifles were loaded by the party politicians and journalists”, remarked Steniberg in his book. He provides a peculiar fact, testifying that Rostov administrative committee discussed an issue of complete execution of the leaders of local Menshevik and right social-revolutionary parties in March 1918. The decision was not passed by the majority. (“Moral Outlook of Revolution”, p. 42.)

attempt of Lenin's assassination *urbi et orbi* "red terror" time is officially declared. Lunacharski spoke about that at the Moscow Soviet 2 December 1917: "We do not want terror, we are against capital punishment and gallows". Against the gallows, but not against the secret executions! Perhaps Radek alone advocated for public executions. In his article "Red Terror"¹⁸ he wrote: ..."five hostages from bourgeois, executed by the public verdict of a local Soviet, before the thousands of workers present, with their approval – is a stronger act of mass terror, than an execution of 500 by an order of Che Ka without participation of the worker masses". Steinberg, recalling "lenience" of the tribunals of the "first revolutionary epoch", must admit, that there is "no doubt that, the period from March till the end of August 1918 was a period of *de-facto*, though unofficial terror".

Terror was turning into a bloody slaughter, that at first raised indignation even among the communist ranks. A famous sailor Dybenko protested against captain Schastny trial in a peculiar letter to "Anarchy" newspaper 30 July: "Could it be true that there is not a single honest Bolshevik, who would register a public protest against restoration of capital punishment? Miserable cowards! They are afraid to openly raise their voice – voice of protest. But if there is still a single honest socialist, he must stress before world proletariat... we are not guilty of this shameful act of restoring capital punishment and in protest are leaving the ruling parties. Let the ruling communists lead us, who fought and are still fighting against capital punishment, to the gallows, let them act as our executioners". For fairness sake, Dybenko soon recanted those "sentiments", as per Lunacharski, and three years later took an active part in the executions of the sailors after crusing of Kronstadt riot in 1921: "We cannot trifle with those rascals",¹⁹ and 300 have been executed in one day. Other voices sounded later. They fell silent too. And the creators of terror started putting up a theoretical basis for what cannot have moral justification...

A famous Bolshevik Ryazanov, the only one who voted against official inclusion of capital punishment into the new criminal code, drafted by soviet justice officials in 1922, visited Bootyrskaya prison after an attempt on Lenin's life and told the socialists, that the "leaders" of proletariat can hardly contain the workers, who want to storm the prison, to lynch the "socialist traitors". I heard the same from Dzerzhinski and many others during an interrogation in September. The masters and connoisseurs of staging tried to create that impression by printing the fake letters from various groups, demanding terror. But that common staging cannot trick anyone, as that is just a method of agitation, rhetoric that nurtured and supported Bolshevik power for so long. Waving of conductor's baton adopted those counterfeit, but belated decrees – belated because "red terror" was announced, its slogans were pronounced in the rallies²⁰, in the newspapers, on the banners, posters and what is left is only reiterating them locally. Too general and boring are the slogans, accompanying the slaughter: "Death to the capitalists", "Death to bourgeois". The slogans at Uritsky funeral are more specific, more timely: "Thousands of your heads for each our leader", "A bullet

¹⁸"Izvestiya" 1918 No. 192.

¹⁹"Revolutionary Russia", No. 16.

²⁰In all districts of Moscow, for example, rallies were held where Kamenev, Bukharin, Sverdlov, Lunacharski, Krylenko and others spoke of red terror.

through the chest of each enemy of working class”, “Death to the mercenaries of Anglo-French capital”. Indeed, every page of contemporary Bolshevik press responded with blood. For example, St. Petersburg “Red Paper” of 31 August read regarding Uritski assassination: “Thousands of enemies will pay for the death of our fighter. Enough trifling... Let us teach a bloody lesson to bourgeoisie... Terrorize the living... death to bourgeoisie – let it become motto of the day”. The same “Red Paper” read regarding an attempt on Lenin 1 September: “We will be killing enemies by the hundreds. Let it be thousands, let them drown in their own blood. Rivers of blood will flow for blood of Lenin and Uritski – more blood, as much as possible”.²¹ “Proletariat will avenge wounding of Lenin so – read “Izvestiya” – that entire bourgeoisie will shiver in horror”. None other than Radek, perhaps the best political writer, stressed in “Izvestiya” in a special article, dedicated to red terror (No. 190), that red terror, caused by white terror, was on the agenda: “Destruction of individual bourgeois, as long as they are not taking part in white movement, only matters as a means of intimidation during the actual fight, in response to the assassinations. Of course for every soviet official, for every leader of worker revolution, who would fall at the hands of counter-revolution agent, the later would pay with dozens of heads”. Recalling Lenin’s proverbial: let 90% of Russian people die, as long as 10% live till global revolution, – we can understand in what shape communists’ imagination pictured that “red revenge”: “a hymn of hatred and revenge will be the new hymn of worker class” – read “The Truth”.

“Worker class of soviet russia rose up – reads an appeal by Moscow district Military Commissioner 3 September – and gravely said, that for each drop of proletariat blood... a stream of blood would be spilled of those, who march against revolution, the soviets and leaders of proletariat. For each proletarian life hundreds of sons of bourgeois would be destroyed... Effective immediately worker class (i.e. Moscow regional military commissar) decrees for the enemies to fear, that it will respond to individual white terror with massive, ruthless proletarian terror”. Russia Central Administrative Committee is ahead of them all, having adopted 2 September a decision: “RCAC solemnly warns all servants of Russian and allied bourgeoisie that for each attempt on the lives of soviet leaders and the carriers of socialist revolution ideas all counter-revolutionaries and their instigators will be held responsible”. The workers (?) and peasants (?) will respond to white terror of the enemies of worker-peasant government with “massive red terror against bourgeoisie and their agents”.

In full compliance with the decree of that highest executive organ the Soviet of People’s Commissars enacted by regulation a special approval of Che Ka activity that prescribed “execution by firing squad of all persons, connected to the white army organizations, conspiracies and riots”. The People’s commissar of internal affairs Petrovsky simultaneously wired an order to all soviets, that became historically notorious due to both terminology and sanctioning all possible abuses. It was published in No. 1 of “Che Ka Weekly” titled “An order regarding the hostages” and read:

Assassination of Volodarski, Uritski, attempt on the Chair of the Soviet of People’s Commissars comrade Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and massive

²¹Without having access to the original, this is quoted from translation.

executions of our comrades in Finland, in Ukraine and finally on Don and in Czech-Slovakia, systematic conspiracies, discovered on home front, an open admission of the part in those conspiracies by the Right SR (?) and other counter-revolutionary scum, as well as negligible number of serious repressions and mass executions of the whites and bourgeoisie by the soviets, demonstrates that despite complaints about mass terror against the socialist-revolutionaries, the whites and bourgeoisie, there is no such terror.

That situation must be decisively dealt with. Lenience and trifling²² must end. All SR, known to the local soviets, must be immediately arrested. Significant numbers of hostages must be taken from the ranks of bourgeoisie and officers. In case of every minor attempts of resistance or movement among the whites mass execution by firing squad must be used unconditionally. The regional administrative committees must take special initiative in that regard.

The administrative committees must use militia and the Extreme Commissions to take all measures to identification and arrest of everyone using false names, with unconditional execution of all involved in white movement.

All these measures to be carried out immediately.

The chair of control department must report every hesitation in that direction by the local soviets to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs immediately. The home front must be finally cleared of any whites and all lowly conspirators against the government of worker class and poorest peasantry. No hesitation, no delays in carrying out mass terror.

Forward this wire to the local soviets upon receipt.

The central outlet of Russia Extreme Commission "Che Ka Weekly", which was supposed to be a supervisor and conductor of the ideas and methods of struggle for Che Ka, published an article "On the issue of capital punishment" in the same issue:

Let us cast away all lengthy, fruitless and idle conversations about red terror... It is time, before it is too late, to carry out the most ruthless, organized mass terror not verbally, but in practice...

After the notorious order by Petrovsky we can hardly talk about "worker class", avenging its leaders, and of humane goals, set by Dzerzhinski and others in organizing the so called Extreme Commissions. Only complete complacency of the Bolshevik political writers allowed Radek, for example, to stress in "Izvestiya" 6 September, that "if not for the certainty of the worker masses that worker government could respond to that strike, we would be experiencing mass slaughter of bourgeoisie". What importance could have in reality an address by some communists of Vitebsk region, demanding 1000 sacrifices for each soviet official? Or demands by a communist local

²²Notice, that this was the first time the term was used in an official document, originating from the center.

of some transport unit – to execute 100 hostages for every fallen, 1000 whites for every red; or an address of communist local of West Regional Che Ka, demanding 13 September to “sweep the disgusting murderers from the face of the Earth”; or a resolution of red army guards of Ostrogorod Che Ka (23 September): “For each of our communists we will destroy hundreds, and for an attempt on the leaders thousands and tens of thousands (!) of those parasites”. We observe how bloodthirstiness of Che Ka is increasing with the distance from the center – started with the hundreds, reached tens of thousands. Only the original words are being repeated; but that repetition, as it was published officially, originates from the excommers themselves. A year later the same rhetoric is repeated in the same bizarre verbiage in another part of Russia, captured by the Bolsheviks – in the kingdom of Latsis, appointed head of Ukraine Extreme Commission. Kiev Che Ka publishes “The Red Sword” – that is an official publication of Che Ka, pursuing the same goal and “Che Ka Weekly”. Its issue No. 1 published an editorial by Leon Krayni:

We must tear off a sting of bourgeois snake, and if necessary, its greedy mouth must be torn apart, and fat belly must be cut open. The sabotaging, lying, treacherously pretending to be on our side (!) classless intelligent speculators and speculating intelligents must be unmasked. We *cannot and do not have the old moral values and humanity*, invented by bourgeoisie for oppressing and exploiting the lower classes.

“The declared red terror – chimes in a certain Schwarz – has to be carried out a proletarian way”... “If for establishment of proletarian dictatorship worldwide we will have to destroy all servants of monarchy and capital, we will not hesitate and will carry out that task, assigned by Revolution, with honour”.

“Our terror was foisted, it is a terror of worker class, not of Che Ka” – repeated over and over Kamenev 31 December 1919. “Terror was foisted by Entente” – stated Lenin addressing the 7th congress of the soviets the same year. No, it was a terror of Che Ka itself. A network of the Extreme Commissions for Combating Counter-Revolution, Sabotage and Speculation covered all of Russia. There was no town, district, that had no detachment of Russia Extreme Commission, which became the main nerve of government administration and absorbed the remainder of justice. “The Truth” itself, published by the central committee of the communist party in Moscow, was forced to notice 18 October: “power to the soviets” was replaced with a slogan “power to Che Ka”.

The district, regional, city (at first village and even factory) detachments, transport etc, army “special detachments” of Che Ka. Finally all kinds of “military field”, “military-revolutionary” tribunals and the “emergency” staffs, “retaliatory expeditions” and so on so forth. All that unites for carrying out red terror. Nilstonsky, author of a book “Der Bluttausch des Bolschewismus” (Berlin) accounted for 16 of various Extreme Commissions in Kiev alone. Each of them could deliver death sentences. In the days of mass executions by firing squad those “slaughterhouses”, mentioned in the Che Ka internal documents only as the mere numbers, redistributed the killing among themselves.

Chapter 6

Bloody Statistics

On the ruins of the old – will build the new.
With a sword we bring not a sword, but peace to the
world.

Revolutionary rhetorics.

The Extreme Commissions are not the court organs, but organs of “ruthless reprisal” according to terminology of the central committee of the communist party.

An Extreme Commission “is not an investigative commission, not a court or tribunal” – sets its own goals Che Ka itself. “This is a combat organization, acting all across the home front of the civil war. It does not judge the enemy, it strikes. It does not grant pardons, but incinerates everyone on the other side of the barricades”.

It is not too difficult to imagine, how that “ruthless reprisal” was supposed to be carried out in practice once instead of the “dead code” of law only “revolutionary experience” and “consciousness” are in force. Consciousness is subjective. And experience will be certainly replaced with lawlessness, growing into bizarre shapes depending on composition of the performers.

“We are not fighting a war against the individuals – wrote Latsis in “The Red Sword” 1 November 1918¹. “We are eradicating bourgeoisie as a class. Do not seek evidence during the investigation that the accused acted or spoke against soviet government. The first question, that you must ask would be – what class do you belong to, what is your background, upbringing, education or trade. These questions must seal the fate of the accused. This is the “gist and meaning of red terror”. Latsis was in no way original, by only copying the words of Robespierre in Convent regarding Reign of Terror: “to execute the enemies of fatherland it is enough to identify them Not punishment, but their destruction is required”.

Does that instruction not tell the judges everything?

But to understand, what is continuing to these days with renewed energy red terror in reality, we have to find out the victim count. The breadth of murders by the ruling power characterizes the whole system of applying “red terror”.

¹Same in “Che Ka Weekly”, Kazan, No. 1 and in “The Truth” 25 December.

Bloody statistics essentially cannot be compiled as yet, and unlikely to be compiled. When only a hundred, perhaps, of the executed is being published, when executions are taking place in the basements of the fortified compounds, when human passing often leaves no trace – a historian has no opportunity to reconstruct the true picture of reality in the future.

6.1 1918

Latsis wrote at the time in the above quoted articles: “our citizenry and even the ranks of comrades are convinced, that Che Ka brings tens or hundreds of thousands of deaths”. And that is true: for the commoners read the abbreviation as an acronym for “every man’s death”². Having supplied us with unrealistic figure of 22, that we covered already, calculates the count of executed during the 2nd 1/2 of 1918. That is 4 1/2 thousand. “That is a figure for entire Russia”, i.e. within the 20 central regions. “If there is anything to blame Che Ka for, – says Latsis – than not for excessive urge for executions, but for insufficient application of capital punishment”. “A strong iron hand always reduces the number of victims. That truth was not always considered by the Extreme Commissions. But not only Che Ka should be blamed for that, but entire policy of the soviet government. We have been too soft, benevolent towards the defeated enemy!”

4 1/2 thousand is not enough for Latsis! He can easily discover, that his official statistics is underestimated. It would be interesting to find out, in what category he put, for example, the executed in Yaroslavl after Savinkov’s revolt. The first issue of “Che Ka Red Book” (there is such thing!), distributed only among the communist officials, published really “unprecedented” historical document. A chair of German Commission (acting under the terms of Brest-Litovsk accord) lieutenant Balk declared to the residents of Yaroslavl city, that the local detachment of the Northern Volunteer Army surrendered to the said German Commission. The surrendered have been turned over to the Bolsheviks and 428 of them have been immediately executed by firing squad. My archives contained 5004 executed for that period within the same territory. My data, as I mentioned, are random and incomplete; they contain for the most part what was published in the newspapers that I had access to.³

Keep in mind that extreme brevity of the official notes complicated the task of keeping the count. For example Klin district (Moscow region) Extreme Commission announced, that it executed *several* counter-revolutionaries; Voronezh Che Ka announced, that it executed “*many of the arrested*”; Sestroretsk Che Ka (St. Petersburg region) carried out “executions after thorough investigation in every case”. The newspapers are ripe with those brief announcements. We applied a factor of 1 to 3 in these cases, i.e. guaranteed to be an underestimate.

²The first letters of Russian for “Every Man’s Death” coincide with the first letters of Russia Extreme Commission. *Trans.*

³I did not even have information of the famous execution of 12 socialist-revolutionaries in Astrakhan 5 September 1918 after a local unrest. “Revolutionary Russia” No. 16 – 18.

This bloody statistics absolutely excluded data of massacres, associated with quelling of all kinds of peasant and other revolts. The victims of those “excesses” of civil war cannot be calculated at all.

My figures are important exhibits in a sense, that they shadow the infinite underestimate of official statistics, provided by Latsis.

The borders of soviet Russia are spreading out and the territory for “humane” activity of the Extreme Commissions is growing too. According to supplemented statistics provided by Latsis in 1920⁴ the figure of executed in 1918 reached 6185. Did Latsis include the thousands of executed in 1918 in North-West Russia (Perm region, etc) mentioned in overwhelming number of English reports.⁵



Figure 6.1: Back yard of Kharkov regional Che Ka (5 Sadovaya St.) with the corpses of the executed.

People of all classes, the peasants for the most part, to testify of the killing of their family members and other violence, committed by the “rampaging Bolsheviks”... (Elliott – to Curzon 21 March 1919.). Did that include the victims of the “officer” massacre in Kiev in 1918? It counted 2000 people! Executions by firing squad and by hacking with swords have been carried out right in the theatre, where the service men were summoned to for “checking ID”. Does that include a navy officer massacre

⁴“Izvestiya” 8 February.

⁵Livre blanc; Interim Report of the Committee to collect information on Russia 1920; Report of the Committee to collect information on Russia 1921.

in Odessa before arrival of Austrian troops? “Later, – writes one English chaplain, – an Austrian staff officer told me that a list of 400 officers, executed in Odessa area, was delivered to them!”⁶ Does that include the victims of Sevastopol massacre of the officers? Does that include those 1342, killed in January-February 1918 in Armavir city, as it was found by the Commission for Investigating Bolshevik Activities, established by Gen. Denikin?⁷ And finally, the hecatombs of Stavropol, mentioned in the memoirs of V. M. Krasnov – the executions of 67, 96 etc.?⁸ There was no place, where arrival of the Bolsheviks was not accompanied by the dozens or hundreds of victims, executed by firing squad without trial or by the orders of the Extreme Commission and the similar temporary “revolutionary” tribunals.⁹ We will devote a special chapter to those massacres – let these be the excesses of “civil war” only.



Figure 6.2: Exhumation of the mass grave of the red terror victims.

⁶Livre blanc, p. 186.

⁷“Common Business”, No. 56.

⁸“Archive of Revolution”, VIII, 159.

⁹It was equally impossible to verify the victim count immediately after Bolshevik retreat. For example, Kharkov branch of Denikin’s commission, that carried out its investigations in cooperation with the members of the city hall, council of the trade unions, working women association, examined 11 detention centers and discovered 280 corpses, but considered the that the number of victims was at least three times higher in reality. It failed to uncover all buried in the city park and behind it.



Figure 6.3: Kharkov. Exhumation of the mass grave of the red terror victims.

6.2 1919

Continuing his bloody statistics, Latsis contends, that 3456 were executed by firing squad by the orders of Che Ka in 1919, i.e. 9641 in two years, of whom 7068 counter-revolutionaries. Keep in mind, that by Latsis's own admission more than 2 1/2 thousands executed not for "bourgeois class", and not even for "counter-revolution", but for the petty crimes (632 abuses of power, 217 – speculation, 1204 – criminal acts). That indicates, that the Bolsheviks introduced capita; punishment not only as a means of struggle with bourgeois as a class, but as a generic punishment, that has not been used for that purpose in any civilized country.

But let us set that aside. Russia Extreme Commission, according to Latsis, executed by firing squad 140 people in September 1919. Meanwhile an investigation into a counter-revolution case of a public figure P. N. Schepkin has been closed in Moscow around that time. The newspapers published 66 last names of the executed, but the Bolsheviks themselves admitted to more than 150. From 100 to 150 people have been executed in Kronstadt in July according to a reliable witness, while only 19 have been published. Thousands have been executed in Ukraine, where Latsis himself rampaged. A report by the sisters of charity of Russian Red Cross to the International Red Cross in Geneva accounted for 3000 executions by firing squad in Kiev alone.¹⁰

¹⁰In the Shadow of Death. Statement of Red Cross sister on the Bolshevist Prisons in Kiev. "Archive of Revolution", VI.

The author of the above mentioned book “Der Blutrausch des Bolschewismus” Nilstonsky provides enormous totals of Kiev executions. It is worth noting that the author demonstrates high degree of familiarity with the activities by all 16 Kiev Extreme Commissions – it expresses itself in precise recording and detailed topographic description. It is possible that the author supplemented the immediate observations with the materials, collected by the Commission for Investigation the Bolshevik Activities established by Gen. Réberg.¹¹ That commission included, besides others, the lawyers and doctors. They photographed the exhumed corpses (some pictures have been published in Nilstonsky’s book, the rest are in Berlin according to him). He contends, that according to Réberg’s commission 4800 have been executed by firing squad – those have been identified. The total count of the Bolshevik victims in Kiev, in Nilstonsky’s opinion exceeded 12,000 people. Although the figures are approximate, they give an idea.

The unusual methods of terror¹² stipulated creation of a special commission for investigation of Ukraine Che Ka, appointed from the capital and headed by Manuilski and Felix Kon. All former prisoners positively referred to that commission in their testimonies to Denikin’s Commission. Propagation of terror has been stalled until retreat from Kiev, when the mass executions reoccurred in July-August. A list of 127 executed by firing squad was published in “Izvestiya” 16 August – those were the last officially published victims.

There is a scary creek outside the city of Saratov – Che Ka carried out executions there. Although, I will quote an eyewitness in that regard¹³ from the same excellent book, that we quoted several times previously and that we will refer to further down.

That almanac “Che Ka”, which contained information about the Extreme Commissions activities, was published by the Socialist-Revolutionary Party in Berlin in 1922. The first-hand accounts, gathered sometimes in the very prison, from the very victims, eyewitnesses, participants, give this book an exceptional value; it was written by those, who survived what they were writing about. And those vivid memories sometimes tell more, than the piles of documents. I knew many of them personally and knew the methods used for collecting data. “Che Ka” almanac will forever remain a historical document for characterization of our time, and a strikingly accurate one. One of the residents of Saratov gave an account of the creek near Monastery district, a creek, where there should be a memorial to the victims of revolution one day.¹⁴

As soon as the snow melts, the friends and families of the dead sneak
to the creek, single and in groups, looking over their shoulders in fear.
At first the visitors were being arrested, but there were so many of them,

¹¹See my analysis of this book, as well as a number of others, in my review “Literature on Terror” in a collection “In a Foreign Land” No. 8. Nilstonsky’s book “Bloody Hangover Of Bolshevism” adopts certain anti-semitism in the conclusion, that allows us to consider it biased. We are getting used to taking the literary works of those, who cannot rise above animal chauvinism even when describing a real tragedy, with a grain of salt. But data, originating from the other sources, confirm much of information in this book.

¹²See further.

¹³“On the activities of Saratov Che Ka”. “Che Ka” almanac.

¹⁴“On the activities of Saratov Che Ka”. A compilation “Che Ka” almanac, p. 197.

and they kept coming despite the arrests. The flood waters exposed the victims of communist persecution by washing away dirt. The corpses have been piled up in a 50 meter area from an overpass. How many? Unlikely one could tell. Even Che Ka itself does not know. Approximately 1500 have been executed with and without documentation in 1918 and 1919. But the executions took place above the creek in Summer and Autumn only, elsewhere in Winter. The most recent corpses – executed late last autumn – have not yet decomposed. Wearing nothing but underwear, with the hands tied behind their backs, sometimes in the sacks or completely naked...

It is frightening to look at the bottom of the scary creek! But the visitors look, peering into any marks that would allow them to identify the body of a relative...

...And with every day that creek becomes scarier and scarier for the Saratov residents. It consumes more and more victims. The steep slope slides after every execution, burying the dead; the creek widens. But every Spring flood water unearths the latest execution victims...

Could that all be untrue?

Averbukh accounted for 2200 victims of “red terror” in Odessa in three months of 1919 in his no less frightening book “Odessa Che Ka” published in Kishinev in 1920. (“Red terror” has been announced by the Bolsheviks in July 1919, when the Voluntary Army troops captured Kharkov). The executions started long before the official announcement – a week or two after the 2nd capture of Odessa by the Bolsheviks. The mass executions started in mid-April according to all witnesses, who testified before Denikin’s Commission. The figures of 26, 16, 12 have been published.

With their usual cynicism “Izvestiya” read in April 1919: “Crucian carp loves to be fried in sour cream. Bourgeoisie loves the government, that rampages and kills. This is good... Holding our imaginary noses (!) we will have to bring bourgeoisie to its senses with a strong medication. If we will execute a few dozens of those rascals and fools, if we will make them shovel snow, and make their wives clean the Red Army barracks (which is a great honor for them), than they will realize, that our government is strong and they cannot rely on the British and French”.

The executions increased in June during the offensive of the Voluntary Army. A local paper “Odessa Izvestiya” read those days of already official terror: “Red terror has been given a go. And it will walk over the bourgeoisie districts, bourgeoisie will crack, counter-revolution will hiss under the bloody strike of red terror... We will uproot them with glowing steel... and will deal with them in the bloodiest manner possible”. And indeed that “ruthless dealing” officially announced by the administrative branch of the local soviet, was followed with publication of the lists of executed: – often without qualifying the accusation: executed by firing squad under “red terror”. Many of those were listed in a book by Margulies “The Years of Fire”.¹⁵

¹⁵“Those unauthorized executions caused worker protests. The rallies have been dispersed using military force and banned” (Margulies, 279).

Those lists of 20 – 30 people have been always understated according to the eyewitnesses. One of the witnesses, who had an opportunity to make observations due to her status, informed that when “Izvestiya” published 18 last names, she counted up to 50 executed; when it was 27, she counted up to 70 (including 7 female corpses – there was no mention of women in an official publication). According to an arrested excommere up to 68 have been shot every night of “red terror”. By the official calculations of Denikin’s commission 1300 were executed by firing squad in a period between 1 April and 1 August. The figure of Bolshevik victims in the South according to German historian Andreas Niemann should be considered 13 – 14 thousands...¹⁶

The workers in Astrakhan go on strike in March. The eyewitnesses testified, that it was drowned in blood.¹⁷

A 10,000 strong rally of the workers, peacefully discussing their difficult situation, has been surrounded by the machine gunners, sailors and grenadiers. After the workers refused to disperse, they were shot with rifle volleys. Then the machine guns went off aimed into the crowd and grenades started exploding among the rally participants.

The rally has fallen to the ground and became quiet. Neither screams nor groans of the wounded and dying could be heard from the machine gun fire...

The city became deserted and quiet. Some escaped, some hid.

The workers lost no less than 2000 victims.

That was the first act of the horrible tragedy in Astrakhan.

The second – even more horrible act – started 12 March. Many workers have been captured by the “victors” and imprisoned in 6 detention centers, in the barges and stem ships. The most horrible was the stem ship “Gogol”. The wires about a “riot” have been sent to the capital.

The chair of Revolution Military Soviet L. Trotski responded with a brief wire: “Deal with mercilessly”. That sealed the destiny of the unfortunate prisoners. Bloody madness ruled on the land and on water.

Executions were being carried out in the basements of the detention centers and just in the yards. The imprisoned in the ships and barges were being drowned in Volga river. Some of the victims had rocks tied to their necks. Some were hogtied and simply thrown in water. One of the workers, who hid amidst the machines and survived, told that about 180 people have been drowned from the stem ship “Gogol” in one night. There were so many executed in the detention centers in the city, that they barely managed to bury them in the mass graves in the cemetery under the guise of “typhus victims”.

The emergency commissar Chugunov had to issue an order, that prohibited loss of corpses being transported to the cemetery under the threat of execution. The residents of Astrakhan were coming across the half-naked

¹⁶“Fünf Monate Obrigkeit von unten. Erinnerungen aus den Odessaer Bolschewistentagen April – August 1919”. “Der Firm” publishers.

¹⁷“Astrakhan Executions”, “Che Ka” almanac, pp. 251, 253.

bloodied corpses of the workers in the streets almost every morning. And the families of the captives sought the dear dead from corpse to corpse in the dawn.

The executions of the workers only continued 13 and 14 March. But then the government came to a sudden realization, that the executions could not be blamed on bourgeois revolt. And they decided, that “better late than never” and dealt with the first “bourgeois” they came across: arrested every building owner, fish merchant, small business owner and executed them...

By 15 March there was no household, that did not mourn a loss of father, brother, husband. Some households lost several men.

The figure of executed could be found from a census in Astrakhan! At first 2000 seemed to be correct, then three... Then the government started publishing the lists of executed “bourgeois” with hundreds of names. By April the number increased to 4000 and the repressions still raged on. The powers apparently decided to take revenge for all previous strikes on the Astrakhan workers: for Tula, Briansk, St. Petersburg strikes, wave of which rolled over the country in March 1919. The executions abated by end of April only.

Astrakhan was a horrible sight those days. The streets were dead quiet. The households were in tears. The fences, store windows and booths pasted with the execution orders, and more, and more...

Let us take a distant from the capital Turkmenia, where Russian population revolted in January against tyrannical regime, established by the Bolsheviks. The revolt was crushed. “They started wholesale searches” – told the eyewitnesses.¹⁸ “All barracks, all railroad shops were full of the arrestees. Mass executions by firing squad have been carried out 20 and 21 January. The corpses have been piled onto the railways. More than 2500 people have been slaughtered that horrible night... A military field tribunal was established 23 January that assumed the trial of the January revolt and continued to execute during entire 1919”.

Why were those victims not included in the official statistics by Latsis? It was the excommers who acted at least in the very first days in all cases, and “military field tribunal” was the same Che Ka even in composition.

Neither “The Truth” nor other official Bolshevik publications answered the question, asked by anarchist organization “Labor and Liberty” 20 May 1919 based on information from the underground flier of the Left SR party (No. 4): “Was it true, that Che Ka is executing 12, 15, 20, 22, 36 people almost daily?” No one will ever reply to that, as it was naked truth. And that was truth too bold, especially that officially the power of capital punishment was given by decree to the Revolutionary Tribunals only. It is safe to say, that on the eve of that decree in the 20th of February both Russia and St. Petersburg Che Ka published the new lists of the executed by firing squad even though the decree left the power of capital punishment to Che Ka only during the riots. There were no riots either in Moscow, or in St. Petersburg.

¹⁸“Will of Russia” 7 December 1921; “Revolutionary Russia” No. 3.

Not sure what the socialist-revolutionary paper “Will of Russia”¹⁹ based its calculation of 13,850 executed in the first three months on. Was that impossible? There was such contrast with the official figure of 3456, announced by Latsis. An impossibility was most likely towards understatement of a real figure.

The Moscow newspaper of the Communist Party Central Committee “The Truth” read 20 March 1919 regarding data, published in Great Britain (that 138 thousand were executed by firing squad): “it would be really horrible if that was truth”. However, the figure so shocking for the Bolshevik political writers, paled in comparison with what was really going on in Russia.

6.3 1920

Latsis no longer published his statistics for 1920 and on. And I no longer maintained my archive, for I was myself under arrest in a Bolshevik prison and a sword of Bolshevik justice was overhanging me.

Capital punishment was abolished once again in February 1920. And Zinoviev, speaking in Galle, Germany, boldly said that executions stopped in Russia after defeat of Denikin. Martov, speaking at the congress of the German independents 15 October made a correction right away: Zinoviev neglected to mention that the executions stopped for a very short time²⁰ and resumed on “frightening scale”. We can cast doubt that the executions stopped, knowing the customs of Che Ka. The most striking example could be glanced from the process of amnesty.

The following inscriptions could be found among those made by the sentenced to death on the walls of Special Department of Che Ka in Moscow: “The night of abolishment [of capital punishment] – became a night of blood”. Every amnesty meant new mass executions for the prisons. The excommers tried to dispatch their victims as quickly as possible. Sometimes the night, when the print shops worked on the announcement of amnesty, that was supposed to be in the morning papers, mass executions by firing squad were being carried out in the prisons. That is a must to remember for those, who often point at the frequent issuance of the amnesty acts by soviet government²¹ The nights before an anticipated amnesty were oh, so worrisome for everyone, who had to spend time in prison those days. I remember those nights in Bootyrskaya prison before the amnesty, announced on the anniversary of the October revolution. They could not keep up transporting the naked bodies of people, shot in the back of the head, to Kalitnikov cemetery. That was in Moscow and the same was in the regions.

¹⁹7 November 1920.

²⁰If they really did.

²¹I believe A. V. Peshehonov should be more careful in his brochure “Why Have I Not Emigrated?” where he softened Bolshevik reality in his rhetoric. “Despite Bolshevik cruelty, – reads p. 8, – to do them justice, most of the inmates do not languish in jail for too long – at least not as long as their sentence says”. You bet! I know of a sentence to 120 years in prison! I know of a life-time sentence by Che Ka (a *temporary* institution according the Bolsheviks). There are lots of savagery in Bolshevik “justice”. Does Peshehonov not know, that thousands are awaiting trial for years without any court order, and on the petty accusations or without any – just as the “counter-revolutionaries” to-be.

An article about Ekaterinodar prison in “Che Ka” almanac reads:

The executions were carried out as usual after the amnesty for the anniversary of October revolution in Ekaterinodar Che Ka and Special Department, but that did not stand in the way of the staff political writers publishing a number of articles in the local paper “The Red Flag” who cynically lied about humanity and mercy of soviet government, which announced the amnesties and supposedly applied them from time to time to their enemies.²² It happened later too. On the eve of the congress of Communist International in 1921 70 were executed in Bootyrskaya prison for the most amazing accusations: for bribes, for abusing food stamps, for pilfering. The political prisoners said that it was a sacrifice to the Comintern gods, while the career criminals rejoiced: there was going to be an amnesty, so those undesirable would be promptly executed, and the rest would be released in the name of Comintern.²³

“The night of abolishment became a night of blood”... We have enough testimony substantiating that claim. A kind of rule has been established, that time before periodical abolishment or relaxing capital punishment became time of escalated executions without any other external cause.

“Izvestiya”²⁴ published a decree, signed by Russia Che Ka chair Felix Dzerzhinsky and addressed to “all regional Che Ka”:

Defeat of Yudenich, Kolchak and Denikin, capture of Rostov, Novocherkassk and Krasnoyarsk, capture of the “Supreme Governor”²⁵ created the new conditions for combating counter-revolution.

The defeat of the counter-revolution’s standing armies undermines the hopes and calculations of the counter-revolutionary groups in Soviet Russia to overthrow the government of the workers and peasants by way of conspiracies, riots and terrorist activity. The worker and peasant government was forced to use the most efficient methods of suppressing espionage, sabotage and rebellious acts of the Entente agents and the monarchy generals in its employ, serving on the home front of the Red Army while the Soviet Republic fought a defensive war against Entente’s counter-revolutionary troops.

Defeat of counter-revolution inside and outside, crushing of the largest counter-revolution conspiracies and bandits and subsequent strengthening of soviet government allowed us to discontinue application of capital punishment (i.e. execution by firing squad) to the enemies of soviet power.

Revolutionary proletariat and revolutionary government of Soviet Russia are pleased to acknowledge that capture of Rostov and imprisonment of Kolchak provide an opportunity to lay off the weapons of terror.

²²“Che Ka” almanac, p. 227.

²³“Che Ka” almanac, p. 102.

²⁴15 January 1920.

²⁵Admiral Kolchak. *Trans.*

Only the renewed attempts by Entente to destabilize soviet government and peaceful laboring of the workers and peasants for establishment of socialist economy by armed intervention or financial aid to the monarchy generals can force us to return to the methodology of terror.

Thus responsibility for return of the soviet government to cruel methods of red terror lies squarely on the governments and ruling classes of the Entente members and their allies among the Russian capitalists.

Also the Extreme Commissions get an opportunity to focus on combating the basic internal enemy of the moment – economic decline, speculation, abuses of power – thus assisting with all means available economic recovery and removing all obstacles, created by sabotage, lack of discipline and malice..

As per above Russia Che Ka ordered:

1. To discontinue capital punishment (execution by firing squad) by the orders of Russia Che Ka and all of its local detachments immediately.
2. To assign a task to comrade Dzerzhinski to apply to the Soviet of People's Commissars and RCAC for complete abolishment of capital punishment not only by the orders of the Extreme Commissions, but by the verdicts of the district, regional and supreme tribunals.
3. To announce of this coming into force by wire...

We did not celebrate in Moscow, as remembered well reading the articles proclaiming end of terror just a year earlier. Here is a quote from an article by a certain Norov in Moscow "Evening Izvestiya".²⁶ Denial of the power of execution to Che Ka was the topic.

Russian proletariat is victorious. It no longer needs terror – that sharp, but dangerous weapon of a last resort. *It is even harmful, for it scares and disperses those segments, who could otherwise follow revolution.* That is why proletariat abandons a weapon of terror, picking up a weapon of justice and law. (Emphasis of the original.)

...We remembered, how Kiev Soviet festively announced back in January 1919: "capital punishment is abolished within its jurisdiction".

It was supposedly Che Ka initiative to abolish capital punishment 15 January 1920. We knew full well that it was not Che Ka – it resisted all the way, and when the decision was made anyway, Dzerzhinski insisted that officially Che Ka was considered the originator. Meanwhile Che Ka rushed to dipatch the remaining victims. More than 300 people have been executed by firing squad by all accounts.

A prominent figure among the left socialist-revolutionaries – Izmailovich, imprisoned at the time, said:

²⁶15 February 1919.

The night before the publication of the decree for abolishment of capital punishment 120 people have been taken from Bootyrskaya prison and executed by the order of Che Ka... The condemned somehow found out about the decree, scattered and begged for mercy referring to the decree, but both resisting and compliant have been slaughtered like cattle... This funeral will become a historic event too!²⁷

One of the authors of the articles in “Che Ka” almanac, imprisoned those days in Moscow Che Ka, testified:²⁸

The decree has been enacted, even printed in the holiday papers (by Julian calendar), but 160 prisoners from various detention centers, prisons, concentration camps who were considered impossible to keep alive have been executed by firing squad in the yard of Moscow Che Ka. Some of them have been already sentenced to the prison terms and served half of that, for example from Lockhart trial – Hvalinski, sentenced to just 5 years even in that cruel case. The executions continued 13 and 14 January. A wounded man was sent to the prison hospital from Moscow Che Ka with a wound to the jaw and tongue. He explained with hand gestures that he was being executed, but did not die and was only wounded and considered himself saved, once he was not finished off and sent to a hospital surgery ward. He was beaming, his eyes were happy and he could not believe his luck. We did not know his name or file number. But by night fall he was taken away with bandage on the face and finished off...

400 people have been executed in St. Petersburg on the eve of abolishment of capital punishment *and even the night after*. And 52 in Saratov, according to a private letter, and so on.

After the capital punishment was abolished, the power to execute was factually left to Che Ka. There was a clever caveat: “Kiev regional Che Ka – read for example “Izvestiya” 5 February – received a clarification by the chair of Russia Che Ka by wire, that the decree on abolishment of capital punishment does not apply to the territories, subordinate to the fronts. Those territories reserve the power of execution to the revolutionary tribunals. Kiev and the region belong to the territory, subordinate to the fronts”. And with incredible cynicism the Special Department of Che Ka distributed on 15 April an instruction to the chairs of the Special Departments of the local Che Ka: “In light of abolishment of capital punishment proposing that all those arrested for the offenses, punishable by execution should be sent to the territories with ongoing military operations as the decree does not apply there”. And I remember how one of the arrested in February 1920 on the charges of counter-revolution was told by the investigator: “we cannot execute you here, but we can send you to the front”, by the way the front was not necessarily a territory with ongoing military operations.²⁹

²⁷“Kremlin Behind Bars”, p. 112.

²⁸“Che Ka” almanac. “A prison of Russia Extreme Commission”, p. 147.

²⁹A Czech socialist Pšenička, visiting Moscow at the time, stated in his report in Prague, that several dozens of the sentenced to death have been sent to the fronts (“The Latest News” 30 June).

But soon Che Ka would not have to resort to those Jesuit tricks (however I doubt it had to actually resort to them, as everything was carried out in secrecy and unlikely they were necessary, if only seldom)³⁰. As if forgetting about the abolishment of capital punishment “Izvestiya” once announced, that 521 were executed by firing squad between January and May, where the tribunals executed 176, and Moscow Che Ka alone 131.

Capital punishment has been officially restored no later than 24 May due to Russian – Polish war. It has not been abolished ever since. A decree by Trotski of 16 June 1920 is very peculiar in that respect, if compared with Bolshevik rhetoric of 1917:

1. Every rascal, who would advocate a retreat, every deserter refusing to obey an order – will be executed.
2. Every soldier who abandoned a position without order – will be executed.
3. Every one who would drop a rifle or sell any issue item – will be executed.

...But the Russia Congress of the Soviets enacted: “capital punishment, restored in the army by Kerenski is abolished”...³¹ An orgy of executions started in the near-front territory and not only there. A riot of red garrison in Smolensk in September was quelled with extreme cruelty. Some estimated, that 1200 soldiers have been executed, excluding the other categories of the rioters³².

The central papers were silent about the executions of Che Ka³³, but they printed information on the executions by the special military-revolutionary tribunals. And that official data is frightening: between 22 May and 22 June – 600; June – July – 898; July – August – 1183; August – September – 1206. Information was published a month after. 17 October “Izvestiya”, announced 1206 executions for September, including the charges. They were typical from the point of view of justifying “red terror”: for espionage – 3, for treason – 185, refusing a order – 14, rioting – 65, counter-revolution – 59, desertion – 467, looting – 160, possession of weapons and failure to turn in – 23, fights and intoxication – 20, abuse of power – 181. It is often difficult for a mere mortal to figure out Bolshevik justice. For example “Izvestiya”³⁴ published, that between February and September 1920 the revolutionary tribunals of the Armed Guard (the home front troops, essentially an army of Che Ka) executed

³⁰“The Star of Kharkov”, 7 June 1910.

³¹Of course the executions in the fronts of civil war have been carried out all the time prior to Trotski’s order. “The ordinary red army men have been executed like the dogs” – stated Ms. Larissa Raisner, retelling the opinions of the red army men themselves, in her essay on the events in Sviyazhsk in August 1918. (“Proletarian Revolution” No. 18 – 19, 185). 27 communist officials, who escaped Sviyazhsk city during the offensive of the “whites”, have been “exemplary” executed to influence the rest of population.

³²“The Latest News”, 20 October.

³³Though there were such publications from time to time. For example No. 206 of “Izvestiya” published a list of the executed by Moscow Che Ka after 10 trials of white espionage, abuse of food stamps etc. 16 people have been executed, including Dr. Mudrov, princess Shirinsky-Shihmatova, the spouses Dovgiyi etc.

³⁴12 November.

283 people. We have a copy of one such verdict, published in Moscow “Izvestiya” 18 November. The Supreme Military-Revolutionary tribunal of the Armed Guard sentenced to execution by firing squad an engineer Trunov, Manager of administration of Moscow Regional Military Engineering Service S. S. Mihno and Manager of Artillery Supplies of Heavy Special Purpose Artillery N. S. Mihno for abuse of power. “The sentence is final and cannot be appealed in any way”.

One can be lost in this bloody statistics, as blood is not dripping, but flowing in springs, merging into the rivers, whenever life in Soviet Russia is disturbed one way or another. In Summer 1920 20 doctors were executed in Moscow on the charges of aiding draft dodgers. At the same time 500 people have been arrested for allegedly bribing the doctors, and the soviet newspapers, publishing the names of the executed doctors, asserted that the same fate awaited the patients too. An eyewitness imprisoned in Bootyrskaya prison at that time said, that majority “could not believe until the very last moment, that they were going to be executed by firing squad”. Officially there were 120 executed, and many more in fact. There was unrest among the troops stationed in Moscow in the Autumn 1920. The rumors of mass executions in Che Ka reached the Moscow residents; foreign social-revolutionary press ³⁵ published information of 200 – 300 executions. “The Latest News”³⁶ wrote about 900 executions in October; 118 in December. A reporter of “Will of Russia” accounted for 5000 people executed in 1920 (the Autumn of 1920 was the time of investigating the “conspiracies”, associated with Gen. Yudenich offensive). An article “In Moscow” by Y. K-iy, printed in “The Latest News”³⁷, quoted a source, who arrived from Russia, as telling of an absolutely monstrous act – execution of women infected with syphilis, arrested in the street raids for “combating prostitution”. I heard about something similar. I could not verify the persistent rumors, circulating in Moscow about the executions of the succumbed to glanders³⁸. Much of impossible and monstrous was not made up under this regime, unheard of in this world.

6.4 In the North

We know of the “civil war” fighting in the North from the numerous sources. The frightening rumors about the death squads of Che Ka Special Department under Kedrov in Vologda and other locations. The death squads were a new form of the field sessions of the Che Ka Special Department.³⁹ Kedrov, presently committed to a mental institution, became notorious for his extraordinary cruelty. The local newspapers

³⁵“Will of Russia”, 21 November.

³⁶18 February 1921.

³⁷24 June 1920.

³⁸British press wrote about executions of the children succumbed to glanders. “The Latest News”, 1922, No. 656.

³⁹A. P. Axelrod writes in his book “Das wirtschaftliche Ergebnis des Bolschewismus in Russland”, as an eyewitness, about a rail train-based death squad, that shuttled daily between Vologda and Cherepovets. It was composed mainly of the sailors and Latvian riflemen. The “train” stopped at a random station and carried out searches, confiscations, arrests and executions acting on a tip or on their own accord (p. 21).

sometimes published thoroughly sanitized reports of those death expeditions, conveying very limited information about their nature.⁴⁰ Those reports listed hundreds of the arrested, dozens of executed by firing squad in the course of “administrative operations” and “military-revolutionary” head counts. Sometimes information was very muffled: for example, that 1000 officers have been “re-evaluated”, many hostages taken and sent to the capital during Voronezh field session of the Che Ka Special Department under Kedrov.

Kedrov proceeded in a similar fashion in the North – since his departure, quite notorious Eydook, who executed the officers himself, seemed to be a “humane” “person”. Arkhangelsk “Izvestiya” published from time to time the lists of those, whom Kedrov’s death squad sentenced to execution. Here is for example a list of 2 November of 36 people, among whom were peasants, cooperators, and a former member of Parliament, Isupov from Vyborg. We have another list of 34 names of the executed by firing squad for “for the active counter-revolutionary activity during the Chaikov and Miller government”; and finally a third one of 22 executed, including Arkhangelsk mayor Alexandrov, “Northern Morning” editor Leonov, manager of a post office, a booking agent, store clerk and many others. A reporter for “The Latest News”⁴¹ testified, that “there were cases of executing by firing squad of the 12 – 16 year old boys and girls”.

Arkhangelsk is called “the city of dead”. An informed reporter for “Voice of Russia”⁴², who visited the city in April 1920, “soon after the departure of the British troops” writes: “A massacre started after pompous burial of the empty red coffins... The city moaned under the burden of terror all Summer. I do not have the exact figure of the killed, but I know that all 800 officers, to whom Miller’s government suggested they should take a train towards London along Murmansk railway (but escaped by an icebreaker itself) have all but been executed first”. The most numerous executions have been carried out near Kholmogory. A reporter for “Revolutionary Russia” informs: “September was a month of red terror in Kholmogory. More than 2000 have been executed by firing squad. *Mostly the peasants and cossacks from the South.* There are practically no intelligent anymore, there are none left” (No. 7). What does it mean “peasants and cossacks from the South”? It means the people, transported from the South and imprisoned in the concentration camps of the North. Che Ka eagerly sentenced to the concentration camps of Arkhangelsk region: “It meant, that the prisoner was sentenced to a slow death in some horrible detention center”. Further we will learn, what were those camps like. Those who are sent there never return, for they will be executed in a majority of cases. Often it was a method of delayed execution.⁴³

Throughout Don, Kuban, Crimea and in Turkmenia they used the same method. A registration or re-registration was being announced for the former officers or some other categories, who served the “whites”. Not

⁴⁰For example, “Voronezh Izvestiya” No. 170, 12 August 1919.

⁴¹8 November 1920.

⁴²25 March 1922.

⁴³“Che Ka” almanac. “Sketches of Life In Prison”, p. 119 – 120.

expecting anything bad, people express their loyalty and show up, where they are arrested dressed as they are, immediately crowded into the rail cars and sent to Arkhangelsk camps. Wearing nothing but the Summer clothes from Kuban or Crimea, with no blanket, piece of soap, or a change of underwear, dirty, infested with lice, they arrive to the Northern climate of Arkhangelsk with not only slim chance to get underwear and warm clothes, but to notify the families of their location.

The same method was used in St. Petersburg towards the commanders of Baltic Navy. Those were the people, who did not emigrate, did not hide, did not join Yudenich, Kolchak or Denikin. All that time they obviously honestly and loyally served, as they have not been arrested once in all the years of Bolshevik government. Some re-registration was announced 22 August 1921, which was not unusual and practiced not for the first time. Each of them, dressed as they were, appeared at registration point on the way home from work. Over 300 have been arrested. Each of them was asked to wait in a room. They waited in that room for two days, then they were taken outside, surrounded with huge guard, sent on foot to a train station, packed into the cattle cars and transported in various directions, – without telling a word, – to the prisons of Orel, Vologda, Yaroslavl and other cities...

It was impossible to find out location of any officers, sent to the North according to the official publications. The Che Ka operatives frankly said in the private conversations that none of them were alive.

Here is a scene of Kedrov's massacre in the North, recorded by "Will of Russia"⁴⁴: Kedrov gathered 1200 officers from Arkhangelsk, locked them on a barge near Kholmogory and opened machine gun fire – "almost 600 have been killed!" Do you not believe? Does it seem impossible, cynical and senseless? But that was a typical fate for those, sent to the Kholmogory concentration camp.⁴⁵ There simply was no such camp before May 1921. The arriving parties of the inmates have been mass executed by firing squad about 5 miles away from Kholmogory instead. An undercover investigator, who clandestinely traveled in the North for discovering a situation of the inmates, was told by the residents of the nearby villages that 8000 have been killed thus far. And perhaps that calamity was actually humane, for the founded later Kholmogory camp, nicknamed "Camp of Death", meant slow death in the atmosphere of complete humiliation and violence.

Human consciousness refuses to believe in those drownings on board of the barges in XX century, replaying the famous events of French revolution. But not even rumors informed us of those barges. This is the second time we are mentioning them. There is a third publication – somewhat later: the methods remained the same. Vladimir Voytinsky wrote in his article, used as a foreword to a book "The 12 Condemned" (a trial of the SR party in Moscow): "The Bolsheviks sent 600 prisoners from several St.

⁴⁴1920, No. 14.

⁴⁵"They disrobe, kill in the barges and drown in sea" – says "Voice of Russia" reporter, quoted above.

Petersburg prisons to Kronstadt in 1921; the barge has been scuttled at a deep spot between St.Petersburg and Kronstadt: all prisoners drowned, but one, who swam to the Finnish shore...”⁴⁶

6.5 After Denikin

Quite possible that those horrors pale in terms of the victims count before what happened in the South after the end of the civil war. Denikin’s government was crushed. New government rose to power, and a bloody strip of vengeful terror came with it, of revenge alone. It was no longer a civil war – it was eradication of the former enemy. It was an act of intimidation for the future. The Bolsheviks captured Odessa for the third time in 1920. Executions of 100 or more are being carried out daily. The trucks are used to transport the corpses.⁴⁷ “We live like on top of a volcano” – reads a private letter, received by the editors of “The Latest News”⁴⁸ “The raids for the counter-revolutionaries, searches and arrests occur daily. It is enough for anyone to send a tip, that a family member served in Volunteer Army to subject a home to ransacking and all family members to an arrest. Unlike a year later the Bolsheviks dispatch their victims quickly, without publishing the lists of the executed”. L. Leonidov, a “Common Business” Constantinople reporter, well informed about the Odessa events, conveyed stunning information of what transpired those days in Odessa in a series of stories “What is going on in Odessa”⁴⁹, that we will be quoting again further. According to him the executions reached 7000 officially.⁵⁰ They are executing 30 – 40 a night, sometimes 200 – 300. Than they use machine guns, for there are too many victims to do it individually. Than the names are not being published, for they execute entire prison cells. Could that be exaggerated? Possibly, but that is very believable, as all officers, captured at Romanian border after Romania denied them entry and they were late to join Gen. Bredov’s troops, have been executed. There was 1200 of them; they were imprisoned at several concentration camps and all gradually executed. Mass execution of those officers was carried out 5 May. We do not want to believe a printed statement that an oncoming execution was publicized in “Izvestiya”. The church bells tolled for a funeral that night. A number of clerics have been arrested and sentenced to 5 – 10 years of forced labor for that according to the author.

⁴⁶“The 12 Condemned”, p. 25.

⁴⁷“Revolutionary Russia”, No 6.

⁴⁸“The Latest News”, 4 June, No. 38.

⁴⁹“Common Business”, No. 223 and up, 1921.

⁵⁰The residents believed in 10–15 thousand victims – adds the reporter. Of course, those are commoner rumors, but those rumors could not be relied upon in calculating the true figure of the dead. Another “Common Business” reporter R. Slotsov (3 May 1921.) diminished the figure by a lot. Referring to a report by the regional Chair of Che Ka Deutch, presented in a conference of communist youth, he provides a figure of 2000. “The figure is likely understated, – he says, – but if we can only make guesses in the dark, it is close to reality”. We need to establish chronological order of the publications. For example, Deutch was appointed July 1920. One of the Odessa Che Ka reports calculated the figure of executions since February 1920 till February 1921 at 1418.

A massacre of the Galicians, who betrayed the Bolsheviks, occurred around that time. Entire Tiraspol garrison has been executed. All Galicians were ordered expelled from Odessa, but when they arrived to a train terminal with the families, children and luggage, they were shot with machine guns. “Izvestiya” printed a note, that the Galicians, who betrayed proletariat, fell victims of an *angry crowd*.⁵¹

The executions are continuing further – after capture of Crimea. “My correspondents – informs a reporter – all contend, that a list of 119 executed was published no earlier than 24 December”. As usual the rumors are that real figure of the executed that day is more than 300. Those were the executions for taking part in a Polish counter-revolution organization. “Polish conspiracy” was widely considered a sting, staged by the excommers, “loosing their jobs”. The further conspiracies followed: “Wrangel’s” (31 executed for espionage, 60 clerks of Trade and Boat Partnership⁵²).

The Bolsheviks entered Ekaterinodar. The prisons are crowded. They execute majority of the prisoners. A resident of Ekaterinodar contends, that between August 1920 and February 1921 3000 people have been executed at Ekaterinodar prison alone.⁵³

The highest portion of the executions falls onto the month of August, when Wrangel’s assault troops landed in Kuban. Che Ka chair ordered “to execute all in the Che Ka prison cells”. One of the excommers Kosolapov objected, that many have not been questioned and some have been imprisoned by accident for example for the curfew violations. The answer was “segregate those, and dispatch the rest”.

The order was carried out precisely. A survivor resident Rakityanski tells a horrible story. As in preparation to evacuation the Che Ka files have been packed up, and the executions were being carried out without any documentation, Rakityanski managed to survive.

The prisoners were being taken away in dozens. When a first dozen was taken away and we were told that they are going for questioning, we were calm. But when they took the second one we realized that they were executing. They killed us like cattle at a slaughterhouse.

Every one summoned to execution was asked what they were accused of, and as those arrested for curfew violations were been separated from the rest Rakityanski, arrested as an officer, claimed that he was arrested after the curfew and survived. All excommers leaded with the chair were carrying out the executions. Atarbekov was executing at the prison. The executions continued all day, instilling fear in the residents of the surrounding community. In total 2000 have been executed by firing squad that day. Who have been executed and what for remains mystery. Unlikely the excommers themselves realize that, for execution and sadism was so ordinary for them, that they dispensed it without any formalities...

⁵¹Osipov. “At the Fracture”. Essay, 1917 – 1922., p. 67 – 68.

⁵²“The Latest News”, 11 December.

⁵³“Che Ka” almanac. “Kuban Che Ka”, p. 227 – 228.

The executions continued: 30 October – 84. In November – 100, 22 December – 184. 24 January – 210. 5 February – 94. There are supporting documents: Ekaterinodar Che Ka disposed of them before evacuation. The same eyewitness testified: “We found stacks of sentencing documents that clearly read “execute by firing squad” in the outhouses.”. Here is another scene from Ekaterinodar of the time:

17 – 20 August the order was interrupted by the Gen. Wrangel’s assault troops that landed near Primorsko-Aktarskaya town. All prisoners, both in Che Ka and ordinary jails have been shot during a panic retreat on the order of Atarbekov – over 1600 in total. Che Ka and Special Department drove their prisoners to Kuban river in the groups of 100 and shot them with machine guns point blank; the prisons executed inside. That was published under the category “Payback”, however there were fewer names than in reality. The Bolshevik occupants forced the workers to evacuate with them under the threat of executing them by hanging upon return.⁵⁴

Similar events transpired during the evacuation of Ekaterinoslav in the face of threat from Gen. Wrangel’s troops offensive...⁵⁵ As a matter of fact the same scenario always repeats: soviet troops retreat from Vinnitsa and Kamenets-Podolsk – Kharkov “Izvestiya of Ukraine Administrative Committee” publishes the lists of executed hostages – there are 217 names, including the peasants, 13 public school teachers, doctors, engineers, a rabbi, landowners, officers. Who was not included?.. They act similarly during the re-capture. The day after re-capture of Kamenets-Podolsk the Bolsheviks executed 80 Ukrainians; 164 hostages taken and sent to the mainland.⁵⁶

A reporter for the same “Revolutionary Russia”⁵⁷, describes the activities of the new power in Rostov-On-Don in the first months:

They are pillaging openly and ruthlessly... bourgeois, stores and mainly cooperative warehouses. Shot and slashed the officers in the homes and streets... Set a military hospital at the corner of Taganrog Rd. and Temeritskaya St. on fire with the sick and wounded officers inside and burned 40 of them alive. The total count of the dead is unknown, but certainly the figure is substantial. The tighter was the grip of soviet power on Don, the more widespread became its methods. Che Ka, inspired by Peters, began its operations. They ran two truck engines full time in order to muffle the shots... Peters was frequently present during the executions. Executions are carried out a group at a time. One night there were 90 executed. The reds are saying, that Peters’s 8 – 9 year old son is following him everywhere begging to let him shoot somebody...

The revolutionary tribunals and military-revolutionary soviets are working simultaneously with Che Ka and they consider the accused not the “prisoners of war”,

⁵⁴“Revolutionary Russia”, No 4.

⁵⁵Arbatov’s memoirs in “Archive of Russian Revolution”, XII, 119.

⁵⁶“The Latest News”, December 1920.

⁵⁷No. 9.



Figure 6.4: A corpse of a 17–18 year old man, flesh slashed from the side and face mutilated.

but the “provocateurs and bandits” and execute dozens of them (for example, the trial of Colonel Sukharevsky in Rostov; of cossack Snegirev in Ekaterinodar; student Stepanov in Tuapse).

And here is poor Stavropol region again, where the wives are being executed for not informing of an escaped husband, as well as the 15 – 16 year old teenagers and the 60 year old elderly... They execute with machine guns and sometimes slash with the swords. Executions are being carried out every night in Pyatigorsk, Kislovodsk, Essentuki. The lists of the victims are being published under the category “Eye for an Eye” and the total is running over 240 people, but each ends with “to be continued...” Those executions are a revenge for an assassination of the Chair of Pyatigorsk Che Ka Zentsov and military commissar Lapin (killed by the horsemen “while riding in a car”).⁵⁸

6.6 Crimea After Wrangel

That was a few months after elimination of Denikin’s government. Wrangel’s followed Denikin’s. The victim count here is in the tens of thousands. Crimea was nicknamed an “all-Russia graveyard”. We heard of those thousands from those who arrived to

⁵⁸“Revolutionary Russia”, No. 7.

Moscow from Crimea. 50,000 were executed – reports “For the People” (No. 1). Others calculate the total at 100 – 120 and some even at 150 thousands. We do not know which of the numbers is accurate, even if it was much lower than that!⁵⁹ Could that diminish cruelty and horror of terror over the people who were essentially guaranteed “amnesty” by the supreme commander Frunze? The notorious Hungarian communist and journalist Bela Kun worked here. He published the following statement:

Comrade Trotski told us, that he would not visit Crimea as long as the very last counter-revolutionary remains there; Crimea is a bottle that none of the counter-revolutionaries will be able to escape, and as it is late on the path towards revolution, we will move it ahead quickly towards the overall revolutionary level of Russia...

And he “moved it” with the mass executions previously unheard of. Dozens were not just shot, but slashed with the swords. There were cases where executions were carried out in front of the family members.

“The war will go on as long as a single white officer will remain in Crimea” read the wires by Trotski’s assistant at Military-Revolutionary Soviet Sklyansky.

Crimean massacre of 1920 – 1921 even caused a special inspection from RCAC. The commanders of the cities have been questioned and according to “Rudder”⁶⁰ as a justification all of them produced a wire from Bela Kun and his secretary “Townswoman” (Samoilova, awarded an Order of Red Flag in 1921 for “the special achievements”)⁶¹ that ordered them to arrest and execute all registered officers and military personnel.

At first the executions were based on the registration lists. “There was a many thousands long line up for registration” – reports an eyewitness A. V. Osokin, who sent an affidavit to a Lausanne trial⁶². “Each tried to step into the grave first...”

The slaughter continued for months. Machine gun volleys could be heard every night until dawn...

The very first night of executions in Crimea yielded thousands of victims: 1800 in Simpheropol.⁶³, 420 in Theodosia, 1300 in Kertch and so on.

Inconvenience of operating so bloated parties immediately became apparent. Despite confusion some still had enough willpower to escape. Subsequently the smaller parties have been assembled and executed in two shifts a night. In Theodosia it was 60 at a time, 120 a night. The

⁵⁹I. S. Shmelev testified before Lausanne trial that more than 120 thousand men, women, elderly and children have been executed. Referring to the testimony of Dr. Shipin, he stated that official Bolshevik data set the count of executed at 56 thousand people...

⁶⁰3 August 1921. See also “The Latest News”, No. 392.

⁶¹According to “Voice of Russia” 1922, Samoilova has been “abducted” by the “greens” in Gurzuph and killed.

⁶²See also “The Latest News”, 10 August 1921.

⁶³More than 5 1/2 thousand registered military personnel have been executed by machine gun fire in Simpheropol at Crimtayev’s estate (“Common Business”, 10 July 1921.).

residents of the nearest homes moved out: they could not stand the horror of mental torture. It was dangerous too – the wounded crawled up to the houses and begged for help. Some were executed for harboring the survivors.

The corpses have been thrown into the ancient Genoan wells. When they have been filled, the parties of the sentenced were sent out supposedly for work in the mines and forced to dig the mass graves during the day, locked in the barns, disrobed and executed by night fall.

The dead were laid side by side in the graves. Moments later another layer was laid and it continued until the graves were full. The wounded were finished off in the morning by crushing the skulls with rocks.

So many were buried alive!..

“Landings at Kuban” have been staged in Kertch: the sentenced were taken out to the sea and drowned.

The weeping wives and mothers were dispersed with the whips and sometimes executed. The corpses of the executed mothers holding the babies could be seen behind the Jewish cemetery in Simpheropol.

The sick and wounded have been carried out of the hospital in Yalta and Sevastopol and executed. And not only the officers – the soldiers, doctors, sisters of charity, teachers, engineers, clergy, peasants etc.

When the initial mass off the condemned were used up, reinforcement arrived from the country side, although usually those were dispatched on the spot. The raids were carried out in the cities. For example 12,000 people have been detained in Simpheropol.

When the rush was over, they started using the questionnaires. People had to write them dozens a month, not just the office workers, but everyone above 16 years old. Some questionnaires included 40 – 50 questions. Every year of one’s life had to be disclosed in detail. Attention was paid to the background (formerly social status), wealth not only of the questioned, but their father, uncles and aunts. Attitude towards red terror, allies, Poland, peace with Poland, support of Wrangel, why did not evacuate with the army – everything required an answer.

Everyone had to commit to returning to Che Ka in two weeks for another questioning by the investigators who tried to confuse with sudden nonsense questions and those who passed the temptations received a certified copy of the questionnaire.

Each had to acknowledge capital punishment for accuracy of the data.

Others were sent to the concentration camps of the North, where many found their grave. Those who tried to escape brought revenge onto the remaining. For example 38 were executed for an escape of six officers from a camp at station Vladislavlevo.⁶⁴

Entire population of Kertch has been subjected to registration. The city was surrounded with patrols. Che Ka ordered the residents to stockpile food for three

⁶⁴“The Latest News”, No. 221.

days and imposed an all-day curfew under the threat of execution. Based on the questionnaires the residents were divided into three categories, and according to Kertch “Izvestiya” there were 860 of “active combatants” subject to execution by firing squad. But the residents contended that the figure was twice understated.⁶⁵ The most massive executions occurred in Sevastopol and Balaclava, where according to the eyewitnesses Che Ka executed up to 29,000 people.⁶⁶ Among the others 500 of dockers have been executed in Sevastopol for assisting in boarding the ships by Gen. Wrangel troops.⁶⁷ The first list of 1634 executed was finally published 28 November in “Izvestiya of the Transition Sevastopol Revolutionary Commission”, including 278 women; the second list of 1202 was published 30 November, including 88 women.⁶⁸ It is considered that Bolsheviks executed more than 8000 people in the first week in Sevastopol.⁶⁹

The executions in Sevastopol used not only firing squads, but hanging of hundreds too. Those who managed to escape Crimea, such as the uninvolved foreigners etc. reported frightening cruelty on the pages of “The Latest News”, “Common Business” and “Rudder”. Even though the eyewitness accounts are subjective, they cannot be discounted. “The corpses are hanging along entire Nahimov boulevard – say the “Rudder” reporters⁷⁰ – “of the officers, soldiers and civilians, arrested in the streets and immediately executed without trial. The city deserted, residents are hiding in the cellars and attics. All fences, walls, poles, store windows are covered with the posters “death to the traitors” – writes someone to “Common Business”.⁷¹ “The officers were hanged – adds another eyewitness⁷² – always in uniform with the shoulder loops. The civilians mostly hung half-naked”. Street hanging was used for “teaching a lesson”. “All poles, trees and even monuments were used... Historical Blvd. was decorated with the corpses, swinging in the wind. The same was fate of Nahimov boulevard, Ekaterininskaya and Greater Sea St. and Primorsky Blvd. The commander Bemer (German lieutenant during their occupation of Crimea) issued an order, prohibiting the civilians from complaining about actions of the soviet administration, “as it aided the white army”. That was truly “wild terror”. The sick and wounded from the hospitals have been executed (for example 272 at the public sanatorium in Alupka), doctors and the Red Cross workers, sisters of charity (the fact of execution of 17 sisters of charity together was established), municipal officials, journalists etc. A people’s socialist A. P. Lourie has been executed just for being an editor of “Southern Messages” as well as Plekhanov’s secretary Lyubimov. And so many of those, who were not even close to the active combatants!

Rightly, those obituaries should be concluded with Ivan The Grave’s words: “and many numerous, whose names you, The Lord, knoweth”... “The victim counts – testi-

⁶⁵“Common Business”, 13 January 1921.

⁶⁶“Common Business”, 9 November 1921.

⁶⁷“Common Business”, No. 148; “The Latest News”, 16 August 1921.

⁶⁸Quoting “Common Business” 11 December; same information was published in other sources too.

⁶⁹“The Latest News”, No. 198.

⁷⁰11 December.

⁷¹8 December.

⁷²“Common Business”, 24 December 1920.

fies a social-revolutionary reporter to “Will of Russia”⁷³ – reached several thousands in any single night”...

6.7 1921

Terror in Crimea continues.

“By July 1921 there were more than 500 hostages in the prisons of Crimea for connections with the “greens”, – testified at Conradi trial A. V. Osokin. Many were executed, including 12 – 13 women (3 in Eupatoria in April; 5 in Simpheropol on the night of 25 March (by Julian calendar); 1 in Karasubazar and 3 or 4 in Sevastopol in April), whose main fault was that they had family members in the hills or gave food to those going into the bush, often without knowing that they were dealing with the rebels.

Finally an ultimatum has been given to the entire villages: “if those who went to the hills would not return, you would be burned”. (The villages of Demerji, Shumy, Korbeck, Sably etc.). But it was not carried out, as the “greens” announced in response that if the threat was carried out, they would massacre the communists and their families, not only in the villages, but in the towns of Alushta, Simeiz and Sudak.

Systemic hostage-taking delivered its bloody results in the Winter of 1921 – 22 in the Northern districts of Tavria and Ekaterinoslav during so-called “disarming of the country”. A quota for surrendering weapons was imposed on the villages (for example Troitskoye, Bogdanovka, Melitopol) per day. The figure greatly exceeded possession. 10 – 15 hostages were taken. Of course the villages could not surrender enough and the hostages were executed.

A safe house of the “greens” was discovered in Feodosia – 3 school boys 4 and school girls aged 15 – 16 have been executed. There were 22 executed after another trial of the “greens” (university instructor Pushkarev, Bozhenko and others) in Simpheropol.

The more and more new “conspiracies” are being discovered with or without a connection with the “greens”, each with a bloody outcome, according to “Crimean Russia Wire Agency”. Terror broadly includes Tatar population, for example several Tatar Muslims were executed in August for “organizing a counter-revolutionary meeting at a mosque”.⁷⁴

Two squads of the “greens” with their Tatar leader Malambootov who trusted the “amnesty” returned from the hills in September. Their fate was typical according to a diary, published in “The Latest News”:

The excommers issued an appeal to the “greens” hiding in the hills, supposedly signed by Malambootov, that spoke of peace-loving character

⁷³21 August 1921.

⁷⁴“Common Business”, 23 August.

of everyone and that “our common enemy, comrade green army fighters, was capital” and so on so forth. The captured Malambootov was forced to go to the hills with his staff, guarded by a large number of the excommers and divulge the hideouts of the “greens”. The peasants of the nearby villages inform that intense gun fire is heard from the hills – the reds are dispatching the remaining greens, betrayed by poor Malambootov. Malambootov and his associates were cowardly executed by firing suqad today on the charges of espionage. The disgusting posters, pasted around town under the title “What Soviet Government Avenges For” (with 64 names) said just that: for espionage. The frightened residents pass rumors, that the excommers did not manage to capture all greens returned with Malambootov, many of them figured out a pending provocation and fought their way into the hills (they kept their weapons under the terms of surrender)...

Avenging the execution of Malambootov – adds the diarist – the greens take their revenge on the reds with animal cruelty. They subject the captured communists to medieval torture.

The so-called “green” rebels are fighting throughout South and red terror is applied everywhere. A riot is quelled in Ekaterinodar 27 – 28 September, and local “Izvestiya” prints a list of 104 executed, including a bishop, cleric, professor, officer and cossack. The rebels under Gen. Przhevalski operate near Novorossiysk – Black Sea Navy Che Ka executes hundreds of the captured rebels and hostages. Executions occur every day. “12 white army organizations” crushed in Kharkov military district, Gen. Ukhtomski’s and colonel Nazarov’s “conspiracy” in Rostov and many others. Pyatigorsk regional Che Ka discovers a conspiracy in late March – 50 leaders of that group are executed⁷⁵. Tersky district Che Ka executes 62 in Anapa under a certain provocation case. Their only fault was an attempt to escape the horrors of soviet reality to Batumi⁷⁶.

What transpired in the territory of The Don Army, in Kuban region, is evident from for instance the address to the residents of Kuban and Black Sea shore by a Special Appointee of Russia Che Ka to North Caucasus K. Lander in October 1920⁷⁷.

...

1. The towns and villages harboring the whites and greens will be destroyed, entire adult population executed by firing squad, property confiscated.
2. Everybody aiding the bandits will be immediately executed.
3. Majority of the greens hiding in the hills have families in the villages. All of them have been registered and all adult family members of

⁷⁵“The Truth”, No. 81.

⁷⁶“The Latest News”, 14 October.

⁷⁷N. Voronovich, “The Green Book”. History of Peasant Uprising in Black Sea Region. 1921.

the combatants will be executed in case of any bandit assault, the children will be exiled to the mainland.

4. In case of massive uprising of the villages, towns and cities we will be forced to apply mass terror: hundreds of residents will pay with their lives for each soviet official killed...

“Vengeful hand of soviet government will ruthlessly eradicate all of its enemies” – concluded the address.

The rebels are being quelled in Ukraine. There is no quiet period here: no difference between 1920 and 1921. Those rebels are diverse and sometimes it is difficult to understand, whether they belong to Makhno, or Ukrainian nationalists, or have a connection with the whites or greens, or it is a purely peasant uprising caused by exorbitant food confiscations etc, where it has nothing to do with the whites’ conspiracies⁷⁸. But there is no distinction in the consequences of crushing the rebels. An order No. 69 for Kiev region, apparently in 1920, prescribed application of mass terror against the affluent peasants up to their “complete eradication”; it ordered execution of everyone, who was found hiding even a single round of ammunition after the deadline for surrendering weapons. Active resistance escalates terror into a bloody slaughter as usual. There are 2000 victims in Proskurov. A warlord Tyutyunick rises near Kiev – dozens are being executed in Kiev every day. Here is a copy of the 21 November 1921 meeting minutes by a special 5-member commission created to try the crushed and captured Tyutyunick’s band.⁷⁹ It states, that over 400 people were killed in combat and 537 were captured. “While fighting was still going on some of the top officers committed suicides realizing that situation was hopeless”. “Tyutyunick’s conduct was disgusting and shameful for a leader – he escaped with the close associates early in the fight”. Che Ka tried 443 – the rest did not live till the trial. Of them 360 convicted to immediate execution as “malicious and persistent bandits”; the rest require additional interrogation by investigation... When we read an article in St. Petersburg “The Truth”, that a conspiracy of “Ukraine Rebel Committee” is discovered and 180 officers of Petlyura and Tyutyunick armies are arrested, we can guarantee that it means execution by firing squad.

A professor of Kiev technical college Koval informs of escalation of terror in connection with discovery of “another conspiracy” in Kiev. Every night 10 – 15 people are being executed. “Education Museum – reads the interview⁸⁰ – organized an exhibition of the local Administrative Committee, that presented the charts of Che Ka executions among other exhibits. The lowest figure of executions by firing squad is 432 a month”.

⁷⁸Interesting summary of the rebel activities in Ukraine in the first three months of 1921 in the Kiev, Cernihiv, Volynsk, Podolsk, Kherson, Poltava, Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav regions was provided in a document, assembled from the confidential data of the “Special Staff for combating rebel movement in Ukraine SSR” and the operational notes of “USSR Red Army”. It was published in “Revolutionary Russia” No. 11.

⁷⁹“The Latest News”, No. 572.

⁸⁰“The Latest News”, 18 September.



Figure 6.5: Corpses of the hostages, found in the basement of Tyulpanov's house, occupied by Kherson Che Ka.

There is no end to the conspiracies of “Petlyura’s” organizations: 28 September 63 were executed by firing squad in Odessa preceded by colonel Evtikhiyev⁸¹; 14 in Tiraspol⁸²; than 66 more⁸³; 39 in Kiev (mostly the intelligent people ⁸⁴; 215 of “Ukrainian hostages” in Kharkov in revenge for the killing of soviet officials by the rebels⁸⁵ etc. Zhitomir “Izvestiya” published a list of 29 executed for conspiracy, while it is highly unlikely that those cooperators, teachers and agronomists had anything to do with Petlyura.

Here are the publications from the Bolshevik newspapers: 5 counter-revolutionary organizations discovered in Podolsk regions. 16 executed in Chernihiv etc. That “etc” – is not an abbreviation, it is a sad reality, for the messages keep piling up.

Belorussia follows Ukraine in its tracks. The year of 1921 is ripe with the publications about rebel movements and activities of retaliatory squads, that execute the real and imaginary rebels with and without trial and verdict. “A few dozen people are being executed daily – writes “Common Business”:⁸⁶ “Especially many Belorussian

⁸¹“Izvestiya”, No. 217.

⁸²“Common Business”, 22 September, 7 October.

⁸³“The Latest News”, 21 December.

⁸⁴“Rudder”, 30 September.

⁸⁵“Frankfurter Zeitung” reprinted from Kharkov “Izvestiya”, “Rudder”, 7 December 1921

⁸⁶19 April 1921.

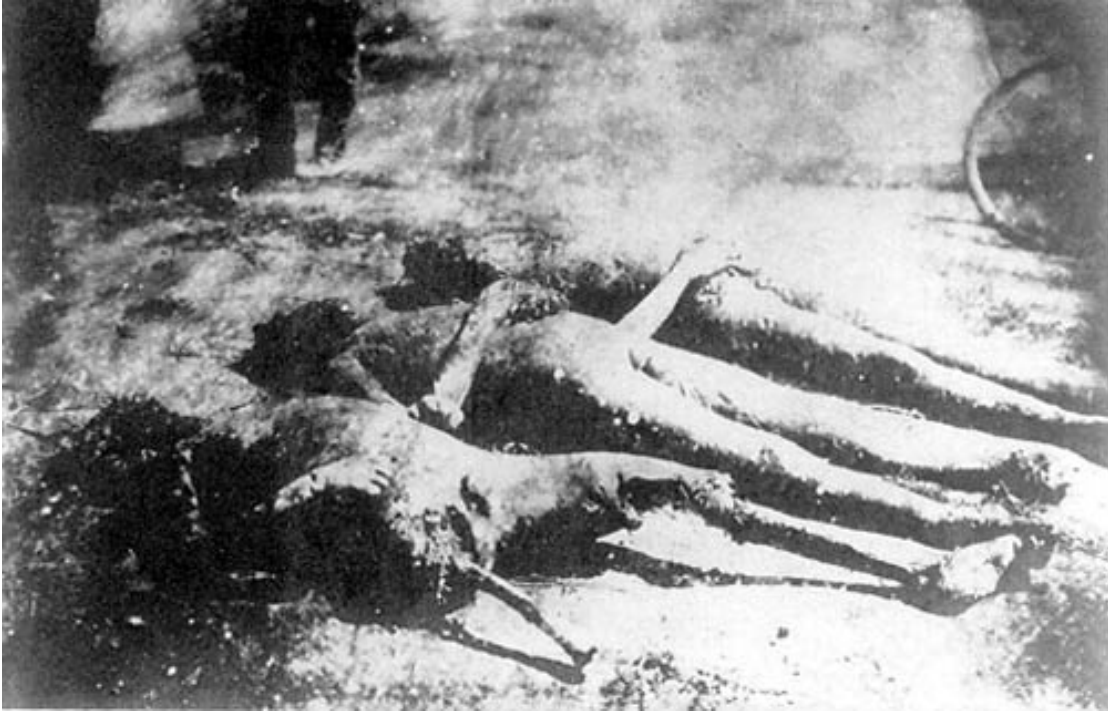


Figure 6.6: Corpses of the victims of red terror at a railroad station in Kherson region. The heads and limbs mutilated.

activists were executed”. “A trial of Savinkov’s followers completed in Minsk... 7 were sentenced to capital punishment”.⁸⁷ In the month of September 45 were executed – adds Riga “Daily Mail” reporter.

Local Che Ka, as well as Podolsk and Volynsk, have a special mandate – to “cleanse” the regions of those, who sympathized Poland during occupation of the territories by its troops. It is carried out by mass arrests, expulsions to the mainland, executions by firing squad – that is the method of cleansing.⁸⁸

The executions of the left socialist-revolutionaries and anarchists are closely connected with the rebel movements. “A Group of Russian Anarchists in Germany”, as we know, published in Berlin a whole brochure on persecution of the anarchists in Russia.

We have to specify – wrote the authors in a preface – that factual material of the brochure represents only a small fraction of collected information. Our “mourning list” of the anarchists – victims of communist government – is far from complete. Thus far we assembled only what we immediately witnessed and what we new personally. But that is just a tiny corner of communist persecution of anarchy and anarchists. The regions, occupying 90% of Russian territory, – Caucasus, Volga valley, Ural, Siberia and others – were not included in the summary. We could

⁸⁷“The Latest News”, 30 August.

⁸⁸“Common Business”, 16 February 1921.

not completely reproduce what happened in central Russia too. Take for instance this fact: Makhno embassy, acting on a political section of the agreement with soviet government in the days when agreement was in force in the Autumn of 1920, officially determined the total count of exiled to Siberia and other remote areas of Russia and subject to repatriation at over 200,000 people (mainly peasants). We do not know how many more were imprisoned locally and executed.

– Soviet press announced in the Summer of 1921 that an organization of 30 – 40 anarchists was discovered and “eradicated” (executed by firing squad) near Zhmerinka. We could not establish the names of the fallen comrades from that organization, but we know that our best youth was in that region.

– In the same Summer of 1921 a large group of anarchists was partially executed, others imprisoned in Odessa, where they advocated for anarchy in the soviet institutions, including the Soviet and even communist party, that was qualified as “treason”.

– We just provided a few of the random recent examples. Listing an entire chain of dispersing, arresting, exiling and execution of the anarchists in the vast territory of Russia in all these years would comprise several huge volumes.

– It is worth noticing, that even the Tolstoy followers were ruthlessly persecuted by soviet government – that most peaceful branch of anarchy. Hundreds of them languish in prisons to this day. Their communes were dispersed – often by armed force (for example in Smolensk region). By accurate data, 92 of Tolstoy followers were executed in 1921 (mainly for objecting draft).

– We could continue these examples to no end, to demonstrate, that this work is a drop in sea compared to the material that some day will be discovered by a laborious historian.

Characterization of Russian anarchist movement, especially its peculiar effects in reality that sometimes motivated the late P. A. Kropotkin to distance himself from them, is out of scope of this book... The Bolsheviks, while manipulating the anarchists where it was convenient, ruthlessly dispatched those anti-government forces, where they considered soviet government strong. Persecution was carried out under non-political guise. Without doubt many victims of the so-called “bandit” executions were those, who had nothing to do with armed robberies. The quoted brochure of the anarchists lists the typical secret wires of central government to Kharkov addressed to the Chair of Ukraine Soviet of People’s Commissar Rakovski⁸⁹, that preceded dispersement of anarchist organizations in Ukraine:

1. Register all anarchists in Ukraine, especially within territory controlled by Makhno.

⁸⁹“Persecution of Anarchism in Soviet Russia”, pp. 23 – 24.

2. Carry out surveillance of all anarchists and assemble the dossier, preferably of criminal nature, that can be used to prosecute. Keep dossier and the order secret. Issue the related orders to all local detachments...
3. Arrest all anarchists and lay charges.

“Common Business”⁹⁰ with reference to Kharkov “Izvestiya” informs, that more than 5000 hostages have been executed by firing squad under “red terror” in November 1921 in Kiev, Odessa, Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov and other cities. Should we cast doubt on the figure after reading the facts, quoted above?..

Siberia follows Crimea⁹¹. Georgia follows Siberia. And the same pattern repeats. Thousands of arrests⁹² and hundreds of executions carried out by Trans-Caucasus Che Ka. A refugee from Batumi to Constantinople said in an interview to a “Rudder” reporter⁹³ regarding the first days after Bolshevik occupation of Tiflis⁹⁴ The city was “raised and pillaged” in the following day:

Our correspondent saw a huge hecatomb of 300 corpses, piled near the Monastery Square. All surrounding walls have been splattered with blood, as execution has been obviously carried out right there. There were men, women, elderly and children; civilians and officers; Georgians and Russians; workers and nobility there.

The main actors here are the notorious Peters, tyrant of North Caucasus Atarbekov and no less notorious sailor Punkratov – one of the tyrants of Astrakhan, transferred to Baku, where he destroyed “many hundreds of Baku workers and intelligent people” at Nargen island...

What about central Russia, where civil war was over long time ago, where its immediate effects could not reach? Same thing here in 1921. The hundreds are still being executed by firing squad. The executions are being used not so to punish the real and imaginary conspiracies, not so for the small riots against tyrannical government – they are a method of belated revenge for the hostile actions. Take for example a trial of the pharmacists in Pskov revolutionary tribunal on the charges of selling alcohol, that ended in cruel execution of 8 people⁹⁵, or October trial of Moscow government guard, that lead to an execution of 10 to 12 people; even the large groups of the accused in Moscow in the trials for the abuses at the Ministry of Finance and Health Ministry, are being sentenced to capital punishment. Vishnyak in his book “Black Year” provides telltale data of executions by the tribunals for June only: in Moscow – 748, St. Petersburg – 216, Kharkov – 418, Ekaterinodar – 315 etc.⁹⁶

⁹⁰2 December 1921.

⁹¹I have little data from Siberia, therefore leaving it alone for now.

⁹²Ramishvili stated more than 5000 in an interview to the editor of “Le peuple” in December 1921.

⁹³“Rudder”, 14 April 1921.

⁹⁴Tbilisi. *Trans.*

⁹⁵“Common Business”, 2 March

⁹⁶Vishnyak, “Black Year”, preface.

“The Latest News”⁹⁷ published data of Russia Che Ka activity for the first three months of the new year. They said that data was borrowed from an official report: 4300 executed; 114 riots quelled – it is regarding the 12 central regions. Mass executions by firing squad occurred in Yaroslavl, Saratov, Samara, Kazan and Kursk. 347 executions in Moscow alone in January. “Voice of Russia” quoted data by statistical department of Transport Commissariat, 1759 (!) passengers and employees have been executed under the orders of the railway tribunals in 1921.

There were extremely troubling executions, for example execution by firing squad of 27 school students in Orel – essentially the executed were 5 children.⁹⁸ After disbanding Russia Committee for Aiding the Starving in Odessa 12 people were executed for, according to Odessa “Izvestiya” a connection to that organization.⁹⁹

6 people escaped a concentration camp in Ekaterinburg. Uranov, a head of department of forced labor, arrives, lines up the imprisoned officers and “selects” 25 for an execution by firing squad – as a lesson for the rest.¹⁰⁰

61 people were executed in St. Petersburg in the fall in connection with Tagantsev’s conspiracy¹⁰¹. During a revolt of the sailors in Kronstadt, that frightened the Bolsheviks, thousands have been executed: according to “Frankfurter Zeitung” 2500 have been killed between 28 February and 6 March among the troops of St. Petersburg garrison alone. According to the sailors, who escaped from Kronstadt to Finland, the executions are being carried out on ice in front of the fort. 1400 were executed in Oranienbaum.¹⁰² There is information about execution of 6 clerics for a part in that revolt.

“SR-Menshevik conspiracy” in Saratov in March, or rather a “riot” against confiscation of grain caused mass arrests and executions by firing squad. Official publication said 27 executions, in reality... We have no idea. But we know, that the “hostages” are being executed in the prisons *in anticipation of a rebellion* – the teachers, engineers, officers, monarchy officials etc..¹⁰³ In connection with this “conspiracy” or another 58 Left SR have been executed in Saratov for “banditism”, or by the terms of reality for taking part in a riot¹⁰⁴.

A revolt of railway workers in Ekaterinoslav lead to 51 victims, perhaps more. Z. Y. Arbatof testified in his memoirs “Ekaterinoslav 1917 – 1922”.¹⁰⁵, that the figure of executed workers reached 200. 50 of them have been sentenced to an immediate execution. “The night of June 2nd the convicted were driven to a high shore of Dnepr in two trucks and lined up in front of a machine gun. The dead fell into the river as if cut with a scythe... Flow carried the corpses away... Some corpses remained on the

⁹⁷5 May, No. 320.

⁹⁸There were such executions previously. For example, man boy scouts were executed in Moscow in 1919, the lawn tennis players were executed in 1920 for espionage etc.

⁹⁹Re-printed in “Rudder” and “Common Business”, 22 September. With reference to soviet press.

¹⁰⁰“Revolutionary Russia”, No. 12/13.

¹⁰¹There were further executions of two less numerous groups.

¹⁰²“The Latest News”, No. 281.

¹⁰³“Revolutionary Russia”, No. 11.

¹⁰⁴“The Latest News”, 13 May.

¹⁰⁵“Russian Revolution Archive”, XII, 132. Information of those executions have been published in all immigrant papers.

shore. The Ukraine Che Ka in Kharkov demanded to take over the execution of the rest of workers... According to the Bolsheviks so was quelled “little Kronstadt”.

A “conspiracy” in Biysk lead to 300 arrests and 18 executions; another in Semirechensk district – to 48 executions among the “officers” and “kulacks”; in Elisavetgrad (December) 55 executed out of 85 arrested and so on, so forth.

The cossacks, who escaped, are returning to the motherland. Not amnesty, but revenge awaits them. A cossack Chuvillo, who again escaped from Yeysk, told the Russian foreign papers, that out of 3500 people party 894 have been executed by firing squad.¹⁰⁶ And again I am prepared to agree, that this random message could be exaggerated. But the very fact of numerous executions of both legally and illegally returned officers and soldiers is indisputable – such executions registered this year too. A reporter of Russian National Committee¹⁰⁷ collected many such facts in an essay titled “Repatriation”. They contend that by information from various sources, including the soviet newspapers in Odessa, up to 30% of those who arrived from Constantinople to Novorossiysk in April 1921 aboard the stem ship “Reshid-Pasha” have been executed. There were 2500 repatriated aboard the ship. The first sailing in February brought 1500 people. “As a general rule – stated the author – all officers and military officials have been immediately executed in Novorossiysk”. About 500 from that party have been executed. The rest were sent to the concentration camps, many of them to the North, i.e. to the almost certain death. Surviving immediate dispatching is not a guarantee of safety. We find confirmation in the letters even from November and December 1923 published in “The Cossacks Thoughts” (No. 10). Every one arriving to Novorossiysk might hear a code phrase: “hired for service in *Mogilev region*”¹⁰⁸. Needless to say about the exile of the so-called repatriated. Only naiveté of a foreigner, too believing in justice, could explain firm position of Dr. Nansen, who stated in a report on 21 April 1923¹⁰⁹ regarding repatriation of the cossacks from the Balkans, that “soviet government faithfully fulfilled the responsibilities it has taken”. There were two responsibilities among those: soviet government undertakes to extend amnesty of 3 and 10 November 1921 to all Russian refugees, repatriated under the mediatorship of Supreme Commissariat¹¹⁰, and soviet government undertakes to provide John Gorvin and other official representatives of Dr. Nansen freedom (?) of communication within Russian territory with the repatriated for the purpose of verification, that the said amnesty is being applied to all those refugees without limitation of any kind. “Although, – notes Dr. Nansen in his report – according to an information there was a case (?) of arrest of two repatriated on insignificant charges, but my delegates are in conversations with soviet government regarding the fate of the arrestees”. One has to have a lot of faith in a written “document” and no understanding whatsoever of Russian reality, to state that in public. In what manner could the private individuals, representing a Supreme Commissar of League of Nations

¹⁰⁶“Today”, 28 April 1921.

¹⁰⁷“Messenger”, No. 1. March 1923, pp. 28–29.

¹⁰⁸Russian name Mogilev has a root “mogil” that is Russian for “grave”. *Trans.*

¹⁰⁹“The Latest News”, No. 928.

¹¹⁰Of Human Rights. *Trans.*

for the Russian Refugee Affairs control the actions of soviet government? They would likely have to establish a state within a state or at the very least organize their own secret service. One cannot discount the following tactics of the Bolsheviki: revenge can be belated by a long span. People disappear “without trace”, are being sent to exile, become imprisoned for a long term long after receiving official guarantees. Need a proof? Virtually every page of this book has one. The most typical trial was conducted recently in Moscow military tribunal.¹¹¹ The accused was an officer Chugunov, who deserted from Red Army in 1919, voluntarily repatriated in 1923 and “wholeheartedly repented”. The accused returned from Poland to Russia with a permission of Russia-Ukraine Embassy for Repatriation. His citizenship was restored after an application to RCAC. 18 May he was arrested and charged. Considering his “wholehearted repentance”, “voluntary repatriation”, “class background” (a son of peasant), Chugunov was sentenced to 10 years in highest security prison.

6.8 1922 – 1923

There were statements made, mostly by the foreigners, who recently visited Russia and were only vaguely familiar with life in the country (for example Errio), that terror in Russia is supposedly a thing of the past. Those statements have little connection with reality. If it is often absolutely impossible to verify some information while living in Russia, than it is much more difficult for me now. Suppose that all figures, published in the foreign press, are vastly exaggerated. For example, all newspapers printed information supposedly from a report by commissar of internal affairs, that 2372 people were executed in May 1922. That information can bring only insane desperation – there is simply no political activity in Russia – it is a field, covered with only dead bones: there is neither protest nor indignation. Everything is exhausted, humiliated and suppressed. And I was eager to believe, that the figure was mistaken one way or another. Let us consider the other figures, finding their way into free foreign press, exaggerated too: for example in January and February, according to the Supreme Political Authority, i.e. former Russia Che Ka, 262 executed in Moscow; 348 in April, 164 in the night of 7 May (including 17 clerics), 187 in May in Kharkov, 209 in the cities of Kharkov region. 200 have been executed by St. Petersburg revolutionary tribunal for the murders and robberies.

Let it all be exaggerated. And still it was high hypocrisy on the part of Stalin when in an August address at the meeting of Moscow communist party he threatened to reintroduce terror. According to a “Voice of Russia” reporter, Stalin stated in justification of mass arrests of the intelligent:

Our enemies may finally force us to use red terror again and respond to their activity with the measures, practiced in 1918 – 1919. Let them remember, that we deliver on our promises. And they should know how we carry out our warnings from the experience of the past years. And all aligned with our political adversaries must warn their most brazen friends,

¹¹¹“Izvestiya”, 15 February 1924.

who crossed the line of the permitted and openly objected against the government measures. Otherwise they would force us to grab the weapon that we set aside in the mean time and did not want to resort to. But we will use it immediately if all our warnings will not be heeded. We will respond to a covert attack with an open cruel strike on all our adversaries, whether active or passive.

There was no need to threaten, for all still remembered the recent executions of the clergy after the trials for the protests against confiscation of church assets. It is hard to imagine the more disturbing sentences, than those, as the protests were very minor. St. Petersburg handed 11 death sentences 5 July in a trial of 86 members of St. Petersburg church communities: among the executed were St. Petersburg metropolitan Veniamin and 4 others; May trial of 54 clerics in Moscow ended with 12 death sentences. And how many of those executions occurred in the province? From one to four clerics were executed in Chernihiv, Poltava, Smolensk, Arkhangelsk, Staraya Russa, Novocherkassk, Vitebsk – for mere advocacy against confiscation of the sacred items.

The executions for the instances of already non-existing active political “counter-revolution” are continuing along with the executions for religious “counter-revolution”. We can read very typical letter in “The Latest News”¹¹² about “quelling” of the recent “riots” in Ukraine. “Quelling the riots – writes a correspondent – was in reality used for eradication of the remaining intelligent”.

The following quote from a letter of a person, who escaped from Proskurov city in late January gives an idea of the size of terror:

Incredible terror of the latest months forced many to make themselves scarce ahead of time. The arrests of remaining intelligent are continuing.

Koritsky, Chuykov, Voloschuk brothers (the elder – agronomist – hung himself before execution, and Voloschuk’s wife is under arrest in Che Ka), Dobroshinski, Kulchitski, Andrusovich, a young man Clemens, Shildovski, Lyahovetski, Radunski, Gridun and many more, 200 in total, accused under the same “conspiracy” case were executed. 23 of them were executed 18 January. The same day 9 of the arrested escaped after breaking down the cell door.

I escaped when they came to arrest me early during the 4th wave of arrests... Those who vanished from Proskurov horizon should praise the God for that they did not witness the heart wrenching scenes of wives, mothers and children in front of Che Ka the day of execution.

Those whose names were listed above were not politically active, for the most part they objected Ukrainian nationalism and fell innocent victims to the charges, fabricated by Che Ka. The Proskurov “conspiracies” were cooked by the general rules of excommen “art”.

The horrible news of rampaging terror arrive from the other locations in Ukraine.

¹¹²22 February.

Read at least the stacks of “Voice of Russia” and “The Latest News”¹¹³ for 1922, at least the references to the official Bolshevik papers, and you will come across the executions of the so-called “Savinkov’s followers” (for example 12 people in Kharkov), “Petlyura followers” (for example 25 people 4 September in Odessa, 55 in Nickolayev, some in Minsk, after the trial of 34, 8 in Gomel), North Caucasus rebels 10 people, 10 (5 by another account) in Pavlodar (Semipalatinsk district), 12 and 42 (for the Antonov’s fliers) in Simbirsk region; 68 greens in Maykop (including women and teenagers), executed “for intimidation of the bandits, becoming brazen with coming of Spring”. 13 members of “Berdyansk counter-revolutionary organization” in Melitopol, 13 army cadets in Kharkov. We can attach a noisy trial of the Don Army staff officers, that ended in execution of two communists in Summer; a trial of “Nobel followers”; a number of trials of the repatriates; execution of socialist-revolutionary Shishkin by Moscow revolutionary tribunal for refusing to testify before the court, “that he does not recognize for being an organ of Bolshevik terror”; execution of colonel Perhurov in Yaroslavl (one of the leaders of Savinkov rebellion in 1918); 13 in Krasnoyarsk; a trial of Karelia rebels; 148 “cossacks” for a riot in Kiev; Odessa “sailor conspiracy”, that arrested up to 260 people; executions in connection with a strike in Odessa¹¹⁴. It is unlikely we can consider exaggeration an article in “Voice of Russia” titled “Bacchanalia of Executions”, that listed an array of such executions. Their reporter wrote from Riga 5 August:

State Political Administration and the revolutionary tribunals demonstrated exceptional energy, expressing itself in numerous arrests and death sentences. St. Petersburg revolutionary tribunal handed down 10 death sentences to the accused in the trial of Estonian control commission. Saratov tribunal sentenced two members of SR party to execution on the charges of organizing a peasant revolt in Volsk district. SR Shamov was executed 29 July in Voronezh by a verdict of the local tribunal. A death sentence was carried out for 18 officers, captured in North Caucasus, Trans-Caucasus and on Don. Those officers were imprisoned in the concentration camps since late 1920 and early 1921. Among the executed by firing squad 70 year old Gen. Muraviev, colonel Gandurin and others.

The trials, that had no political lining, at least not on the outside, should be mentioned here too: 3 engineers in Kiev, 40 people¹¹⁵ for pilfering aid to the starving in Saratov, 6 railroad workers for theft in Novocherkassk. The cities of Tsaritsyn, Vladimir, St. Petesburg, Moscow and many more should be marked as the places, where the death sentences have been handed down. Perhaps, people were not always executed by firing squad. That is without doubt, as is the fact that foreign press received only a small fraction of such publications. They are not even published in the official Bolshevik press. “The Latest News” once published a brief note: “the

¹¹³Example: No.No. 700 – 800 of “The Latest News” information about the executions in No. 703, 709, 721, 729 – 732, 740 – 742, 746, 753, 773, 780, 796.

¹¹⁴“The Latest News”, No. 729.

¹¹⁵No doubt starving themselves. *Trans.*

executions of the corrupt officials escalated”. And I recall as in the last days before my emigration from Russia (in early October 1922) a special “week against bribes” was announced. The entire Brest rail terminal was pasted with the posters to that effect. As usual combating the bribes was pompous: many hundreds if not thousands of the rail road officials alone were arrested...

Z. Y. Arbatov, who escaped through Minsk at that time, wrote in his expressive memoirs¹¹⁶, about Minsk:

A list of the names was nailed to the wall of a store, ending with the bold letters “whom Che Ka terrorizes”. Without stopping I captured a figure “46”... My friend pulled me ahead and, looking over his shoulder quickly said: “These are not news here... There is a new list every day... But if they will see you reading the list, Che Ka can arrest you... They say, that if you are not connected to the enemies of soviet government, than you do not need to read those lists... A few dozens are being executed daily by firing squad!”

6.9 1923

Here is data from a report by Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal: 40 people executed in January – May, the tribunals alone executed 100 people in May.

What can be speaking louder, than the fact, established by a special commission of RCAC – 826 unauthorized executions by the State Political Administration have been discovered: unauthorized, i.e. carried out with violation of the established protocol. 519 of those 826 were political. After an audit by RCAC 3 chairmen of the local SPA and 14 investigators were suspended. Not only the sources of the European newspapers, but the official soviet press, available abroad, publish sufficient information about the continued executions, single and mass. Those publications still fall into the same categories.

First of all “counter-revolution” is mentioned here: is it necessary to remind everyone of the execution of prelate Bootkevich? There are executions for printing of outlaw political literature here, the trials, referred to officially as the “fragments”, those are the flash backs from the past, that surfaced now, sometimes several years later: Savinkov’s “agent” Sverzhovsky, (a conspirator in a non-existing attempt on Lenin), 3 and later 6 members of “Union for defense of Motherland and Freedom”, a follower of Savinkov M. F. Zhilinski (in Moscow)¹¹⁷, 3 officers of Olonetsk rifle division, for intent to surrender it to the British troops in Arkhangelsk in 1919, 33 members of Nikolaev-Neznamov counter-revolution organization, 13 members of some counter-revolution organization in Kiev. A trial of 44 in Semipalatinsk (12 executions); the Kolchak army officers Drizdov and Timofeev (in Perm); the head of Kolchak counter-intelligence, former deputy prosecutor Pospelov, previously a subject to an “amnesty” (in Omsk), a former Semipalatinsk investigator under Kolchak administration Pravdin

¹¹⁶“The Archive of Russian Revolution”, XII, 145.

¹¹⁷Reported by a Warsaw newspaper that published Zhilinski.

(in Moscow), a commissar of Bashkir Republic Ishmurzin, who defected to Kolchak; Moscow trial of Reschikov, Okulov and Petkevich (the former officers of Denikin's army) on the espionage charges; here in Moscow a deputy commander Serdyukov from Omsk and others.

The rioting cases: 28 of Ekaterinoslav rioters, 26 of Petlyura followers (Podolsk), Petlyura's centurion Rogutski, 64 from Volynsk (340 sentenced to execution – commuted for the rest), 9 members of rebels, operating in Caucasus in 1920, another similar group of 10, the rebels from Belarus, where all reporters noticed “escalation of terror”, in Chita (colonel Emelin and 6 of his assistants, in Rostov (5).

The endless trials of the “bandits”: 15 in Odessa, 15 and 17 in St. Petersburg (including several women, who did not tip the authorities about their partners), 9 in Moscow, 6 in Ekaterinoslav, 6 in Berdichev, 3 in Arkhangelsk. Kharkov alone accounted for 78 “bandit” trials, very few of which commuted execution to the prison terms in recognition “of proletarian background” or “the services to revolution and proletariat”. In Odessa, according to “Russian Newspaper” reporter¹¹⁸ 16 bandits sentenced for terror acts against the communists. The term “banditism” should be taken with a grain of salt: “Izvestiya”, for example, read: the trial of “white bandits of Soloviev” was heard by a court in Eniseysk. Of 106 accused 9 sentenced to execution by firing squad etc; 5 executed for counterfeit rail tickets, counterfeiters etc.

There is a separate category of “economic counter-revolution”: the supervisor of Turkmenia tobacco industry executed for poor management practices, as well as 4 officers of Tomsk region logging company, 3 of “Union” engineers, a trial of Central Horsery Operations – the former socialist-revolutionary Topilsky), the officers of State Trade Commission and State Sea Technical Administration, engineer Verhovski in St. Petersburg (among 7 others), a trader at Sukharev market, 4 workers for “sabotage”, the “brazen red merchants” for illegal lending, a trial of some “club in Vladimir” and many others on the similar charges.

Here is senseless unjustified revenge for the very old deeds in 1923 : lieutenant Stavradi, who took part in quelling a riot of Black Sea Navy in 1905, 76 of repatriated Wrangel soldiers; Gen. Petrenko, repatriated under amnesty from the Prince Islands. White collar crime: 11 officers of Central Housing Department in Moscow, Porhovskiy trial (in Pskov) of the tax agents (2 executed), bribery case in Vyatka Public Education Department (1 executed) and a number of excomm and tribunal member trials for the abuses (there was such trend once): a member of Arkhangelsk tribunal, head of Dubossar (Tsaritsyn district) criminal police, accused of the unauthorized executions and torture.

I keep the publications about these and many other executions that occurred in 1923 in my suitcase. But how many executions have not been publicized? I contend that is the case. Where was published for example execution by firing squad of 19 “Savinkov followers” in May 1923 in St. Petersburg? I have reliable information about that execution, which proves that at least 13 of them had nothing to do with what they have been accused of. Sinovari, a witness at Conradi trial, talks about execution of P. I. Smirnov in January of that year in St. Petersburg, who was arrested on those

¹¹⁸27 August 1923.

charges in April of the previous year...

Ang Georgia again, but “communist” already. The unavoidable riots follow, quelled with the old tested methods. Even the Bolshevik papers wrote about those rebellions of 1922, quelled by red army. The orders for the residents testify about that – the same old:

All residents must immediately inform the authorities and the army commanders of the first and last names of bandits, those who harbor them and in general of the location of all enemies of soviet government. (No. 2.)

The riots are followed by an era of conspiracies. The lists of executed contain 15, 91 etc. Of course all those are the “former princes, generals and nobility” or bandits, but in reality they are largely the socialists and democrat intelligent public, village teachers, cooperators, workers and peasants.¹¹⁹ There are several prominent Georgian social-democrats among the “bandits”.

The central committee of Georgian Social-Democrat party addressed Georgian “communist” party and the local Soviet of people’s commissars 5 July 1923:

Many socialist workers and peasants fell victims to your executioners in November-December of last year... Many thousands of our comrades are either hiding in the bush, or exiled from Georgia, or languishing in prison...¹²⁰ But that was not enough for you. Now you subject our arrested friends to torture in the basement of Che Ka... As a direct result of unimaginable moral and physical suffering many have gone mad, others are permanently crippled, and some died.

At this moment in Tbilisi alone 700 – 800 are imprisoned (on the political charges) in Che Ka and in Metech castle...

6.10 1924

And the new year begins with the same publications. The trial of the “spy” Dzyubenko, heard by the military section of the Supreme Court in Moscow – the accused colonel of Kolchak army was sentenced to an execution by firing squad with confiscation of property. “The sentence of Dzyubenko – adds “Izvestiya”¹²¹ – carried out in the time frame prescribed by the law”. The trial of the “spy” Khrusevich, an instructor of artillery school of Kronstadt garrison – the same section sentenced him to an execution by firing squad.¹²² “Execution for the strikes” – reports “The Days”:¹²³ in Upper Tagil field section of the regional court sentenced 5 unemployed and one worker to an execution on the charges of leading the January rioting and strikes in the factories. “The

¹¹⁹“The Days”, 13 May 1923.; “Socialist Messenger”, 1923, No. 5.

¹²⁰“Socialist Messenger”, 1923, No. 15.

¹²¹“Izvestiya”, 27 February.

¹²²“Izvestiya”, 29 February.

¹²³No. 395, 24 January.

sentence was carried out”... “The recently printed brochure of the Working Group, dated February, published a note – writes someone to “The Days”¹²⁴ from Moscow – about the execution 8 Russian and 3 Georgian workers of Baku oil fields”...

We are awaiting more death sentences. Another political trial is staged in Kiev in connection with the discovery by the State Political Administration of a counter-revolutionary organization called “Kiev Regional Center of Action”...

There is no end to the executions by firing squad – reports an emigrant from Russia in “New Time”.¹²⁵ But everything is more covert. They send for the executions from Tambov to Saratov, and from Saratov some place else to hide the tracks.

The people are disappearing and there is no way to find out where to.

Oh, how realistic that is!

There were attempts at summarizing the data. Do we need to do that now? Perhaps the future will not lift the dark curtain, that is hiding all aspects of the period of Russian life in the last 5 years. The history will always stand to a certain degree in front of the locked doors to the kingdom of “red terror” statistics. We will never learn the names and numbers of the victims. There are rumors that the fishermen often catch the corpses of Solovki monks tied together with wire by the wrists during trawling...¹²⁶

One such theoretical attempt for accounting was undertaken by Eugene Komnin in “Rudder”.¹²⁷ I will quote his musings – they are of interest for establishing that possible statistics of the executions:

By the Winter of 1920 Russian Federation included 52 regions – with 52 Extreme Commissions, 52 Special Departments and 52 regional revolutionary tribunals. Besides that there were: countless district transport Che Ka, rail way revolutionary tribunals, tribunals of Government Armed Guard (presently Internal Armed Forces), field sessions, sent out for the mass executions “locally”. Add to this list of the jails the special departments and tribunals of the armies – 16 at the time – and divisions.

There were at least 1000 jails in total – and if we took into account that the district Che Ka existed for quite some time – than more.

The number of regions in the Russian Federation increased since – Siberia, Crimea, the Far East have been occupied. The number of jails has increased exponentially.

According to the soviet reports we could (back in 1920 – terror has not subsided since, it is just not reported anymore) average a figure of executions for a jail: it fluctuates from 1 to 50 (the later – in the large cities)

¹²⁴4 March.

¹²⁵21 September 1923.

¹²⁶The memoirs of midshipman Gefer. “Archive of Revolution” X, 118.

¹²⁷“More of Medusa Head”. “Rudder”, 3 August 1923.

and 100 in the areas just occupied by red army. Those explosions of terror occurred from time to time and subsided again, therefore a (moderate) average should be set at 5 people per day, and multiplied by 1000 (jails) – 5000 people a day and 1 1/2 million annually.

And “Medusa head” is hovering above the incinerated country for nearly 6 years.¹²⁸ According to the rumors some Extreme Commissions created a special position for a “body count supervisor”.

Does it not tell all?

¹²⁸Professor Sarolea, who published a series of articles about Russia in Edinburgh newspaper “The Scotsman” touched upon the death statistics in an essay on terror (No. 7, November 1923.). He summarized the outcome of the Bolshevik massacre as follows: 28 bishops, 1219 clergy, 6000 professors and teachers, 9000 doctors, 54,000 officers, 260,000 soldiers, 70,000 policemen, 12,950 landowners, 355,250 professionals, 193,290 workers, 815,000 peasants.

The author did not provide the sources of that data. Needless to say that the precise counts seem to fictional, but the author’s characteristic of terror in Russia in general matches reality.

Chapter 7

During the Civil War

Truth was tortured from under the nails,
Attached the grenades to the necks,
“Stitched the shoulder loops”,
“Carved the lanyards”
“Made the single-horned devils” –
How many lies were necessary
In those accursed years,
To enrage and make to take up arms
The armies, the kingdoms, the peoples.

M. Voloshin.

Gen. Denikin’s commission for investigating the actions of the Bolsheviks in 1918 – 1919 accounted for 1,700,000 victims in its summary document¹. Little was published of the numerous documents gathered by the commission. I did not have an opportunity to study the entire archive, stored in Paris. Meanwhile the statistics greatly depend on the methodology, applied to the studying of the topic.

We have been talking almost exclusively of the deaths, dispensed in “judicial” or “administrative” order, i.e. more or less by the verdicts of “revolutionary” government. But there are many more victims of “red terror” in reality, as we realized circumstantially every time we touched upon quelling of one or another rebellion.

It is difficult to distinguish what can be considered the so-called “excesses” of the civil war, the process of “revolutionary order”, supported by the squads of savage sailors or “female death squad of the convict Marusia”, as occurred for example in Essentuki in March 1918, from what represents carrying out “red terror” as planned, as militant Che Ka always follows the approaching armed forces, that carried out savage terror of surrendered enemy or innocent civilians. Does it matter what title is officially used at any moment?

There are too many of these documents. And still I will describe several of such incidents, perhaps not the most cruel in application of purely animal human-hatred,

¹It was compiled privately and not published.

without mercy to the nerves of the readers.

Let me start with the documents of the “Special Commission”. File No. 40 – “A protocol of investigation of crimes, committed by the Bolsheviki in Taganrog city from 20 January till 17 April 1918”.

The siege of Taganrog city started on 18 January 1918 by the Bolsheviki, composed of the Sivers army units that entered the city...

20 January the Junkers signed a ceasefire and surrendered to the Bolsheviki on the condition of safe passage out of the city, but the Bolsheviki did not abide by the condition and “exceptionally cruel terror” began that day.

The officers, Junkers and everyone, who was aligned with them or sympathized them were being picked out across the city and immediately executed in the streets or detained at one of the factories, where the same fate awaited them.

The wholesale searches were carried out day and night across the city. They searched the so-called “counter-revolutionaries” everywhere.

The wounded and sick were not spared. The Bolsheviki entered the hospitals, dragged the officers and Junkers found there to the street and immediately executed them most of the time. Death of the adversary was not enough for them. They used all kinds of violations of the dead and dying...

A staff-captain, assistant supervisor of the under-officer school died a horrible death: while gravely wounded, he was grabbed by the hands and feet by the red army nurses and his head was smashed at the stone wall.

The majority of the arrested “counter-revolutionaries” have been taken to the steel, leather and mainly “Baltic” factory. There they were slaughtered with such extreme cruelty, that the workers were outraged and filed a protest.

The reds threw 50 hog-tied Junkers and officers into the iron kiln. The remains of those victims were later found in the slag refuse of the factory.

The mass executions by firing squad and other types of killing were carried out near the above listed factories, while some of the corpses were mutilated beyond recognition.

The dead were left at the place of execution and the families were not allowed to inter the bodies and the dogs and pigs dragged them across the steppe.

After expulsion of the Bolsheviki from Taganrog region, police undertook exhumation of the bodies in presence of prosecutor’s observers from 10 till 22 May 1918, accompanied with forensic survey and identification of the corpses, that were protocolled according to the established process...

A witness that was present at exhumation of the said mass graves was questioned and testified, that they personally witnessed, that the victims of Bolshevik terror were subjected to painful torture before their death and the method of execution was extremely and unjustifiably cruel attesting

to the fact that class hatred and dehumanization could reach the deep lows.

Many corpses, besides the expected bullet wounds, had stab and slash wounds inflicted antemortem, often in large numbers and throughout the body; sometimes the slashes covered the entire body; the heads of many if not majority were completely smashed and deformed with complete loss of facial features; there were corpses with severed limbs and ears; some had wound dressing – evidence of being taken from the hospital beds.

There is no variance in the description of Bolshevik invasion and their terror in March – April 1918 in any town of the Don Army region and Kuban region. There were no towns without victims, and station Ladyzhenskaya, where 74 officers and 3 women were slashed to death is not an exception. The wounded in Ekaterinodar were chopped with axes, eyes were poked out, decapitated; 43 were murdered just as cruelly in Novocherkassk. The terrors cause riots, followed with quelling with the same methods. “The history of cossack rebellions – notes in the “Russian Upheaval Essays”² Gen. Denikin – is tragic and uniform”: several towns of Labinsk district rebelled in June – besides those who died in combat 770 cossacks were executed. And truly the stunning scenes of inhumane terror could be portrayed by the dozens...

The same situation could be observed in the various cities of Crimea – in Sevastopol, Yalta, Alushta, Simferopol, Feodosia. The file No. 56 talks about one “Massacre of Saint Bartholomew’s Day” in Eupatoria. The reds showed up in Eupatoria 14 January. The mass arrests of the officers, the affluent residents and everyone pointed at as counter-revolutionaries began. More than 800 have been arrested in 3 – 4 days in a small town.

The executions were carried out the following way: the sentenced to execution were lead to the top deck, where they were shot after humiliation and thrown overboard (The executions were carried out aboard stem ship “Romania”). The alive were thrown overboard as well en masse, but in that case the victim’s hands were tied by the elbows and wrists behind the back, the legs were tied as well and sometimes the head was pulled back with a rope. The grates were tied to the feet. “All arrested officers (46 in total) were lined up along the board of the transport ship” – adds another witness³ – “one of the sailors kicked them overboard where they drowned. That savage massacre could be seen from the shore by the families: children, wives... All of them cried, screamed and begged for mercy but the sailors only laughed. Staff Rittmaster Novatski, considered a leader of rebellion in Eupatoria, died the most horrible death. While heavily wounded, he was stabilized, awakened and thrown into the ship furnace.

The executions were carried out onboard the transport ship “Truevor”, but according to an eyewitness, as follows: by the order of the tribunal the sailors called

²Vol. III, 153.

³N. Krishevski, “In Crimea” (1916 – 1918.) “Archive of Russian Revolution” XIII, 108.

out the names through the open hatch and summoned the victims to the deck. They were lead to the calvary across the deck under guard. There they were surrounded by the armed sailors, disrobed, tied by the hands and foot with ropes and laid on the deck. Their ears, nose, lips and genitals were cut off, and sometimes arms severed, and they were thrown overboard in that condition. Then blood was washed off the deck and everything repeated. The executions continued all night and each took 115 – 20 minutes. The blood-curdling screams reached into the bulge from the deck and to silence them “Truevor” started the machines and went into open sea. In three days of 15, 16 and 17 January no fewer than 300 were killed and drowned onboard of “Truevor” and “Romania”.⁴

A sailor Kulikov said in one of the street rallies that he “personally threw overboard 60 people”.

The night of 1 March 30 – 40 people vanished from the town. They were taken 3 miles away from the town and executed on the sea shore.

It was found that the victims were lined up along a mass grave dug nearby and shot in volleys with the partition bullets, stabbed with bayonets and slashed with swords. Often the executed were only wounded and lost consciousness, but they were piled up with the rest and buried alive. There was one case where one so wounded got up and ran, but was finished off with another shot.

Kryshevski writes in his memoirs:

Bolshevism was imposed in Crimea in its most cruel rogue bloodthirsty form, based on wild terror of the local government. Blood was flowing in all towns, the gangs of sailors rampaged everywhere, there was total robbery, in other words it was a nightmarish situation of raising and pillaging, when the residents became subject to permanent robbery.

He further talks about the executions in Yalta (80 officers), Theodosia (60), Simpheropol (100 officers and 60 civilians killed inside the prison) etc.

At the same time in Sevastopol, that was February, a second massacre of the officers took place, but this time it was well organized, the executions were planned and not only naval officers, but officers in general and the number of respected residents of the town, about 800 people in total.

The murders were just as cruel – the eyes were pocked out...

The hundreds of Tatars were being killed in Crimea as well for resisting the Bolsheviks.

It is impossible to tally the victims – says investigation of Bolshevik activities in Stavropol from 1 January till 1 June 1918. The people were killed without trial and

⁴Vol III of the “Essays” by Gen. Denikin has a horrible illustration: “Identification of the corpses of those tortured to death by the Bolsheviks in Eupatoria”. It leaves no doubt about accuracy of the above mentioned.

investigation by the verbal orders of the commissars and red army unit commanders (the documents count 96 of prominent residents). The memoirs about Stavropol region by the former Transitional Government prosecutor V. M. Krasnov, published by I. V. Gessen in “Archive of Revolution”, confirm this investigation. He told about raping of the Kalmyk women, of the children with the “ears cut off”, of raping and torturing of the school students at S. Petrovsky gymnasium.⁵



Figure 7.1: Station Snegirevka near Kharkov. Corpse of a woman, tortured to death. No clothes were found. Decapitated and arms severed (not found during exhumation).

The cities Kharkov, Poltava and others pass before the reader in the documents of Denikin’s commission. Everywhere there are “corpses with the severed arms, fractured bones and heads ripped off”, “with broken jaws, genitals cut off”. And everywhere the exhumed mass graves yield dozens of corpses: 69 in Kobeli, 20 in another small town, and another one, 18 of 70 year old monks in Kharkov. Here is a body of 75 year old Abbot Rodion who was scalped in Kharkov...

The Bolsheviks are coming and going during the civil war in the South. And coming back... these secondary occupations are often more horrible than the primary. Not the excesses play out, but organized blind revenge. Let us touch upon some aspects of the bloody events, the last in Kuban region in 1918, that transpired in Armavir. They are peculiar in that revenge was not directed at Russian population. “In July Armavir was liberated by Gen. Borovsky’s division. The troops were welcomed by Armenian population “with bread and salt”⁶; the funerals of the officers, killed at Armavir were paid for by the Armenians. When Gen. Borovsky strategically abandoned the city, the Bolsheviks returned. They started mass executions. First of all more than 400 Armenian refugees from Iran and Turkey, who camped near the rail way, were slashed to death including women and children. Then the executions moved into the city. More than 500 of civilian population were stabbed with bayonets, slashed

⁵Archive VIII, 164.

⁶A traditional welcome for the liberators in Russia. *Trans.*



Figure 7.2: Kharkov. Head of Abbot Rodion of Spassovski monastery, scalped alive by the Bolsheviks.

with swords and shot with rifles and machine guns. People were being killed in the homes, streets and squares where parties were crowded into"... "After slashing Iranian consul Ibdal Boka, the reds burst into the yard where 310 Persian nationals sought refuge. All of them were shot with machine guns"...

Let us take a depiction of those days in Rostov-On-Don from another source, a remarkable book by social-democrat A. Lockerman "74 Days of Soviet Government", published back in 1918 in Rostov. It describes the same mass executions by firing squad, including the wounded from the hospitals.

The arrested were disrobed in Sivers's staff; some were left wearing pants and boots, others with underwear only. In 20th century, in the light of day, the naked and barefoot people were rushed down the snowy street in winter cold and once crowded in front of a church fence the volleys were fired... Many were crossing their chest and the bullets hit them during the prayer. The bourgeois superstition such as covering the eyes and inviting a minister were not observed of course.

All 14 – 16 year old teenagers, who signed up for Volunteer Army, including the school and seminary students, were executed.

Sivers's staff unconditionally stated, that all members of Volunteer Army and all persons, signed up for participation, *without distinction of*

participation or age, would be executed without trial”⁷.

Many cases of executing people who left homes after 9 pm curfew took place – the patrols lead them to the alleys and executed. The executions were carried out “at the wall of the race track, in people’s view”, at the wharf during the day. Often the corpses of the executed were “mutilated beyond recognition”. Terror was carried out under the slogans “Death to bourgeois”, “Death to the capitalists”, but the enormous list of victims had nothing to do with the capitalists. “Large percentage of the dead was composed of the students of secondary schools and colleges and the professionals and at first it seemed that a massacre of the intelligent was going on. But that was not the case, “the majority of the dead were random people from all walks of life, mostly the ordinary folk.

Before their retreat the Bolsheviks committed a series of “disgusting abuses” again.

The retreat is no less cruel, than occupation. In late 1918 the Bolsheviks abandoned the town of Sarapul: in light of complications, that evacuation of the local prison would entail, it was decided “to clear it by executing all inmates”.⁸

“One of their (Bolshevik) leaders stated in public, that if they would have to abandon the town, they would slaughter 1000 residents” – reports Elston to Curzon 11 February 1919.⁹

Enough material can be found in the “Livre Blanc” to characterize the methods of civil war in the Russian North-West in 1918 – 1919.

Elliott writes to Curzon in March 1919:

Usually the victims have been executed by firing squad, but very often they have been drowned or slashed with the swords. The massacres of 30, 40 or 60 people took place, for example, in Perm and Kungur.

Murder was often preceded by savage torture. Before executing the workers in Omsk they were flogged and severely beaten with the buttstocks and iron rods in order to extract the confessions. The victims were often forced to dig their own graves. Sometimes the executioners lined the victims in front of a wall and fired the missing shots, delaying death. The survivors testified of that.

There were teenage girls, pregnant and elderly women among thus executed...¹⁰.

“The corpses of the officers and soldiers from Torbolov’s unit – wrote Knocks to the ministry of war – have been found in Blagoveshensk with the record player needles under the fingernails, eyes pocked out, nails hammered into the shoulders (where the

⁷I specially highlighted that category – the officers, clerks etc.

⁸“The 12 Condemned” p. 21.

⁹Livre blanc, 108.

¹⁰This footnote is missing from the source. *Trans.*

shoulder loops were). Their bodies turned into the horrifying frozen statues. They were killed in Meschanova and transported to Blagoveschensk"...¹¹.

Here is a note from Elston to Balfour 18 January 1919 regarding the facts of the events in Kiev worth noting according to the Czech foreign minister.

...Even Armenian massacre by the Turks cannot compare to what the Bolsheviks do in Russia... Dr. T. found the severely mutilated corpses of the Czech soldiers in the field during fighting in Ussuriysk district in July 1918.

Their genitals were cut off, skulls cracked open, faces slashed, eyes pocked out and tongues cut off...

The local representatives of Czech national council, Dr. Girska and his assistant said, that hundreds of the officers were executed by firing squad in Kiev after the Bolsheviks captured it over a year ago...

They were taken from the homes in very cold weather, stripped naked with only the hats left, loaded into the carts and trucks. Lined up, they waited in the cold for hours until the Bolshevik soldiers would finally get around to executing them.

At the time Dr. Girska was a surgeon at the 12th public hospital. It was overfilled with the sick due to cruel treatment of the intelligent and officers in Kiev. He and his staff had to hide even the mortally wounded officers in the closets, as they would be executed right here and right away by the Bolsheviks who were looking for them.

Many heavily wounded were dragged from the hospitals and mercilessly killed.

The Bolsheviks took to the streets and executed people with penetrating wounds, fractures and other heavy wounds. He recalls how he saw the dogs eating the corpses of the officers. Dr. Girska's assistant's wife saw a truck, full of the frozen corpses of the officers, that were being taken outside the city for burial...

People were evicted from their homes, the hospital beds were emptied by night, the wounded were killed without mercy; the men were executed without trial...¹²

The same Elston writes to Balfour 14 January 1919:

¹¹Up to 1500 have been killed in Blagoveschensk during the massacre of bourgeoisie. A. Budberg. Diary. "Archive of Russian Revolution" XIII, 197.

¹²A Bolshevik Supreme Commander Muraviev provided a colorful description of capturing Kiev. That rare adventurer, who told "Vladimir Ilich"¹³, that he was going to capture the whole world with his revolutionary troops, so described his heroism in Kiev in a speech in Odessa: "We are coming with fire and sword, establishing soviet government: ...I captured the city, fired at the palaces and churches, at the clergy, did not show mercy to anyone! 28 January the defense council asked for a ceasefire. In response I ordered bombardment with chemical weapons. Hundreds of generals, maybe even thousands (An impossible figure. *Trans.*) have been mercilessly killed. That was our revenge. We could of course contain our explosion of revenge, but we did not have to, as our slogan was to be merciless" (Margulies: "The Years of Fire" 191).

...The figure of savagely killed innocent civilians in the cities of Ural reaches several hundreds.

The Bolsheviks nailed the shoulder loops to the shoulders of the captured here officers; the young girls have been raped; the civilians have been found with pocked out eyes, others – without noses; 25 clerics have been executed in Perm, and bishop Andronick buried alive. I was promised a final total of the killed and other details once they would become available.

The different types of testimony from the different areas draw the uniformly horrible pictures. In Estonia, Latvia, Azerbaijan – everywhere civil war was fought – without exception. The bloodbaths in Valka, Derpt, Vezenberg etc in 1918 – 1919 were described in “Das wahre Gesicht des Bolschewismus!” (Tatsachen, Berichte, Bilder aus den Baltischen Provinzen. November 1918 – February 1919). “Unter der Herrschaft des Bolschewismus.” (Gesammelt von Erich Köhrer, Pressebeirat der deutschen Gesandtschaft bei den Regierungen Lettlands und Estlands) and a number of similar works, published in German. Much material on the Baltic states is in the reports, printed in “Livre blanc”; it talks about the hundreds with their eyes pocked out and so on so forth.

The author of the memoirs of revolution in Trans-Caucasus¹⁴ talks about 40,000 muslims, killed by the Bolsheviks during a rebellion in Elisavetpol in 1920 etc.

In order to understand the effect, called “red terror” as a whole, one cannot pass the by facts, that transpired immediately on the battlefield of civil war. And not even during combat, not during the charges, when animal side of human nature takes over. One cannot just discount that as the “excesses”, and specifically those of the Chinese or “international” battalions, that exhibited exceptional cruelty according to absolutely all witnesses. “The international battalion in Kharkov” – says Left SR Vershinin – “committed such atrocities, that much of what is considered horror paled before that”.¹⁵

Those are not the “excesses”, as cruelty is part of the system here, i.e. it is a planned effect. The same Latsis, writing “Izvestiya” 23 August 1918., i.e. prior to an attempt on Lenin, spelled out the new laws of civil war, that were supposed to replace “the established customs” of war, expressed in various conventions dictating that the prisoners must not be executed etc. That is just “funny”: “Massacring all wounded who fought against you – that is a law of civil war”.

The Bolsheviks did not only enrage human nature, but directed it certain way with their systematic rhetoric. The events of March 1918 in Kuban transpired under the slogan of communist party in Pyatigorsk: “All hail red terror!” One of the civil war combatants from the Bolshevik side drew a truly epic picture: the cossacks were executing the captured officers near a haystack. “I was glad, the game was not for nothing, but was a truly civil war. I rode up to them and greeted. The cossacks recognized me and yelled “hurray”. One of them said: “When we have red officers, we do not need the whites and here we are, comrade, finishing them off”. – “Well, folks,

¹⁴“Archive of Revolution”, IX, 190

¹⁵“Kremlin Behind Bars”, 177.

carry on; remember, that only when there will be no more of them, we will have real freedom”¹⁶ ...

¹⁶S. M. Pugachevsky. “For the Power of the Soviets” (from a civil war fighter’s diary) “The Red Army History”, vol. I, 406.

Chapter 8

“Class Terror”

Proletarii, remember, that cruelty – is a remainder of slavery, as it testifies of barbarity remaining in ourselves...

Jean Jaurès.

The quotes from “Livre blanc” told us the facts of quelling the peasant riots, that sparked up in the areas occupied by the Bolshevik government. They also told us about quelling of the worker riots.

The workers, resisting the Bolsheviks, have been dealt with just as with the peasants – writes Elliot to Curzon 5 March 1919.¹ – 100 workers have been executed in Motovilovka near Perm in December 1918 for a protest against Bolshevik conduct”.

But we can find countless similar facts not only in the British reports. Russian press is a bottomless pit, filled with such publications. A long list of peasant uprisings out of protest against tyrannical Bolshevik regime, against food confiscation etc. could be compiled even inside Russia. All of them have been drowned in blood.

The history of Russia, where peasant revolts always played an important role, never before saw the kind of quelling, that was practiced by soviet government. Nothing like that occurred even earlier, at the times of serfdom, for the modern techniques included armored vehicles, machine guns and chemical weapons.

Unfortunately, huge volume of data that I assembled in that area between 1918 – 1919 was lost during one of the numerous searches.

Here is a typical document, summarizing the events transpired in Tambov region. That predated the so-called Antonov’s rebellion, which enclosed a vast area and served as a response to what the Bolsheviks did to the peasantry in the name of “class terror”. It is dated late 1919. This is a note, submitted to the Soviet of People’s Commissars by a group of socialist-revolutionaries. This is regarding quelling of an “upheaval” in November 1919. Several reasons lead to the uprising: draft, livestock confiscation,

¹Livre blanc, 131.

inventory of church property etc. Ignited in one district, they quickly spread to the others like infection, and finally to the regions.

Soviet government has sent dozens of death squads to the local communities, and here is a brief summary of the facts of their bloody activities. The horrors, committed in the same territory in the past by the monarch's henchman Luzhenovsky: the most disgusting, total flogging of the peasants was used in Spasskiy district by all death squads. Many were executed by firing squad. The Spassk residents were forced to be present at the execution of 10 peasants and a priest in the downtown square, and to provide the carts for transporting the corpses. 30 peasants, executed behind Spassk prison, have been forced to dig their own mass grave. The death squads in Kirsanov district, in their insane cruelty, locked the arrested in one barn with a large hungry hog; those subjected to that torture have gone mad. The Chairman of Naschekin "Committee of the Poor" continued executions even after the death squad left the town. Hundreds and thousands have been executed in Morshansk district. Some villages, for example Raksha, have been all but destroyed by artillery fire. Peasant property was not only stolen by the "communists" and the reds, but also burned with the stockpiles of seeds and grain. Pichaev district has been mostly affected, where every 10th house has been burned and women and children have been driven into the woods. The village of Perkino never participated in the rebellion, but it elected a new soviet. A death squad from Tambov executed the entire new soviet. 15 peasants, completely crippled by the death squad, have been sent to Morshansk prison from Ostrovsk district. There is a woman in the same prison, whose hair has been completely ripped off. Dozens of rape cases have been recorded. 8 peasants, wounded by the reds, have been buried alive in the Morshansk cemetery (Markov, Suchkov, Kostyaev, Kuzmin etc.) The following avengers have proven themselves especially cruel: a communist commander Chufirin, Chumikin (ex-convict), Parfenov (ex-convict, pardoned by the head of state), Sokolov (former sergeant-major) and others. Many villages of Tambov district have been almost destroyed by bombardment and fires. Many have been executed by firing squad. The villages Tilling Corner, Znamenka, Karian, Bondari, Lavrovo, Pokrovskoe-Marfino have suffered the most. Entire church staff has been executed in Bondari for a serving a prayer, requested by the peasants after overthrowing the local soviet². The member of the 1st Parliament O. K. Bocharov has been executed together with the rest of the accused rebels. Seriousness of the approach to quelling of the rebellion by the regional government is evident from the fact, that a 16 year old youth Lebski was leading one of the death squads, while A. S. Klinkov, a chronically bankrupt former fraudster merchant,

²The excommers considered it normal; at least a report by Kamyshin Che Ka read: "They are blaming us for ruthlessness and cruelty, but how else can we treat those... who celebrate the fall of worker-peasant government with the prayers?" ("Che Ka Weekly" No. 4, 25).

bribe-taker and alcoholic was and still is a commander of Tambov district Che Ka. The lives of the arrested were under his total control and he personally executed them left, right and center. Besides the special purpose death squads sending the newly established communist party members for a “trial by fire” has been practiced and those criminal gangs organized real orgies in the villages – drank, robbed and set homes on fire, turning the famous slogan of “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité” into a horror of barbarian occupation. The bloody acts of the Latvian squads, that left a long nightmarish memories behind them is duly noted too. The prisons and basements of Che Ka are currently overcrowded. The count of arrested across the region is in the thousands. The diseases are spreading quickly among them due to starvation and cold. The destiny of more than half of them is clear – they would be executed, if the same commissars and Che Ka will remain in power.

According to the note the uprisings occurred in Kozolov, Usman, Borisoglebsk and other districts of Tambov region, while the eyewitnesses stated that Shatsk district was literally drowned in blood³.

The peasant rebellions quite easily transitioned from the village riots into the district-wide and spilled into the cities. A Berlin newspaper “Rudder” printed a picturesque description of peasant rebellion in Petropavlovsk city. The peasants here will be referred to as the “whites”, but in reality it was a truly popular movement. Let us quote the very end of it:

With red occupation started “red terror”; the mass arrests and executions without trial; the posters stating “...in case of invasion of the white bands the city will be flattened by “red” artillery”.

According to a doctor who returned from detention of the “whites”, “red terror” in the country was more horrible, than in the city: all homes have been robbed, livestock stolen, some families completely slaughtered without mercy to the women, children and the elderly. Only the elderly and little babies stayed in some households: the men and women left with the “whites”. The mutilated peasant corpses are scattered in the villages and along the roads as a “warning” to the others, it is strictly prohibited to bury them.

The peasants in turn ruthlessly dispatched the communists. The long rows of mutilated corpses of the communists were on display at the People’s House⁴ in Petropavlovsk in February, March, April and further in May, despite the weekly ceremonial funerals of 50 – 60 of them every Sunday. And the mutilated corpses of the hostages, killed as soon as the communists entrenched in the city, could be seen in the formerly “meat stores” of the marketplace (as a warning too). Among them were the corpses of

³“In the Foreign Land”, III.

⁴A propaganda bureau, established everywhere by the Bolsheviks. *Trans.*

the former mayor, his deputy, justice of the peace and many other prominent figures and merchants. It is unknown how many have been executed by firing squad in the yard of Che Ka and who they were, but the shots have been fired there daily for many months. Besides that many of the arrested have been slashed with the swords and the residents could only hear the heart-rending screams of the dying. The primate and priests of the local temple have been executed too. They were accused of tolling the bell to welcome the whites during their capture of Petropavlovsk, but the communist failed to take into account the fact, that the whites arrived exactly at 4 in the afternoon, when the bells tolled for the evening service. The primate's corpse was left as a warning in the train terminal square for a long time.

The supreme command of the Eastern Siberia armies was situated in the terminal. It is alleged, that the command executed all prisoners, who were arrested prior to the arrival of the whites for weeks or months for the slightest violations.

I left Petropavlovsk on 10 May. The city was quiet, if not for the huge number of the reds that we never saw before. The rebellion in the district was still not quelled, and the large numbers of the arrested peasants continued to be brought over from the villages, and the ceremonial funerals of the communists with music continued on Sundays.

The peasants were aggravated by the communists to such degree, that I know for a fact, that they cut a captured commissar with a wood saw in Mozhaysk district very near Moscow.

A "Bulletin of the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries", published in January 1919, stated the following about the mass executions of the peasants in the late 1918: Epifansk district of Tula region – 150, in Medynsk district of Kaluga region – 170, in Pronsk district of Ryazan region – 300, in Kasimov district – 150, in Spassk district – hundreds as well, in Tver region – 200, in Velizhsk district of Smolensk region – 600 etc.

An uprising in the villages around Kronstadt occurred in July 1919. The accurate numbers are available: 170 executed in one village, 130 in another; it was simply every third executed.

More than 5000 have been executed by firing squad during the Kolyvanov's uprising in Tomsk region in 1920. A similar uprising in Ufa region was quelled with such cruelty according to the Left SR, that by the official data 10,000 have been executed, and by the unofficial 25,000 or more⁵. Hundreds of peasants have been executed in Valkov district of Kharkov region – wrote a reporter of the underground Left SR paper "Flag of Labor" published in Moscow. He accounted for 140 executed in one village⁶.

⁵A letter dated 1920. "Kremlin Behind Bars".

⁶"Flag of Labor", No. 3, September 1920.

And here is a description of quelling the rebellions in Belorussia in 1921. Those are the historic documents of civil war, that started exclusively due to food confiscation. Resistance caused cruel revenge.

Lyaskovich district of Bobruysk region was almost entirely burned by the Bolsheviks. The arrested have been sent to Vologda region or the starving areas, their property has been confiscated, dozens of hostages taken in the areas, where guerrillas showed up. A death squad of certain Stock is operating in the district – they torture the suspects by compressing fingers in the door frames etc.⁷

I will quote a single document in relation to quelling of Antonov's rebellion, which spilled far beyond Tambov region.

By the plenipotentiary commission of RCAC, 11 June 1921⁸...

1. The citizens, refusing to identify themselves, to be executed on the spot without trial⁹.
2. Read the hostage taking order to the villages hiding the weapons and execute the hostages if weapons not surrendered.
3. A family, harboring a bandit¹⁰ is subject to arrest and exile from the region, its property to be confiscated, the major bread-maker in the family to be executed on the spot without trial.
4. The families, hiding the family members or property of the bandits, to be considered the bandits and the major bread-maker executed on the spot without trial.
5. The property of the escaped bandits to be distributed among the peasants, loyal to soviet government and the abandoned homes to be burned.
6. Carry out this order ruthlessly without mercy¹¹.

Tambov and neighboring regions have indeed been drowned in blood. Without exaggeration Left SR Gan could state to the Revolutionary Tribunal¹²

The hundreds of peasants have been executed by the field sessions of revolutionary tribunals and regional Che Ka; thousands of unarmed civilians fell under the machine guns of the reds and trainees; tens of thousands exiled to the Northern regions with the families, while their property has been burned or stolen¹³. According to the data in possession of the Left SR a number of regions are in similar situation: Samara, Kazan, Saratov.

⁷“The Latest News”, 21 September 1921.

⁸“For the People” No. 1.

⁹Is our society moving in the same direction with the power of police to check the IDs? *Trans.*

¹⁰I.e. a peasant rebel.

¹¹Vocabulary of the original preserved as much as possible. *Trans.*

¹²The trial of Left SR party, 27 – 29 June 1922. “The Paths of Revolution”, 296.

¹³Regional administrative committee shamelessly published announcements, that for example, villages of 6 – 10 thousand residents have been burned for tearing down of a propaganda poster.

This data arrives from everywhere: 4000 rebels executed by firing squad in Buzuluk in 1920, in Chistopol – 600¹⁴, in Elatma – 300, and those “300” have been made to dig their own mass grave¹⁵. That is the data from the central Russia. What about Ukraine? Or Siberia?...

Mass staged executions are being practiced: with disrobing, digging the graves, traditional “Fire!” and shots fired above the heads – according to S. S. Maslov’s book¹⁶. This particular feature of quelling the uprisings should be specifically noted, as these are the acts of government, that supposedly brings great future of communism and speaks so often about cruelty of the “whites”. According to the same No. 1 of the Left SR Bulletin – they lined up 30 and decapitated with the swords...

What about flogging? It is used too – claims the Left SR publication – everywhere. “They flog with the twigs, cleaning rods, sticks and horse whips”...

“They beat with the fists, buttstocks and revolvers”.

And a long list of regions, using corporal punishment, follows...

Officially they can state that flogging is not used in Russia, for corporal punishment is a shameful act where power is in the hands of “workers and peasants”. Reality is completely different. I. Z. Steinberg collected large volume of notes about the soviet gendarmes of the early period of Bolshevik governing. Most important – that information came entirely from Bolshevik press – “The Truth” and “Izvestiya”. An article in “The Truth” titled “Gendarmes Under Soviet Flag”¹⁷ read of how Che Ka in Nikolaev (of Vologda region) shook down the “excess” grain from the residents and quelled the “kulaks” uprising:

Che Ka locked the large numbers of peasants in a cold cellar, disrobed and whipped with the cleaning rods. The peasants in Volsk district of Vitebsk region have been flogged by the decree of the administrative committee. The peasants of Uren village in Kostroma region had to put on 5 or more shirts in order to decrease pain from flogging, but that could not help, as the whips have been made of wires. Often the shirts became stuck in the scars and dried up, so that they had to be softened with warm water.

A private letter, quoted by Spiridonova in an address to the Bolshevik Central Committee, reads: “They lined us up, the entire 1/3 of the district, and slugged from left to right with the fists, and those who tried to escape have been flogged” (That was regarding the actions of a food confiscation squad).

Regional government, having arrived to Vetluzhsk and Varnavinsk district villages of Kostroma region, “made entire villages kneel, so that the peasants felt respect to soviet government”.

They said: “Bust them up, let them remember soviet government”...

¹⁴“Flag of Labor” No. 3, September 1920.

¹⁵According to an eyewitness.

¹⁶“Russia After Four Years of Revolution. Paris, 1922.

¹⁷No. 276, 1918.



Figure 8.1: Left: a corpse of hostage S. Mihaylov, a grocery store clerk, apparently slashed with a sword. Middle: a corpse of teacher Petrenko, flogged to death with the cleaning rods, lower spine fractured. Right: a corpse of Captain Agapov with mutilated genitals.

What could be surprising in common perception of “communists” as rascals, lazies and liars? “They are pushing us around, as dumb animals”... To understand terror in the country, terror of the food confiscation squads, terror of the so-called “village poor committees” – the rascals made armed dictators, one has to really become familiar with present situation.

“In the olden times – they say in Makarievo village – the supervisors abused the peasants, but now the communists do”. That is right from “The Truth”. A food confiscation squad arrives into one village in Khvalynsk district of Saratov regions. They wake up and gather the peasants in the middle of the night, order them to prepare a bathhouse and bring “the most beautiful young girls”... And here is an order of the food commissar to a “committee of the poor”: “tell your folks, that I give them three days time to surrender 5900 bushels of wheat... For the failure everyone will be executed, like I just executed one rascal in Varvarinka village. A commissar (name) gave me power to execute for failure to surrender food, especially the accursed district (name)”¹⁸.

Execution by firing squad and flogging – they are the symbols of “transitional epoch” towards socialism. What could be said about the whites then? No one could outdo the Bolsheviks in their bloody hangover.

I challenge anyone to find a historic mention of anything analogous to what Stein-

¹⁸“Izvestiya” No. 15, 1919.

berg wrote about a tragedy in Shatsk district of Tambov region. There is a revered icon of God's Mother in the village of Vyshinskaya. Spanish flu epidemic was ravaging the residents. They organized a prayer and procession of the Cross, for which local Che Ka arrested both priests and the icon... The peasants learned of desecration of the icon by Che Ka: "they spit, scraped the floor" and "went like a wall to rescue the God's Mother". The women, elderly and children. Che Ka fired on them with machine guns. "The machine gun is downing the ranks, but they are coming, without seeing anything, over the corpses, over the wounded, crawling ahead, with the scary eyes, mothers holding the babies, with everyone screaming: "Mother, the savior, save and pardon us, we all are going to die for you!"...

To recap we would have to tell about mass exile of the peasants, that followed the executions, burning and confiscation of peasant property.

When we talk about quelling of the peasant uprisings; when we talk about execution of the workers in Perm¹⁹ or Astrakhan, it becomes clear, that it is no longer about some special "class terror" against bourgeois. Indeed, terror has been applied to all classes without exception from the day one, but primarily to the classless intelligent.

That was the intent. The goal of terror – read the front page article in No. 1 of "Che Ka Weekly" – eradication of the ideologists and leaders of the "proletariat's" enemies (read: enemies of soviet government). The sentencing documents of Che Ka and tribunals sometimes referred to leniency towards the convicted due to "proletarian background". But that was just a facade, required for the most brazen rhetoric. Of course some categories of population have been tricked by that facade, but soon, so it seems, everybody figured real value of that rhetoric.

I reckon, that the investigators like "comrade Trunov", described by V. Krasnov in his memoirs²⁰, could be rare species, but perhaps only at first, when intense agitation against bourgeoisie per se was going on. Interrogation by that investigator in Bezopasnaya²¹ village was limited to "Show your hand! Disrobe!" "The arrested was disrobed, pushed outside, stabbed with the bayonets and thrown into the pits, left over since cattle plague epidemic". Keep in mind, that the prison, where Trunov dispensed justice was only a prison in a village, although a large one, – could it not be clear, that the investigator's action was nothing but a stereotypical phrase? A statement by a certain worker Mizikin from Lefortovo district in Moscow, later quoted by "The Truth" should be attributed to the same rhetoric. During the discussion in Moscow Soviet of powers of Che Ka and Latsis's proposal, that judicial inquiry was unnecessary, Mizikin said: "What are these questions for? (of background, education, occupation etc.) I would go to his kitchen and look into the pots: if there is meat there – enemy of the people! For execution!" Practicing that "proletarian" principle in 1918 would automatically mean execution by firing squad of the entire privileged communist party; "not working must not eat"²²... Only the Bolsheviks had meat in

¹⁹According to Gen. Denikin's data, about 800 workers have been executed during the Spring 1918 revolt at Botkinsk and Ezhevsk factories.

²⁰"Archive of Revolution" VIII, 163.

²¹Oh, irony! "Bezopasnaya" is Russian for "Safe". *Trans.*

²²A popular Bolshevik slogan of the time. *Trans.*

the pots at the time, and perhaps the speculating “bourgeois”.

No one would believe Latsis that terror supposedly did not affect the “confused workers and peasants”, like no one would believe Shklovsky, who contended in No. 3 of “Che Ka Weekly”, that “there was not a single case, where oppression was directed at working class”. When in July 1919 the protest rallies against the mass execution of the workers occurred in Odessa²³, regional Che Ka published an “order” which stated, that the counter-revolutionaries were spreading “the false provocative rumors about execution of the workers”; the board of Che Ka announced, that it has not executed “a single worker, not a single peasant” – and immediately made a reservation “except the apparent bandits and robbers”. All interested “comrade workers” have been invited to inquire of the official listings of the executed by Che Ka. Then a warning followed: the persons, found spreading the false provocative rumors “will be subjected to the most severe punishment, admissible under the existing martial law”. Unlikely anyone showed up to view the listings after that... The Astrakhan massacre was unique only in its huge number of victims: for example 60 worker representatives have been executed by firing squad in September 1920 in Kazan for demanding 8 hour working day only (!)²⁴, review of the wages, expulsion of the rampaging Hungarians etc.²⁵. An appeal of the Left SR to the workers in April 1919 was right to propose boycott of May 1st festivities: “The communist government has executed many thousands of laboring peasants, workers, soldiers and sailors²⁶. “Prison for bourgeois, friendly influence for the workers and peasants” – says a mural in one of the Bolshevik institutions. That scary creek in Saratov, that we talked about above (p. 50), was equally scary for “bourgeois, workers and peasants, for the intelligent and members of all political parties, including the socialists”. Just like the concentration camp in Kharkov, where Sayenko worked, named specifically “a camp for bourgeois”, was overcrowded – according to one of its inmates – by the members of all segments, primarily by the peasants.

Who can establish how much blood of workers and peasants was spilled in the days of “red terror”? No one and probably never. I tried to determine social composition of the executed from my archives from 1918... According to little data that I could capture, I arrived at approximately the following²⁷. Of the intelligent – 1286 people; of the hostages (professionals)²⁸ – 1026; peasants – 962; commoners – 468; unidentified – 450; criminal elements (however, political cases have often been labeled criminal) – 438; abuses of power – 187; servants – 118; soldiers and sailors – 28; bourgeois – 22; clergy – 19.

No matter how arbitrary was the grouping, it disproves the statements by the Bolshevik leaders and knocks the last stone from the political foundation they tried to base the system of terror on (there can never be moral justification for terror in public consciousness). By the words of Kautstki: “that is a fratricide, committed exclusively

²³See V. Margulies

²⁴It was a Bolshevik policy item prior to October revolution. *Trans.*

²⁵“Flag of Labor” No. 3. See above about execution of the workers in Ekaterinoslav.

²⁶A flier by the Left SR Central Committee. No. 4.

²⁷See “Medusa Head”.

²⁸I intentionally segregated that category of the office workers, officers and others.

out of lust for power". That was unavoidable. That occurred during French revolution, as I mentioned earlier²⁹. That postulate, which I consider absolute, creates the most doubt. I am sure that in the future more affirmative data will become available. Here is one more example. One of the inmates of Nikolaev Che Ka prison wrote in his testimony to Denikin's commission (21 August 1919.): "The situation of the workers and peasants, who had no opportunity to bribe their way out, was the most dire: a much greater portion of them have been executed, than of the intelligent". There is a document in the commission's archives, confirming that hypothesis with raw data. An attempt was made in a report of Nikolaev municipal government to summarize the recorded executions. The commissions managed to confirm 115 executions by firing squad; a clearly understated number – according to the commission – for not nearly all mass graves have been examined (two of them could not be examined due to complete decomposition of the corpses; the river floor could not be examined too). Also, Che Ka publicized only a portion of the executions; there was no data at all about the executions of the deserters. Only in 73 cases the commission was able to discover social background of the executed; it broke them down into the following categories:

- 1) the most prosecuted category (merchants, landowners, military, clergy, police) – 25, of them 17 officers,
- 2) the working intelligent (engineers, doctors, students) – 15,
- 3) workers and peasants – 33.

If my categories from 1918 were used, than percentage of the so-called "bourgeois" would be even less³⁰.

These facts have gained more prominence in the subsequent stages of terror. The prisons have been full of workers, peasants, intelligent. They filled the ranks of executed by firing squad too.

The last year would allow us to create another category: "red terror" against the socialists.

The statement that red terror was a response to white terror aimed at destruction of the "class enemies, conspiring against worker and peasant proletariat" could be made for no other purposes than rhetorical. Perhaps those appeals, directed at Red Army, made the initial stage of civil war so cruel, so truly barbarian. Perhaps that rhetoric mixed on lies corrupted some segments of population. The government appealed to the people to fight the enemy and inform of it. But those appeals to snitching were simultaneously followed by the threats: "every failure to inform – read the order³¹ of the Chair of Extreme Military-Revolutionary Tribunal of Donetsk re-

²⁹Of 2755 guillotined in France, whose social background could be discovered by Louie Blanc, only 650 belonged to the well off classes, i.e. less than 20%. Hippolyte Adolphe Taine arrived at the same conclusions: according to him 12,000 of the executed, whose occupation could be discovered, 7545 belonged to the lower bourgeois and workers. Thus the historian of different generations and different political affiliation arrive at the same conclusions.

³⁰See below sentencing statistics for the Revolutionary Tribunals 1922 – 1923

³¹"The Star of Kharkov", 7 June 1919.

gion Pyatakov – would be viewed as a crime against revolution and punished with all power of the military-revolutionary law”³². Informing is considered civil duty and declared a virtue. “From now on we all would have to become the agents of Che Ka” – declared Bukharin. “We have to watch every counter-revolutionary in the streets, in the homes, in public places, at the railroads, in the soviet institutions, wherever and whenever, capture them, pass them to hands of Che Ka” – wrote “left” communist Myasnikov³³, the murderer of the Great Prince Michael Alexander, who have subsequently fallen from grace for a brochure, where he opposed Lenin³⁴. “If each of us would become an agent of Che Ka, if each worker would inform about counter-revolution, then the later would be tied by hands and feet, then we would become strong and guarantee the results of our labor”. Every honest citizen must do just that, it is his “sacred duty”. In other words, the entire communist party would have to become secret police, entire Russia would have to turn into Che Ka, where there could be not even a hint of independent and free thought. So, Che Ka detachment at Alexandrov railway in Moscow proposed to announce to all workers, that they would have to give prior notice of any meeting to Che Ka, who would send its representative for sitting in, and the minutes would have to be delivered to Che Ka immediately after the meeting...³⁵

Those appeals called not only to inform – they sanctioned the most egregious tyranny. If Kiev revolutionary tribunal³⁶ called on the workers, reds etc. to fulfill the “great” mission and inform investigative department of the tribunal (“wherever you were... in town or out, around the corner or miles away – inform in person or send a wire... the tribunal’s investigators will arrive immediately”), than in the same Kiev 19 July 1919 the Regional Defense Committee allowed the residents

to arrest all who resist soviet government, take hostages from the rich and execute them by firing squad in case of counter-revolution resistance; subject the villages to military blockade for hiding the weapons; once the deadline for surrendering weapons has passed, carry out mass searches

³²Oh, how reminiscent that is of the modern day’s AML laws! Everyone involved in financial transactions can be punished by 2 – 5 years in prison and fine of \$500,000 – \$1 million for a failure to submit a “suspicious transaction report”. *Trans.*

³³“Izvestiya”, 1 October 1919.

³⁴Where Myasnikov considered using the same methods, developed for bourgeois in 1918 – 1920, on working class a mistake of communist government. Thus Myasnikov’s ideology was not far from those sailors of Kronstadt, who protested against execution of 6 women and sailors, but considered execution of bourgeois the right thing.

* By the way, Myasnikov explained the mystery of Prince Michael Alexander’s murder in his brochure “Could it be true that you do not know, that for the words I am writing many hundreds or thousands of proletariat languish in prisons? If I free, it is only because I am a communist for 15 years... and besides that the working class knows me, failing that, if I was just a communist metal worker... than where would I be? In Che Ka or worse: I would have been “escaped”, “*just like I “escaped” Michael Romanov*, like were “escaped” Rosa Luxemburg, Liebknecht”.

* There seems to be another Myasnikov among the Bolsheviks. It is possible, that the author of “Izvestiya” article and the leader of so-called “worker opposition” were different individuals.

³⁵“People’s Business”, 28 February 1919.

³⁶Kiev “Izvestiya”, 24 July 1919.

and execute those, who was found hiding weapons; impose tax; evict the leaders and agitators to the riots; confiscate their property for the poor³⁷.

The soviet newspapers in the provinces often published the announcements according to the following template: "Kostroma region Che Ka announces, that every citizen of RSFSR is under obligation to execute on the spot the citizen Smorodinov, accused of premeditated desertion...". "You, the communist, have power to kill any provocateur and saboteur – wrote "comrade Ilyin" in Vladikavkaz ³⁸ – if it is preventing you from walking towards the victory in a battle over the corpses".

One of the Southern revolutionary committees even issued a "license to life and death of a counter-revolutionary" in 1918. Some worker unions and reds announced in Astrakhan in June 1918 that the bourgeois hostages would be executed "in 24 minutes" if shots were fired at the workers and reds.

³⁷"Beginning", 19 July 1919.

³⁸"People's Government", 24 January 1919.

Chapter 9

Che Ka Tyranny

They kill the wild animals, but not harass or torture them.

Y. P. Polonsky.

Having created conditions for tyranny externally, the architects of “red terror” established unlimited tyranny internally as well.

If we would glance over the official data from the rarely published lists of executed by firing squads, we would see unforgettable picture of human tyranny over the lives of their brethren. Sometimes people have been officially killed without knowing whom and on what charges: “executed such and such, identity not possible to establish”...

Dzerzhinsky and Zacks so described the methods of the Extreme Commissions in an interview to “New Life” 8 June 1918:

We are being wrongfully accused of anonymous killing – the commission consists of 18 experienced revolutionaries, representatives of [communist] party Central Committee and and representatives of RCAC.

Execution is only possible by unanimous order of all commission members. It is enough for one to vote against execution and the accused’s life is spared.

Our strength is in the fact that we do not know brother or mother, and treat the comrades, accused of wrongdoing just as seriously. This is why our personal reputation has to be beyond suspicion.

We judge quickly. In most cases it takes *one to few days* from the arrest of a *miscreant* to a verdict, but that does not mean that our verdicts have no basis. Of course we can be mistaken, but we *made no mistakes so far* and the best proof of that is our protocols. The *miscreants, crushed by the body of evidence*¹, *confess of the crimes in virtually all cases*, and what can carry more weight, than the confession of the accused?

To a remark of the “New Life” reporter regarding the rumors about violence, used in interrogations, Zacks stated:

¹Did not Latsis just instruct Che Ka to not seek evidence (p. 45)? *Trans.*

All those rumors of violence allegedly used during the interrogations are absolutely false. We are fighting with the elements among ourselves, who prove themselves unworthy of taking part in commission's process.

That interview is a lie from the first till the last word, it is a lie about the times that both leaders referred to.

9.1 Cynicism Of Execution

18 people decide life or death in Che Ka?! No, only 2 – 3, sometimes just one!

Even justice of the peace had power to impose capital punishment. That has caused a kind of collision between the two subordinate offices in 1919 . 20 June Kiev "Izvestiya" (No. 70) published a note:

In response to the queries from the districts the regional legal department explains, that the justices of the peace have no power whatsoever to issue death sentence verdicts. Capital punishment as a norm has not been established by any decree and is contrary to socialist justice. In this transitional time capital punishment is being used by the revolutionary tribunals *and administrative committees exclusively as the means of class struggle.*

Just a few days later we could read something completely different:

In light of the queries from the districts regarding possibility of issuing death sentence verdicts by the justices of the peace the Supreme Court Control explained: presently the power to use capital punishment can rest with the justices of the peace in case of mass attempts of counter-revolutionaries to undermine soviet government.²

"We judge quickly"... Perhaps that happened in the days of mass executions, perhaps that expedience of sentencing is a feature of Russia Che Ka process, but... reality is different. Months pass without interrogation, investigations take years, and still end with... the same execution by firing squad.

"We are being accused of anonymous killing"... In reality, as we mentioned, large number of executions are not being publicized, even though 5 September 1918, at the heat of terror in soviet Russia, the Soviet of People's Commissars issued an order mandating "publication of the names of all executed by firing squad and the grounds for using capital punishment". The publications of "Che Ka Weekly", that was supposed to be an instructional matter for the commissions provide a very informative illustration.

No. 6 of the "Weekly" (26 October) published a list of the executed month earlier for an attempt of socialist-revolutionary Caplan on Lenin. Several hundreds people

²"Beginning", No. 9, 24 July 1919.

have been executed by firing squad and only 90 names published. Of those 90 executed 67 last names published without first and middle names³; 2 with initials only, 18 with general indication of occupation, for example: Cotomazov, former student; Muratov – cooperative clerk, Razumovskii – former lieutenant-colonel, etc. Only 10 had indication of the reason for execution: “obvious counter-revolutionary”, “white army man”, “former minister of internal affairs, counter-revolutionary Khvostov”, “archpriest Vostorgov”. And the reader had to figure out, that “Maclackov” meant execution of the former minister of internal affairs. That was not hard to guess, but who were Zhichkovskii, Ivanov, Zelinski – no one knew and probably never will.

If that was how a decree of central authority was implemented by the central office, one can imagine what transpired deep in the provinces, where terror often took exceptionally monstrous forms. Here the execution announcements (if any!) were much more muted: for example, executed “39 large landowners (?)”, arrested under the trial of counter-revolutionary group “Defenders of Transitional Government” (Smolensk Regional Che Ka); “executed 6 henchmen of monarchy” (Pavlov Posad Che Ka); several names and addition: and “so many” more (Odessa).

The same trend continued even after the “chaotic upheaval”, that infamous ex-commer Moroz mentioned in the same publication (No. 6).

The murders have been carried out literally anonymously. The sentencing “panel” never even saw those whom they convicted, never heard their testimony. We in turn do not know the names of the murdered⁴, as Che Ka never published the names of the judges. Che Ka even coined a technical term for the executions without publishing the names: “muted executions” (Odessa). What kind of moral impudence one had to have in order to reply, as Chicherin, to a “Chicago Tribune” reporter’s question regarding the number of executed by the “orders of secret tribunals” and the fate of the Emperor Nickolas II family. The commissar of foreign affairs replied: “There are no secret tribunals in Russia. As to the executed by the orders of Che Ka – that has been published” (!!!). The fate of the king’s daughters – added Chicherin – is unknown to me. I read in the newspapers (!!) that they were residing in America”...(!!)⁵

“The own confession of the accused”... How many times I personally observed the fact of such confessions under the influence of intimidation, threats, under the barrel of a gun! How many of those complaints have been left on the walls of Che Ka by the inmates!

All rumors regarding violence are “absolutely false”... We will see, that torture and mutilation is rather common for the extreme commissions, and not just deep in the provinces.

Yes, human life costs very little in Soviet Russia. That clearly spelled out a Moscow delegate to Kungur Che Ka Goldin: “We do not need evidence, interrogation or suspicion for an execution by firing squad. We execute as we deem necessary, that is

³Last name is mandatory in Russia. *Trans.*

⁴Besides that the Bolshevik activists for the most part were unidentified individuals: the notorious Moscow investigator Agranov’s last name was in reality Ogranovich; a notorious Odessa ex-commer Kalinichenko was really a Georgian national Sajaya; the secretary of Odessa regional Che Ka Sergeyev signed even the official documents “Benjamin”, i.e. with his conspiratorial alias.

⁵“The Latest News”, 25 April 1922.

it”⁶. And that was really it! Could one provide a better reference to the extreme commissions?

Let us however review motivation for some of the executions, as much as they have been officially published by soviet press. We can find something peculiar. Among those qualifications we can find such precise descriptions of the “crimes” committed: “slick, evasive counter-revolutionary”, “(the wife) was aware of husband’s activity”, “a number of sons and daughters of various generals” (St. Petersburg).

Sometimes the accusations are so shameless that they can only amaze: “the peasants Gorokhov and others, for beating of military commissar”, “merchant Rogov for propaganda against the soviets in his shop”. Or simply “executed under red terror”. Very little information in the following qualifications: 20 “obvious whites” (Orel), “Dr. Zverev, white” (Vologda), 16 “kulacks” (Sebezh), “former member of cadet party” (Moscow), “counter-revolutionary convictions” etc. I could provide many more examples like that from the official soviet newspaper clippings in my possession. It is sufficient to simply scan a volume of “Che Ka Weekly” (6 issues). But here is a publication of the executed by Che Ka in Moscow, shaking by close acquaintance with the names it mentioned, the names familiar to entire educated Russia: N. N. Schepkin, A. D. and A. S. Alpherov⁷, A. A. Volckov⁸, A. I. and V. I. Astrov⁹, N. A. Ogorodnikov¹⁰, K. K. Chernosvitov¹¹, P. V. Gerasimov, (executed as Grekov)¹², S. A. Knyazkov¹³ and others. There were 66 names in total, published in the Moscow newspapers 23 September 1919. Our public consciousness will never come to terms with execution of the Astrov spouses, referred to as “Denikin’s spies” in the official announcement with a note: “A draft plan for overthrowing soviet government, courts, transport, supply chain and an application to Volunteer Army have been found during a search of Astrov’s residence”.

It cannot come to terms with the executions under the motives, put forward by the later trial of Tagantsev against N. I. Lazarevsky, prince Ukhtomsky and others. What have they been executed for? Official publication (1 September) said about N. I. Lazarevsky: “a convicted supporter of democratic government”, “drafted a number of documents for overthrowing soviet government, namely a) local government model of Russia, b) of [Russian] fiat currency circulation, c) of restoration of credit in Russia”; and about the sculptor S. A. Ukhtomsky: provided information about *organization of museums* (?) for passing overseas and a related report for printing in white press”. The poet Gumilev has been executed at the same time.

The publication about the trial of N. N. Schepkin also read: “Yakubovsky Maria Alexandrovna, constitutional democrat, teacher, connected with Kolchak’s agent” – her only fault was that she was captured by an ambush at a private apartment.

⁶From a letter by social-democrat Frumkina to Ural district committee of the communist party. “Always Forward”! 22 January 1919.

⁷Prominent educator, member of Moscow City Council, and his wife. *Trans.*

⁸Groom of the Chamber of the Russian Queen. *Trans.*

⁹Professor of hydraulic engineering and his wife. *Trans.*

¹⁰Member of Kostroma City Council. *Trans.*

¹¹Formerly judge and lawyer, member of transitional parliament. *Trans.*

¹²Lawyer, member of transitional parliament. *Trans.*

¹³Famous historic writer and educator. *Trans.*

Kiev “Izvestiya” 29 August 1919, almost when the Bolsheviks were expelled from Kiev, published a list of 127 executed by firing squad “under red terror in response to mass executions of workers and communists in the territory, captured by Denikin and Petlyura”. Who were those executed we for the most part do not know. Only the names have been published and all were supposed to believe, that “Sinyuk Ivan Panteleymonovich”, “Smirnov Vladimir Vasilyevich”, “Serbin Mitrofan Alexandrovich”, “Serebryakov Alexander Andreyevich” etc. were “the sworn enemies of the workers and poorest peasants”.

Let us provide several examples from the foreign press quoting the soviet newspapers from Southern Russia. They are similar to those, quoted from the central regions. Take for instance Odessa: – justice of the peace Nikiforov, who worked as a night guard of Odessa Ship and Trade Company’s factory, executed for “while dodging draft and refusing to work for the benefit of soviet Russia, got employed at the factory in order to spy and agitate among marginal proletariat”; an old lady Sigizmundova, who received a letter from her son officer in Varna, Poland, executed for “communicating with the agent of Entente and its henchman Wrangel”¹⁴. Gen. Baranov was executed in Odessa in 1919 “under red terror” for taking a picture of Katherine II statue in the square faced by Che Ka building^{15,16}.

We already know, that revolutionary tribunals executed even for intoxication, petty theft. In reality they executed for the officer’s buttons, found during search, for “criminally obtained corpse of a son”. Among the executed was a butcher from Miusskaya Square, who dared to curse the statues of Marx and Engels in Moscow as the “scarecrows”... The doctors of Kronstadt have been executed for “being famous among the workers”. Is it surprising, that the communists in Ivanovo-Voznesensk officially threatened execution for the failure to surrender (and even for a failure to register!) the sewing machines¹⁷, and Vladikavkaz commander Mityaev promised to “sweep off the face of the Earth” everyone guilty of selling alcohol. Baku commissar of Post and Wire Communication threatened the wire operators with execution within 24 hours for delay in processing the messages or those, who responded rudely¹⁸.

Che Ka keeps the logs of death sentences. But does Dzerzhinsky consider sufficient the logs, kept in 1919 in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine? We published the samples of those truly amazing logs of Kiev regional and Ukraine Che Ka under Latsis – the creator and implementor of red terror in Ukraine – in No. 4 of “In the Foreign Land”. Those logs with the authentic signatures and stamps, preserved by Denikin’s commission in its archives, deserve to be photocopied. In one session the regional Che Ka managed to hear 59 cases. The death sentences have been issued oh, so lightly! 19 May 1919, besides the routine issues, heard 40 files and issued 25 death sentences. The sentences have been thoroughly justified – none of them even mentioned motivation: Rudakov Peter George; Vashin Ivan Alekseyevich; Ryzhkovsky Vikenty Romanovich

¹⁴“The Latest News”, 24 November 1920.

¹⁵Archive of Denikin’s Commission.

¹⁶Did the excommers have nothing better to do than looking out of the windows? *Trans.*

¹⁷“Land of Workers”, 19 October 1919.

¹⁸“The Latest News”, 6 November 1920.

etc. – “to apply capital punishment and confiscate cash¹⁹”. In the same article²⁰ we mentioned cynicism of Ukraine Che Ka and sampled its meeting minutes signed by Latsis, without a date, meanwhile some unfortunate Eugene Toklovodov was sentenced to execution by firing squad to be carried out in 24 hours for counter-revolution actions... We mentioned frightening simplicity of the documentation for the executions in Kharkov Che Ka. Here the excommers Portugeis and Feldman executed in 1919 without any logs: simply wrote brief and hurried notes on the files: “to execute Bayeva as a hardened criminal”²¹.

Apparently the above mentioned is called “to shape it legal” and arrive at “spirit of execution” in terminology of the excommers, who despised old morality as bourgeois prejudice. These instructions have been sent by the Odessa Che Ka secretary according to an ex-student of Novorossiysk university Sigal. Or this: turn the case in such direction, as to put 15 people “up against the wall”.

With little respect to human life the namesakes have often been executed – sometimes through oversight, other times specifically to avoid mistakes. There was a case in Odessa where three doctors have been executed: Volkov, Vlasov and Vorobyev²². A certain Ozerov was executed in Odessa. The investigator finds an error and executes the other Ozerov, to whom the verdict was supposed to apply²³. The same case was quoted by Averbuch in his book “Odessa Che Ka”.

A tip was given about counter-revolution activity of a certain Aaron Husid, without exact location. The same day, according to the address records accessed by the order of the investigator Sigal 11 people with the last name Husid have been arrested. And after two weeks of investigation and various torture, two namesake Husids have been executed, despite the fact that originally only one was accused, as investigation was not able to establish which of them was really a counter-revolutionary. Thus another Husid was executed *just in case...*

A reliable witness, who cannot be suspected in intentional twisting of reality, testified, that a deputy prosecutor N. S. Baranov has been executed in Odessa instead of an officer with the same name; that witness was present in a cell, when Alexey Vyvodtsev was summoned for an execution; there was another K. M. Vyvodtsev in the cell, but response was “*The name does not matter*, that is the right Vyvodtsev”. One of the intelligent witnesses to Denikin’s commission, an agronomist, testified, that again in Odessa a peasant Yakov Hromoy of Yavkino village has been executed – he was confused for another peasant Yakov from the same village, who was clinically lame²⁴.

So many have found themselves in that situation, and some of them by accident escaped death in the very last moments. I know many similar facts of Moscow investigators activity. My personal observations will be kept aside for now – they will

¹⁹So that is where lies the origins of civil forfeiture! *Trans.*

²⁰“In the Foreign Land” No. 4.

²¹By the way, about that 17 year old Bayeva. She was considered hardened after the 3^d theft. The witnesses however said, that Bayeva was in reality executed for calling Steklov a “jew”.

²²Visnhyak, “Modern West” I, 227.

²³“Common Business” No. 126.

²⁴“Hromoy” is Russian for “lame”. *Trans.*

be included in the memoirs presently being edited. The same facts can be found in “Livre blanc” and “Che Ka Weekly”.

Nilstonsky also wrote about the executions of namesakes in Kiev (p. 17)²⁵.

And how many executions by mistake! Excommar jargon even coined a term “the errored”. An officer organization headed by a certain “Levshin” was discovered in Moscow in 1918. All officers residing in Levshin Drive have been arrested. They languished in Bootyrskaya prison simultaneously with those arrested under Lockhart trial. Of 28 arrested only 6 survived. The situation was much worse in the provinces. Quoting an official document: “the commissars in Bronnitsa city (near Moscow) executed everyone, whose face they did not like. The administrative committee of the soviet did not even meet, but one or another member simply said: “we have ruled” and nothing could be done any more”. They gave an arrestee a shovel, posted two guards and sent him to the Bronnitsa race track, where he was made to dig his own grave, then executed and buried him.

Should we be surprised by all that, if Latsis himself testified in his articles, that execution by firing squad was used *just in case* – to intimidate the commoners, “impart a due effect”, “to discourage from sabotage and conspiring”. The hostages have been executed *in anticipation* of “kulack uprising” in Yaroslavl.

“The Bolsheviks stated, that they had to terrorize the population to prevent all kinds of counter-revolutionary movements in the [Ekaterinburg] city” – wrote Elston to Curzon 11 February 1919²⁶.

And execution of the hostage family members remains the most unacceptable; it is impossible to come to terms with an announcement, that a family of 3 – 7 year old girls and 69 year old mother has been executed for her officer son in May 1920.

Why were the “counter revolutionaries” executed at particular moment in time? That is unclear too. The ministers of monarch government were executed in the Autumn of 1918. Another minister Bulygin survived 1918, but for some reason was tried by Che Ka 5 September 1919. He was accused of reactionary policies of 1905. The verdict read: “to execute citizen Bulygin, confiscate property belonging to Bulygin and transfer to the Administrative Committee for distribution among the workers of nationalized factory”²⁷. Did Dzerzhinsky consider such verdicts justified in his interview?

9.2 Mutilation and Torture

Recounting the above mentioned one can hardly doubt use of real torture in the basements of the Che Ka. The address of Administrative Committees of the members of Transitional Parliament in Paris to the public opinion of Europe (27 October 1921.) unlikely overstated anything when it protested against bacchanalia of political killing in Russia, violence and torture. Sometimes it can be hard to distinguish physical

²⁵Nilstonsky’s book, although containing a number of very interesting facts, confirmed by other sources, obviously overstated the figures. In this case he wrote of 10 (!) namesakes.

²⁶“Livre blanc”. p. 108.

²⁷Ryazan “Izvestiya” 7 September 1919.

and mental torture, for they often intertwined. In reality the conditions in Bolshevik prison are a prolonged torture in itself.

Everything we know of the old Russian prisons, of “Russian Bastille” as Schlisselburg castle was referred to – the prison for the important political prisoners – pales before many prisons and regime, established by communist government. Was imprisonment there, often for months without interrogation, without accusations, under the constant threat of execution, that materialized in the end, not a torture, almost physical? P. A. Kropotkin called systematic hostage taking a restoration of torture under those circumstances. But everyone imprisoned was just the same hostage as a matter of fact.

When I was imprisoned in Bootyrskaya prison, I met a Dr. Mudrov from Moscow. I did not know what he was accused of, but apparently there were no significant accusations against him. He was transferred from Che Ka to the general prison and remained there for several months. He got used to the life there and prison administration obtained an investigator’s permission to engage Mudrov as a prison doctor for lack of required medical personnel. There was a typhus outbreak in prison and Dr. Mudrov faithfully worked. He was no longer called to the interrogations. One could speculate that his case would be closed, at least it was obvious that there was no urgency in it. Once he was called to Che Ka for an interview. He has not returned and several days later we learned of his execution by firing squad. There was no justification for that senseless cruelty. No one ever learned what Dr. Mudrov has been executed for. The official publication about that in “Izvestiya” on 17 October read only that he was a “former member of Cadet party”.

I recall another encounter, even more striking. It was Summer 1922. I was arrested as a witness under the trial of socialist-revolutionaries. At some point they summoned me from the cell to trial. I walked along with some elderly emaciated man. I managed to exchange a few words with him along the way. Turned out he was a lieutenant-colonel Perkhurov, who took part in Savinkov rebellion against the Bolsheviks in Yaroslavl 1918. Perkhurov languished in a holding cell of Che Ka special department – starving, with no books, no visitors, no walk, that were banned in that supposedly investigation jail. Was he forgotten, or held on to for some reason – I do not know. He was sent to the court just like me, as a witness, but... in court he was turned back into an accused. He was transferred to Yaroslavl and according to the official newspapers he was executed by firing squad a month later. Another officer languished in that jail with horrible regime for year and a half and expected an execution probably nightly.

These are only two examples that I immediately witnessed. But there are hundreds of them! And if that occurred in the capital during the days, when initial anarchy of Bolshevik government transitioned into established order, than what was done in the remote provinces? Horrible tyranny ruled there. Living for years in anticipation of execution – is a physical torture. The staged execution is the same torture, used so often by the Che Ka investigators for the purpose of intimidation and extracting information. I recorded many such stories during imprisonment in Bootyrskaya. I had no grounds to question the validity of those stories about personal suffering – they were so actual. Some of the accused in the trial of St. Petersburg cooperators

in Moscow Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal have been subjected to that torture in Autumn 1920. The investigation was carried out in St. Petersburg. One of the accused was taken out for execution several times at night, where he was ordered to disrobe and watch execution of the others – in the last moment he was taken back to his cell only to repeat the same nightmarish scene a few days later. People lost their senses and were ready to acknowledge any confessions. An American national Kalamatiano sentenced to an execution under the Lockhart trial told me and V. A. Myakotin that he and his co-accused Frida have been twice told that they were going to be executed and taken outside. Kalamatiano was sentenced in 1918 and only 10 May 1920 he was told, that the verdict was overturned. He lived under the threat of execution for all that time.

The Russian writer O. E. Kolbasina, who was imprisoned simultaneously with me, writes about similar experience of another inmate in her memoirs²⁸. That was in Moscow, at Russia Che Ka, i.e. in the capital. One woman was accused of giving a 100 thousand Rouble bribe to save some officer. Quoting her story from Kolbasina's memoirs:

The executions were carried out in the basement. There were several corpses, stripped to underwear here. I could not remember how many. I clearly saw one woman and a man wearing socks. Both lied face down. They shoot in the back of the head... The floor is slippery of blood... I was not going to disrobe – let them take what they want²⁹. “Disrobe!” – they yelled, it was like hypnosis. The hands mechanically started to unbutton... I put off the coat. Started unbuttoning dress... And I heard a voice like from a distance – like through cotton: “Kneel!”. I was pushed onto the corpses. They were piled up. And one was still moving and wheezing. And again someone shouted from a distance somewhere: “Get up fast” – and someone pulled me by the hand hard. Romanovsky (a notorious investigator) stood in front of me smiling. You know his face – disgusting and cunning triumphant smile.

– What, Catherine Petrovna (he always addressed by first and middle name), got scared a bit? A little shake for you? That is nothing. Now you will be more cooperative. Right?

Is that a torture or not, when a husband is being executed in wife's presence? That fact was mentioned in her Odessa memoirs by N. Davydova³⁰.

We learned today, that Baroness T-gen has not been executed. Only her husband, and several more have been killed. She was told to stand and watch, waiting for her turn. When all have been executed, she was read a pardon. She was ordered to clean up blood. They said her hair turned gray.

²⁸“Will of Russia” No. 4, 1922.

²⁹The executioners took the clothes of the victims for themselves.

³⁰“Half a Year In Jail”, p. 65.

“Che Ka” almanac published many such incidents. All that was quoted from the source. Back to the same creek in Saratov (p. 50), where local Che Ka buries its victims. Here the hundreds of corpses are piled up out to 120 – 150 feet already. Two young women are being taken to that creek in October 1919 and demand from the disrobed under the barrel of a gun on top of the creek that they said where one of their family members is. The eyewitness saw two completely gray haired young women.

“Seldom, but from time to time, some unfortunate victims, who were subjected to physical or mental torture, survived and testified with their mutilated bodies and absolutely gray from fear and suffering hair better than with words. Even less often, but it happened too – those who escaped death learned about the last suffering of the executed and conveyed information.

This is how we learned about horrific torture of a member of Parliament Ivan Ivanovich Kotov, who was dragged from the bulge of a barge for an execution with a broken arm and a leg and poked out eye (executed in 1918.)”³¹.

And here is Ekaterinodar Che Ka, which used the same methods of intimidation in 1920. Dr. Shestyakov was taken to the Kuban river bank outside the city by a car. There he was forced to dig his own grave, a firing squad was lined up and aimed... and a volley of blank shots was fired. The same was done to a certain Korvin-Piotrovski after severe beating. Worse – he was told, that his wife and 10 year old daughter were arrested. And their execution was staged before his eyes that night.

An article in “Che Ka” almanac provides clear details of torture and mutilation in the chambers of Ekaterinodar Che Ka and elsewhere in Kuban region.

Physical and mental torture is carried out. This is how they torture in Ekaterinodar: they stretch a victim on the basement floor. Two burly excommers pull the victim by the head and shoulders, stretching the neck, while the third one slams a blunt object, usually a butt of a handgun, into the neck. The neck bloats, blood flows from nose and mouth. The victim suffers immensely...

Dombrovsky, a teacher, whose only fault was that during a search they found a suitcase with officer clothes, left behind by an officer family member passing through the town back in Denikin’s time, was tortured in a solitary cell. Dombrovskaya confessed of that, but the excommers had a tip that she was hiding gold jewelry, received from a relative, some general. That was enough to subject her to torture. Firstly she was raped and abused. The rape was carried out in the order of seniority. The excommmer Friedman raped her first, than the rest of excommers. Then she was tortured in order to extract information of where she was hiding gold. First they carved her naked body with knives, than crushed the fingertips with the pliers. Suffering and bleeding, the victim pointed at some place in a barn of 28 Medvedev St., where she lived. She was executed at 9 PM 6 November, and an hour later that night the excommers searched that address, and supposedly found a golden wrist band and several rings.

³¹“Che Ka” almanac, p. 198. See the documents, collected in chapter IV of “Mauvais traitements et tortures des prisonniers”, Socialist-revolutionary Memorandum.

An iron glove is used for torture in Kavkazskaya village. It is a massive chunk of steel, worn around right hand, studded with small nails. “Besides pain from the mass of iron, the victim suffers immensely from the multitude of shallow wounds, left by the nails, that quickly inflame. Ion Efremovich Lelyavin was subjected to that torture among others while the excommers questioned where he was hiding gold and paper money of the monarchy. A headband is used for torture in Armavir. It is simply a leather strip, connected with a screw and nut. The band is wrapped around the head and nut is tightened, squeezing a head and causing immense physical pain”³². The chair of Pyatigorsk Che Ka Operative Department Richman “flogs” the questioned with rubber whips giving 10 – 20 whips. He was the one who sentenced some sisters of charity to 15 whips for providing medical care to the wounded cossacks³³. The pins have been inserted under the fingernails in the same Che Ka – “interrogations with systemic use of fists, whips and cleaning rods” is a commonplace here. A number of witnesses certified savage beating of Adm. Myazgovski in Nikolayev (1919). “Common Business”³⁴ printed testimony of a commoner from Lugansk city, of how he was tortured: here is drenching in ice-cold water, pulling the fingernails with pliers, inserting the needles, carving with a razor etc. A letter to the same paper³⁵ read about torture in Simpheropol – Che Ka use a “novel method of torture – administering enemas with crushed glass and setting burning candles under the genitals”. They used to sit a tortured onto a hot frying pan³⁶ and used iron rods, rubber hose with metal tip, “twisted arms”, “fractured bones”.

A separate chapter in Averbuch’s memoirs was dedicated to torture in Odessa. Shackles, punishment cell, flogging with twigs and sticks; crushing fingertips with pliers; suspending etc. – all that was used by Odessa Che Ka. There were “half-inch sticks” and “braided leather whip” etc. among the torture tools. According to the Denikin’s Commission archive we can supplement the picture, painted by Averbuch. Here is a staged execution: they insert a victim into a box with a corpse and fire shots. The blast injured victim’s ear. They take him away perhaps until the next time; another was forced to dig his own grave in the same cell where he was imprisoned – this is a “cell for condemned”, and there is writing on a wall: 27 corpses already buried here... but that is only a method of intimidation; an executioner comes to another one every night: “Go outside!”, and once outside: “Take him back – let him live another night”... Several times a day the Odessa excommers entered the cells and taunted the inmates: “you will be dispatched today”³⁷. Armed guard was installed in the holding

³²“Che Ka”, pp. 230 – 231.

³³Archive of Denikin’s Commission.

³⁴1921. No. 476.

³⁵“Common Business”, 27 June 1921.

³⁶Archive of Denikin’s Commission.

³⁷Archive of Denikin’s Commission; see also Kurakina’s memoirs. “Russian Chronicles” No. 5, p. 201.

cells when Che Ka conducted a large political trial in Moscow in 1919; the female communists often visited the cells, telling the guards: “These are the spies, you can kill them for an attempt to escape”.

A woman Bosch was a chair of Penza Che Ka, who was so wanton in 1918, that she was transferred by the central organization. A 20 year old man was a chair of Vologda Che Ka. He used this method (and not in 1918 but in 1920). He sat on a chair at a river bank; they brought the bags and the inmates for interrogation, put them in the bags and sank them in an ice hole. He was committed to a mental institution in Moscow when the rumors of his methods reached the center. I learned of him from a reliable witness.

Same “whipping and torture” with rubber in Tyumen³⁸. Here is how they torture in Uralsk Che Ka – according to the mentioned report by Frumkina – “Meder was lead to a barn, keeled against the wall and shots were fired left and right of him. Goldin (investigator) said: “if you will not surrender your son, we will not execute you by firing squad, but first break your arms and legs, and then finish you off”. (That unfortunate Meder was executed the day after.) An investigator of Novocherkassk prison inserted the barrels of two revolvers into the victim’s mouth and pulled out the teeth together with gums³⁹.

Vast material was collected by the “Special Commission” of Gen. Denikin on the torture chambers of Che Ka. Was a method of executing Gen. Ruzski and others used in Pyatigorsk, mentioned earlier, a torture or not?

The executioners ordered their victims to kneel and stretch their necks forward. Then they slashed them with the swords. Some executioners were inexperienced and could not deliver a fatal blow from one strike. Some hostages were slashed up to 5 times or more”. The chair of Che Ka Atar-bekov himself slashed Ruzski with a “dagger”. Others “had arms and legs severed first, than decapitated”⁴⁰.

Here is descriptions of the actions by the Kharkov Che Ka commissar Sayenko, who attained extreme notoriety during capture and abandoning of Kharkov by the Bolsheviks in 1919. Hundreds of people were under his control. One of the witnesses said, that upon entering a cell when arrested he noticed that the inmates were frightened.

To the question “What happened?” followed an answer: “Sayenko came and took two for interrogation, Sychev and Belochkin, and promised to return at night to “shave off” a few more inmates”. Few minutes later a door opened and a 19 year old man Sychev entered, supported by two reds. It was a shadow of a man. To a question “What happened to you?” short answer “I was interrogated by Sayenko”. Sychev’s right eye was completely bloodied and swollen, right chick had a huge abrasion inflicted by a butt

³⁸“Worker’s Life”, a social-democrat paper, May 1918.

³⁹A. Nickolin, “Cossack’s Thoughts” No. 9.

⁴⁰Handwritten summary “Bolshevism in the Caucasus Mineral Waters region” 1918.

of a revolver. 4 front teeth were missing, neck bruised, a large torn wound was on the left shoulder blade; in total there were 37 bruises and scars on the back". Sayenko was interrogating them for 5 days. Belochkin was taken to a hospital from interrogation, where he died. Sayenko's favorite method was stabbing the interrogated 1/2 inch deep with a dagger and turning it in the wound. All tortures were carried out by Sayenko in the office of Special Department investigator before Yakimovich, his assistants and investigator Lyubarsky.

The same eyewitness further tells about an execution of several inmates, carried out by Sayenko the same night. Drunk of under the influence of cocaine, Sayenko came at 9 PM to the cell, accompanied by an Austrian staff captain Klochkovsky, he ordered Pshenichy, Ovcharenko and Belousov to go outside into the yard, where they disrobed them and started stabbing and slashing them with the daggers, starting with lower body and going up. Having finished the execution, bloodied Sayenko returned to the cell and said "Do you see this blood? Same will be with anyone, who would go against me and worker-peasant party". Then he dragged Sychev, beaten in the morning, to the yard to let him see Pshenichny still alive and finished the later with a revolver shot, struck Sychev several times with a sword sheath and pushed back into the cell".

Writing on the walls told of the feelings that Che Ka inmates experienced. Here are some of them: "beaten for 4 days to unconsciousness and forced to signe a prepared statement; signed, could not take any more torture". "Was given 800 cleaning rods and looked like a chunk of meat... executed 26 March at 7 PM at the age of 23". "Chamber of torture". "Entering here, leave hopes behind".

The surviving witnesses confirmed the horrors of that "Chamber of torture". According to those survivors, interrogation by Che Ka occurred at night and always included threat of excution and savage beating in order to extract confession in the trumped up charges. After the failure of threats confessions were extracted by whipping with the cleaning rods into unconsciousness. The investigators Miroshnichenko, a former hairdresser, and Iesel Mankin, 18 year old man, were most persistent. The first forced a servant Kanisheva under the barrel of a gun to "confess of harboring the officers", the other, aiming a handgun at the interrogated used to say: "your life depends on the correct answer". Since early April "new mental torture" added to other suffering:

The executions were carried out almost before the eyes of the inmates; the sound of shots from the cellar in the yard used for torture and execution could be heard in the cells. During the inspection of that cellar 16 June two 30 lb weights and a 2 foot length of rubber hose with improvised grip were found. The weights and hose were used for torturing the victims of Che Ka. The floor was covered in blood-soaked straw; the walls had bullet holes and blood splatter, with brain tissue and pieces of scalp with hair stuck; the entire floor was also splattered with those pieces.

The autopsies of 107 corpses, exhumed from the graves of Sayenko's victims in the concentration camp, discovered savage cruelty: beatings, fractured ribs and shin bones, crushed skulls, severed hands and feet, severed fingers, decapitation, burning with hot metal, etc. "The first body exhumed was identified as that of Cornet of the 6th Hussar squadron Zhabokritsky. He was savagely beaten antemortem, inflicting rib fractures; besides that chest was burned with a round object in 13 places and an entire strip was burned on the back". Further: "Head of one corpse was completely flattened into a disk 1/2 inch thick; flattening was performed by simultaneously applied pressure from two sides". Here as well: "7 stab and bullet wounds inflicted to an unidentified woman, who was buried alive".

The bodies with hot liquid burns of abdomen and back were found, slashed with the swords but not instantly killed: "the victims were wounded by slashing specifically to torture at first"⁴¹. Wherever the corpses were discovered in the more or less secret places, all of them bore the same signs. Be it Odessa, Nikolayev, Tsaritsyn. It is possible that the skulls of the corpses, exhumed from the Odessa pit mines, could be fractured from throwing into the pits; it is also possible that many signs of torture occurred from prolonged burial; and it is possible, that those who examined the bodies, could not distinguish torture from perimortem effects and "confused macerations for burns and bloated genitals for the antemortem mutilation" – and still there is sufficient evidence and multiple pictures (a few dozens), that clearly demonstrate that the corpses could not naturally arrive at the condition, discovered at autopsy. The stories of physical torture on par with Spanish inquisition would always be exaggerated – our consciousness would not feel any better from realization, that Russian torture was slightly less cruel, less inhumane.

With some moral relief we can stress, that all staff of anatomical theater in Odessa, where the corpses of the executed by Che Ka were often sent, testified about absence of any external signs of torture. But that fact does not preclude the very possibility of torture. Not everyone, of course, was tortured, and those corpses obviously would not be sent to an anatomical theater.

Much of testimony by the eyewitnesses to Denikin's Commission was confirmed by the sources on the other side opposed to White Army. Let us take for example Kharkov and Sayenko's achievements. Left SR, imprisoned there at the time, said⁴²:

As Denikin's troops approached, bloodthirsty rage of Che Ka increased more and more. It found its hero. That hero was Sayenko. As a matter of fact he was low flying – a Che Ka commissar, but in those days of panic the lives of prison and Che Ka inmates have been under his exclusive control. Every night his car drove to the prison, every night they grabbed several inmates and took them away. Usually Sayenko executed the sentenced himself. He shot one, sick with typhus, in the yard of the prison. Short, with shiny eyes and twitching maniacal face, Sayenko ran around the prison with a cocked Mauser in a shaking hand. Previously he arrived for the sentenced. In the last two days he himself selected his victims among

⁴¹ Archive of Denikin's Commission, ed. II, Rostov on Don, 1919.

⁴² "Kremlin Behind Bars", p. 181.

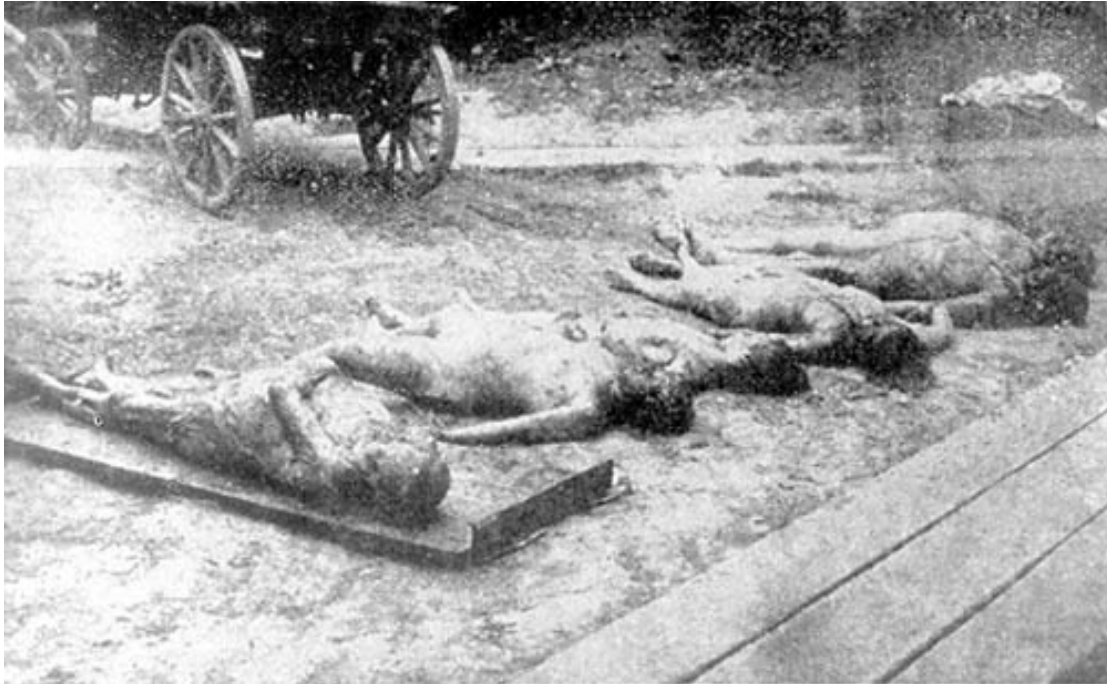


Figure 9.1: Kharkov. The corpses of hostage women, tortured to death. Second on the left S. Ivanova, a convenience store owner. Third from the left A. I. Karolskaya, colonel's wife. Fourth from the left L. Hlopkova, land owner. Breasts of all cut off antemortem, genitals burned (charcoals found inside vagina).

the arrested and rushed them across the yard by striking with flat side of his sword.

During the last day of our confinement at Kharkov prison the sounds of volleys and single shots sounded across the quiet prison all day long. 120 people have been executed that day in the back yard of the prison.

That is a story of one evacuee. There were few of those “happy survivors” – only 20 – 30. His friend describes that horrible sorting before surrendering the city “for three nightmarish hours”⁴³.

We were waiting in the office and observed a nightmarish scene, how quickly the inmates were being judged. A well-dressed young man popped up from the cubicle adjoining the office, shouted a last name and the guards went into the said cell. Imagination created a horrible picture. The living human beings are lying on the bunk beds in the dozens of the cells.

And in the quiet of the night, interrupted with the sounds of cannon fire near the city and single revolver shots in the disgusting prison yard, where one dead falls after another – 2000 strong prison population is twitching in frightened anticipation.

⁴³“Kremlin Behind Bars”. pp. 54 – 55.

The doors would open in the corridor, heavy steps would sound, buttstocks would strike the floor, than locks would squeak. Someone is shining a flashlight and looking up a last name in the list with a callused finger. And people on the bunk beds are shivering in a feat of fear, consuming brain and heart. "Is it for me?" Than a name is called out. The rest slowly calm down, the heart stops jumping out of the chest: "Not me, not now!"

The summoned rushes to put on the clothes, but the fingers are failing. The guard rushes them:

"Move quicker, no time left"... It is hard to tell how many of them summoned in the last 3 hours. I know only that many of those half-dead walked by with dull eyes. "Trial" does not last long... And what kind of trial was it? The chair or secretary of tribunal – the well-dressed young man – looked into the list and barked: "take him away". And a man was lead through another door.

The horrible scenes of systematic "unloading" of prisons could be found in the archive of Denikin's commission.

After midnight of 9 June the inmates of a camp in Chaikovskaya St. were awoken by the shots fired. No one was sleeping, listening to the shots and steps of the guards in the corridors, to the clicks of locks and heavy steps of those lead from the cells for execution.

Sayenko went from cell to cell with his assistants and called out the condemned by the list; the shouts of the commissar could be heard in the furthest cells: "Come out, gather your stuff!". The exhausted prisoners got up and dragged their feet out of the cell doors and down the steps towards death without objections or use of force. At the place of execution on top of the dug grave, wearing only underwear or completely naked, people were made to kneel; Sayenko, Edward or Bondarenko approached one after another and shot them in the back of the head, the skulls crushed, blood and brain was flying around, and the body silently fell down onto the still warm corpses of the executed. The executions continued for more than three hours... More than 50 people have been executed. The news of execution spread across the city in the morning, and the families gathered at Chaikovskaya St; suddenly the doors of command opened and two disheveled men left, followed by Sayenko and Ostapenko holding revolvers. As soon as the unidentified men crossed the ditch, two shots were fired and they fell into a grave, dug near the prison wall. Sayenko ordered the crowd to be dispersed with the buttstocks and yelled: "Do not be afraid, Sayenko will complete red terror to its end, execute all". And the same "happy survivor" confirmed all data on Sayenko, collected by the commission in his description of transfer from Kharkov to Moscow. Sayenko supervised the transfer and executed many of the inmates in transit. (That witness is

prominent Left SR V. A. Karelin⁴⁴.) “The legends, circulating about him in Kharkov, did not depart from reality. He shot a sick man on stretchers in Kharkov prison before our eyes”. “He stabbed one inmate in a cell before the eyes of one of our comrades. When one of the inmates escaped from a party he was responsible for, Sayenko shot the first one at random – as a sacrifice”. “A man with dull red eyes, he was obviously under the influence of cocaine and morphine. His sadism was expressed even more in that condition”⁴⁵.

Nilstonsky tells something even more horrible in his book “Bloody Hangover of Bolshevism”, which for the most part quoted the data of Gen. Réberg’s commission, which carried out its investigation immediately after capture of Kiev by the Volunteer Army in August 1919.

The Bolsheviks managed to slaughter the inmates of the most Che Ka on the night [before their retreat]. During that human blood bath, on the night of 28 August 1919 127 have been murdered at the regional Che Ka at 5 Sadovaya St. alone. Due to the rush about 100 people were lying in the garden of regional Che Ka, about 70 at the district Che Ka at Elisavetinskaya St, about that many at the “Chinese” Che Ka; 51 railroad workers at the railway Che Ka and a few at each of many other Che Ka in Kiev...

That was done primarily out of revenge for victorious offensive of Volunteer Army and secondly out of reluctance to evacuate the arrested.

We found a few survivors at some of the Che Ka, abandoned too quickly by the Bolsheviks, but in what condition! Those were walking dead, dragging their feet and looking at us with still dull eyes” (p. 9).

Nilstonsky further describes the interior of one of the Kiev human “slaughterhouses” (the author contends, that they were officially referred to as such) while examined by the commission.

...The entire concrete floor of a large garage (he is referring to a “slaughterhouse” of the regional Che Ka) was covered with several inches of blood, still due to heat, mixed with brain, skull bones, fragments of hair and other human remains. All walls were splattered with blood, the chunks of brain and scalp stuck to them around the thousands of bullet holes. A 10 inch deep 10 yard long drainage ditch lead from the middle of the garage to the next building where there was sewage pipe. That ditch was full to the top with blood... Near that horrible place in the garden of that building 127 corpses from the recent slaughter were buried in a shallow mass grave... Here we immediately noticed, that all corpses had crushed

⁴⁴Released from prison after transfer to Moscow in October 1919. Arrested in September 1937 and executed in 1938. *Trans.*

⁴⁵“Kremlin Behind Bars”, 62 – 63.

skulls, some heads were completely flattened. They were possibly killed by way of crushing the heads with some heavy object. Some had no heads at all, but they were not decapitated by chopping, but... by ripping the heads off... Only a few could be identified by the special features, such as golden teeth, that the “Bolsheviks” did not manage to pull in this case. All corpses were completely naked.

Normally the corpses were taken by carts and trucks outside the city and buried there after the slaughter. We found another older grave with about 80 corpses near the first one. Here we discovered all kinds of mutilation and crippling that were difficult to imagine. There were corpses gutted, others had no limbs, some were completely slashed. Some had eyes poked out and at the same time their heads, faces, necks and bodies were covered with stab wounds. Further we found a body with a wedge driven through the chest. Some had no tongues. We found a number of severed arms and legs in one of the corners of the grave. In a distance from the grave near the garden fence were found several corpses without signs of violent death. When the doctors autopsied them several days later, they found dirt in their mouths, throats and lungs. Therefore the victims have been buried alive, swallowed and inhaled dirt trying to breath. There were people of varying ages and both sexes in that mass grave. There were elderly, men, women and children there. One woman was tied with a rope with her about 8 year old daughter. Both had bullet wounds. (pp. 21 –22).

Right here in the yard among the graves we found a cross that lieutenant Sorokin, considered by the Bolsheviks a Volunteer Army spy, was crucified on about a week prior to capture of Kiev... At the regional Che Ka we found a chair similar to a dental (the same in Kharkov) with the belts remaining that were used to tie down a victim. The entire concrete floor of the cell was covered in blood, and chunks of human skin and scalp with hair were stuck to the bloodied chair...

The same was at the district Che Ka, the same floor covered in blood with brains and bone fragments etc. “A stump struck an eye in that building, that a victim’s head was put against and crushed with a breaker bar, there was a hole right next to the stump, a kind of hatch, filled to the top with human brain which fell down there out of a crushed skull...

Here are the tortures of the so-called “Chinese” Che Ka in Kiev:

The tortured was tied to a wall or a pole; then they firmly attached one end of a pipe few inches in diameter to his body... A rat was sent down the other end of the pipe, which was immediately covered with a wire mesh and heated with fire. The animal, desperately trying to escape heat, started gnawing through the body of the victim to find escape. That torture lasted for hours, sometimes into the day after, until the victim died (p. 25).



Figure 9.2: Kaharkov. A corpse of the hostage non-commissioned officer Bobrov. Tongue cut off, hands severed, skin removed along the left leg.

The commission documents contain information of the following method of torture as well:

The tortured were buried with only head above ground and left until they passed out. Then they were dug out and left until they regained consciousness, then buried again... Before leaving Kiev the Bolsheviks so buried many unfortunate souls and in a rush left them – the Volunteer Army men dug them out... (pp. 23 – 24).

The author of the quoted book stated, based on the same commission's data, that Kiev was not an exception. Those methods have been used everywhere. However each Che Ka had their unique feature. Each territory had its specifics in the area of human cruelty during the civil war.

It was scalping and pulling skin from the hands at Kharkov Che Ka under Sayenko⁴⁶.

The tortured have been put naked into the nail studded barrels and then rolled back and forth in Voronezh⁴⁷. A 5-star was burned on the forehead; a wreath made of barbed wire was put around the priests' heads.

The bones have been sawed in Tsaritsyn and Kamyshin. The clergy have been staked up in Poltava and Kremenchoog (pp. 26 – 28). "They staked up 18 monks in one day in Poltava, where "Gregory-the-prostitute" was a king" (p. 28). "The residents

⁴⁶The fact confirmed by other sources too.

⁴⁷Recall the similar testimony regarding Odessa!

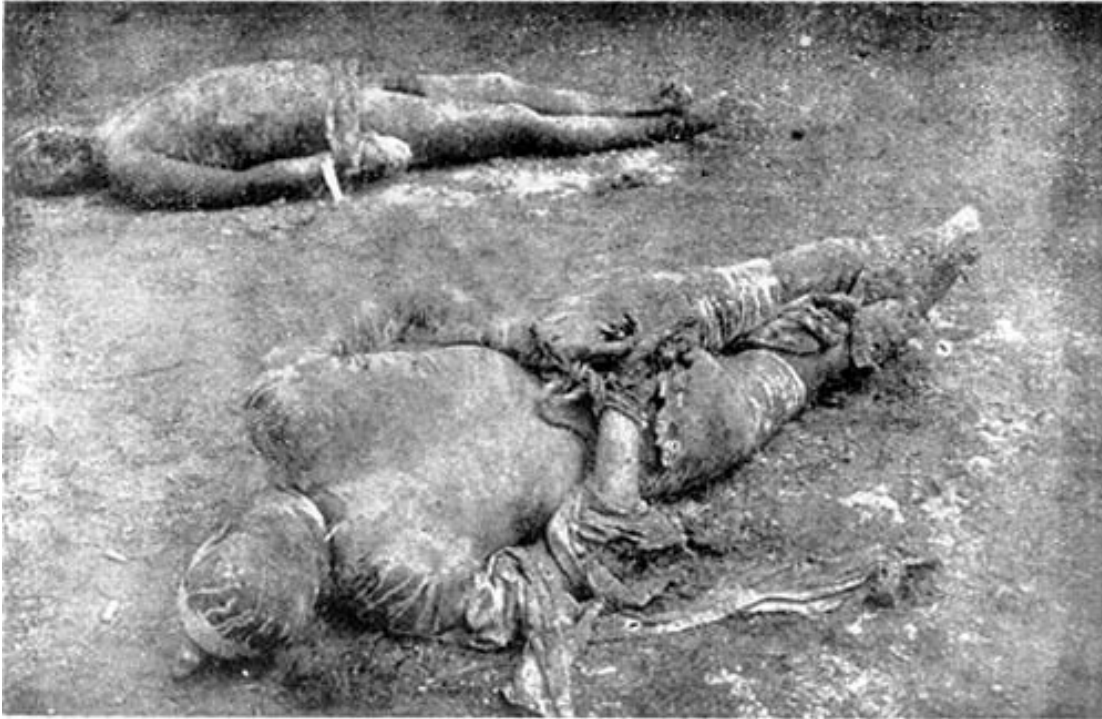


Figure 9.3: The villagers I. Aphanasiuk and S. Prokopovich, scalped alive. I. Aphanasiuk's corpse bears hot metal burns.

contended that “Gregory-the-prostitute” burned the most rebelling peasants at the charred poles here, and watched, sitting on a chair...” (p. 28).

Crucifixion and stoning were preferred in Ekaterinoslav (p. 29). The officers have been tortured in Odessa by chaining to the boards and slowly inserting into the furnaces, others have been torn apart by the winches, others have been dipped in boiling water and sea, than burned in a furnace (p. 31)⁴⁸.

The methods of torture are innumerable. The victims have been put into a crate with rotting corpses in Kiev and shots fired near, than threatened to bury in the crate alive. The crate was buried, than... dug out half hour later and interrogation continued. And that continued several times in a row. Is it surprising that people have gone mad?

A report by the Kiev sisters of charity read about locking into a basement cell with the corpses. One Latvian national, who was imprisoned in 1920 at Moscow Special Department on the charges of espionage told about the same. She stated, that she was flogged with a horse whip and beaten with a metal bar on the fingertips, an iron clamp was tightened around her head. Finally she was pushed into a cellar! “Here” – she said – “with dim electric light I noticed, that I was among the corpses and identified one woman I was acquainted with, who was executed a day earlier. Everything was splattered with blood. That scene impressed me so much, that I literally felt cold

⁴⁸That was confirmed by other testimonies as per above.

sweat... Do not know what happened to me after – I only woke up in my cell”⁴⁹.

Why did the sources of different affiliation and periods portray so similar pictures? Does that serve as an evidence to the truthfulness of the story?

Here is a statement of the Central Bureau of Socialist-Revolutionary party:

Kerensk Che Ka tortures by temperature: a victim is exposed to a heated bath, than sent out into the cold; the naked victims have been drenched with cold water in winter cold, turning them into ice statues in Alekseyevskaya village of Voronezh region... The “death wreaths” are being used in Armavir: a victim’s head is wrapped in a belt, connected with a bolt and nut... The nut is then tightened and so is the belt... A special nail studded iron glove is used in Kavkazskaya village.

The reader might say that those are isolated incidents – adds S. S. Maslov in his work “Russia After Four Years of Revolution”. To the humankind’s horror – no. Not isolated. Freezing into an ice statue was widely practiced in Orel region during the food confiscations; one merchant (Yushkevich) was “put on a hot cook stove top by a food confiscation squad for a failure to surrender grain” (p. 193). The following methods have been used to the peasants of Voronezh region (1920) for the same failure: winched into the deep wells and dipped in water many times, pulled out and demanded to surrender food. The author did not collect that data from the “counter-revolutionary sources”, he did not quote some restorers or ideologists of monarchy, but from testimony, collected while imprisoned from the victims, eyewitnesses – the carriers of democratic and socialist way of thinking...

We would love to consider that an overstatement. We do live in the age of highly developed culture after all!

I will repeat, that I am prepared to cast doubt on the “urban legends”, such as told by a peasant from Beloborodki village: they were put in a large pot which was heated to red glow; inserted into a nail studded pipe and drenched in boiling water. Let us keep just torture with “hot sealing wax”, that many from Kiev recalled (see p. 131)...

Time flies. Georgia is the next in line – a country, where Che Ka was established last. An informed reporter to “The Days”⁵⁰ so describes “the work” of Che Ka in Trans-Caucasus:

They keep an arrestee destined to torture in the deep, moist and sealed cellars of Che Ka for weeks, without food and often with no water. There are no beds, desks or chairs here. The tortured lie on the ground, knee-deep in bloody mud and have to fight off the armies of hungry rats. If that treatment proves insufficient to loosen their tongues, they are transferred one level below, to a completely dark cold cellar. After a short time hypothermia sets in and they carry the victims upstairs, wake them up, and propose to provide information. They keep doing that until an arrestee

⁴⁹“Brihwa Seme”, 31 March 1921, No. 71.

⁵⁰13 May of 1923 already.

dies or says something incriminating, even if completely fictional. It happens that the executioners of Che Ka enter the cells in the middle of the night, lead the arrestees out into the yard and fire missing shots at them, staging an execution. After firing a few shots they return a half-dead to the cellar. They are now widely using the “death wreaths”, including on a social-democrat Kakabadze from whom they extracted a commitment to become a Che Ka informant. Released from the cellars, Kakabadze told his comrades everything in detail and made himself scarce⁵¹.

Information about torture during interrogations found its way even into soviet press, especially in the beginning, when mutilation and torture was too uncommon, at least for some members of the ruling party.

For example Moscow “Izvestiya”⁵² published a letter from a random victim communist under the title “Could it be a medieval torture chamber?”

I was arrested by accident in a place where counterfeit Kerensky’s money were supposedly printed. I was imprisoned for 10 days before interrogation and experienced something impossible (he is referring to an investigative commission of Suschevo-Mariinskiy district in Moscow)... They were beating people unconscious here, than carried them into a cellar where continued to beat with breaks for 18 hours a day. That affected me to such degree that I have almost gone mad.

Two months later we are learning from “The Truth”, that there is a cellar in Vladimir Che Ka where they “stick needles into the heels”⁵³.

A communist was arrested by accident again, who appeals to society: “it is scary to live and work, for any position of authority, especially in the provinces, can easily find themselves in that situation”. That case was paid attention to, as a communist was involved. But they passed by the thousands of other cases in silence. “I am ashamed by your torture chamber – wrote L. M. Reisner about St. Petersburg Che Ka in December 1918. But those were all “sentiments”, and seldom protests drowned in ambient noise. St. Petersburg “The Truth” described usefulness of staged executions in February 1919: a kulack was allotted 30 bushels of emergency food tax. He has not paid. They arrested him. He did not pay. He was lead to a cemetery – not paying. He was put up against the wall – still not paying. Fired a shot near his ear. Oh, miracle! He agreed to pay!

We have an amazing historic document, that serves as clear evidence of torture. It was published by the very “Che Ka Weekly” in Moscow under the title “Why Are You Lenient?” and signed by the chair of Nolinsk Che Ka and others.

⁵¹Compare to the address of Central Committee of Georgian Social-Democrats of 5 July 1923, quoted above. (“Socialist Messenger” No. 15).

⁵²26 January 1919, No. 18.

⁵³No. 12, 22 February 1919.

Explain, – why did you not subject that Lockhart to the most sophisticated torture, to extract information that the rat was supposed to have in abundance⁵⁴? Explain, why instead of subjecting him to torture, from just a description of which cold fear would overwhelm the counter-revolutionaries, you released him? Enough of being lenient!.. A dangerous scoundrel was arrested... Extract every bit possible from him and send him to afterlife!...

That was printed in No. 3 of the official publication⁵⁵, whose goal was, as we mentioned, to “lead” the provincial Extreme Commissions and conduct the “ideas and methods” of Russia Che Ka struggle. Was it surprising that the representatives of Che Ka stated in the congress of the soviets: “we now admit, that lack of discipline and lenience towards bourgeois and their lackeys must have no place”.

Che Ka is “ruthless to that rabble” – that is a slogan sent to the provinces and perceived by the local authorities as a call to ruthless and uncontrolled cruelty. The instructions (rather theoretical) for the justice departments of the regional Administrative Committees to maintain “justice” are in vain⁵⁶. Provinces only take center for an example. According to one of the British reports, Kanegisser (an assassin of Uritski) was tortured in the very center. Was Kaplan tortured, as per the persistent rumors in Moscow? I could not say. But I remember the impression from the first night spent in Russia Che Ka after an attempt on Lenin: some were definitely tortured here by sleep deprivation...

Information from the torture chambers seldom becomes available. I recall a trial in August 1920 in Moscow, where tortures were exposed before the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal (drowning in ice cold water etc.). It was exposed even more during a political trial in Turkmenia in October 1919.

All 10 of the accused retracted their testimony made during the investigation at Che Ka, stating that they signed those under coercion by horrible torture. The tribunal questioned a Special Department of Che Ka... Turned out that mutilation and torture were routinely used.

“The public was weeping” at the court – writes “Will of Russia”⁵⁷ reporter. What the prosecutor called “crying of bourgeois” so affected the judges, that tribunal itself protested... We could recently read in Moscow “Izvestiya”⁵⁸ about a session of Omsk regional court, that 29 November tried a commander of district militia German, a militia man Scherbakov and Dr. Troitsky, accused in torture of the arrestees... They burned hands and arms with hot sealing wax, poured it on the back of the head and neck, then ripped it off with skin. “Those methods of intimidation, reminiscent of

⁵⁴A reference to the British consul-general Lockhart.

⁵⁵6 October 1918.

⁵⁶“Izvestiya”, 3 March 1919. P. Mayer wrote about a “secret order” by Justice Commissar Kursky, that instructed to monitor Che Ka activity, in his memoirs about service at the commission. “Archive of Revolution” VIII, 100.

⁵⁷7 December 1920.

⁵⁸12 December 1923.

Spanish inquisition, are absolutely unacceptable” – moralized the chair of the court during trial. But torture was essentially legalized. “Socialist Messenger”⁵⁹ exceptionally illustrated that:

In light of persistent rumors and discovered facts regional tribunal of Stavropol established in Spring of this year a commission of Public prosecutor Shapiro and reporting investigator Olashanski for investigating torture, practiced by Criminal Investigation Unit.

The commission has found, that besides *usual beatings, suspension and other types of torture* Stavropol Criminal Investigation used the following:

1. A “hot cellar”, that was a cell in the basement, with no windows – 10 by 4 foot. The floor has 2 – 3 steps. They crammed 18 people in that cell for torture, so that not all could stand on the floor and some had to hang on the shoulders of the others. The air in that cell was such that a lamp or matches would not burn. People were kept in that cell for 2 – 3 days with no food or water without access to a toilet. It was established, that women were imprisoned in the “hot cellar” together with men (for example Veizman).
2. A “cold cellar”. That is a pit previously used as a cold cellar. The arrested were disrobed to underwear and sent into the pit down a ladder, which then was removed and water poured from above. That was used during the Winter cold. The cases have been established were up to 8 buckets of water was poured onto an inmate (Gursky and Winer have been subjected to that among the others).
3. “Skull measurement”. Head of the person being interrogated is tightly wrapped with a rope, then a rod is inserted under the rope and turned to a point, where rope compressed the skull and separated scalp.

Besides those methods of torture for extraction of confessions the murders of the arrestees by the investigators for the alleged attempts to escape have been established (Masteryukov was thus was killed in April 1922).

All those facts have been confirmed by the victim and witness testimony, forensic data, autopsies and confessions of the investigators, who used torture and testified, that they acted on the orders of Criminal Investigation Unit commander Grigorovich (also a member of Stavropol Administrative Committee, member of the regional Committee of the Communist Party and deputy chair of the local Political Administration), his assistant Povetsky and legal counsel (!!) Topyshev. Tortures have been carried out under their personal supervision and in their presence.

The tribunal ordered to bring the accused to justice and issued an arrest warrant. But no one could be arrested, as the chair of regional Political Administration has sheltered them at the dorms of the Political Administration and produced a secret order of Russia Che Ka, that among

⁵⁹21 September 1922.

other things prescribed, that if during the inquiry or preliminary investigation the face-to-face interrogations, evidence and “usual threats” would not lead to a confession, than “the old tried method” was recommended.

The origins of that secret order were as follows. There was a complaint against a notorious Moscow Che Ka investigator L. D. Wul in mid-1921 regarding mutilation and torture he used during investigation. Wul was planning to quit and relinquish responsibility for increased violent crime rate in Moscow. Under the circumstances, supposedly Menzhinsky (!) gave a permission to use the old methods, and an order regarding “the old tried method” was issued. The outcome of that story was common. None of the torturers could be arrested. But those, who exposed the secrets of criminal investigation unit, were prosecuted.

The same was confirmed with new details by a letter from Stavropol, printed in No. 1 of Left SR almanac “The Paths of Revolution”. The outcome in Turkmenia was the same. The most active torturer there was a former circus clown – member of Che Ka and executioner Drozzhin. After his activity was discovered, he was recalled and transferred to a prison as political commissar⁶⁰.

Not much imagination is required to picture that circus clown in his new role. We have no information of his activity on the new scene, but we can find the illustrations in the facts from across the country – in Arkhangelsk.

There is an essay about “Kholmogory concentration camp” in “Che Ka” almanac – the same one mentioned above. I personally know the author of that essay, who took great risk of visiting the far North in order to collect information about the horrors rumored in Moscow and assess a possibility of aiding the unfortunate inmates of that “death camp”. I heard his report in Moscow. It was even more horrible in oral transmission. It was really scary, but we were powerless to provide any aid. It is enough to mention two – three facts to describe the conditions of Kholmogory concentration camp:

While extremely cruel Bachulis was a camp commander, many were executed by firing squad for the minimal breaches. He had horrible reputation. Rumors were that he separated the inmates into the tens and punished all 10 for the breach of one; that when one of the inmates escaped and could not be found, and other 10 have been executed. Then the escaped was finally captured, sentenced to execution and lead to a fresh grave; the commander, cursing him, struck him over the head and knocked unconscious into the grave, where he was buried alive. That story was told by one of the jailers.

Later Bachulis was appointed a commander of the North-most camp, in Portaminsk city 70 miles North of Arkhnangelsk where the inmates⁶¹ were fed dry fish only, with no bread and he gave free play to his cruelty.

⁶⁰If I am not mistaken Drozzhin was awarded an order of “Red Banner”. See also a report No. 344 of Gen. Denikin operations staff.

⁶¹The sailor rebels, after all.

According to the rumors very few survived from a party of 200 recently sent there from Kholmogory. Even a mention of Portaminsk is frightening for the Kholmogory inmates – it equals a death sentence for them even though conditions in Kholmogory are very severe⁶².

Here is information about Portaminsk “monastery” itself. A private letter, received in St. Petersburg, reads⁶³:

Once they sent us to work at 6 AM. – one of the arrested was too weak after typhus and fell in the yard before departure. The commander did not believe in his weakness and in punishment for malingering ordered him stripped to underwear and sent to a cold cellar with snow. The sick man was frozen alive.

It further tells how a sick man, who was unable to follow the party during transfer was simply shot before the rest.

Another witness adds:

The following incident illustrated the level of tyranny⁶⁴... The inmates were mining sand for construction. Work was carried out in front of the windows of commander’s house. Seeing how the workers sat down to rest, he opened fire from his window. Several were killed and wounded in the crowd. After that incident the inmates went on hunger strike. When the rumors reached Moscow, a commission from the capital dismissed the commander. The new one – a convicted sailor from “Gangut” – was no different in cruelty. Execution of the inmates on the spot in front of the others was a normality.

All those events transpired in 1921 – 1922. The following fact attests to the conditions in the camp: there were 442 deaths among 1200 inmates in half a year!!!

Besides dark punishment cell and cold tower there is a special “white house” in Kholmogory camp. It is a special place of isolation for some of the offenders. Up to 40 people could be locked in a small room without a toilet. The author told about people, sick with typhus, who languished there for up to 10 days without medical aid. “Some spent more than a month there, contracted typhus and ended up with mental disorder”. Is that not torture?

There is no excuse for those incidents that it was long time ago...

We learn of those events seldom and at random. Impunity of the superiors makes complaining dangerous for the inmates even under those rare circumstances, when it is possible. I was present at the beating of a suspect by an investigator only once. He begged me to be quiet. It is even risky for the doctors to register a beating – Dr.

⁶²“Che Ka” almanac, pp. 242 – 243.

⁶³“Revolutionary Business”, No. 2, February 1922, St. Petersburg.

⁶⁴“Voice of Russia” 1922, No. 961.

Scheglov, who issued a note to some of the socialists, beaten in Bootyrskaya prison, was instantly sent into severe exile⁶⁵.

There is information that members of political parties become victims of tyranny. We learned that 18 year old SR Lavrova was flogged in Tambov⁶⁶, that same was the fate of SR Kuznetsov's wife, when location of her husband could not be established⁶⁷. So we learn that social-democrat Treiger was jailed in a 9 by 6 foot "box" in Semi-palatinsk, together with a mad Chinese murderer⁶⁸. Left SR M. P. Shebalin wrote in a letter, delivered clandestinely, how he was tortured in St. Petersburg: he was beaten on the hands and feet with a butt of revolver, his eyes and testicles were compressed (into unconsciousness)⁶⁹, he was beaten specially to leave no blood or bruises (bleeding was through the throat)⁷⁰. I know Shebalin very well after being his cell-mate for half a year at Bootyrskaya prison. He is a man incapable of lies or exaggeration. "Remember, that I am writing from a cell, that Russian Bastilles – Schlisselburg and Peter and Paul castles – where I was imprisoned under the monarchy as a political prisoner, pale" – writes Shebalin.

He also told about sophisticated invention of the "cork cells" at Gorokhovaya St. of St. Petersburg Che Ka (the cold, small solitary confinement cells, tight sealed, with double walls padded with cork – completely sound-proof). The interrogations with "freezing", "burning by fire" etc. are being carried out in those cells. The inmates were usually held in the "cork cells" for 5 – 10 days, but sometimes up to a month. The letter is dated 9 April 1922⁷¹.

"Beating with the buttstock, butt of a revolver and kicking – notes S. S. Maslov in his book⁷², based for the most part on the material he brought over from Russia – do not count, as it is common and widely accepted". And he provides a shining example that has nothing to do with politics. The more peculiar it is for "communist" justice, which new principles are so positively characterized in soviet press. Of course the criminals are not punished there, but re-mediated.

In May 1920 a group of homeless children aged 11 – 15 was arrested in Moscow on suspicion of being pocket thieves. They were locked in a basement cell separate from the rest but together as a group. Che Ka decided to use the arrest on full scale. They demanded from the children – at first by threats and promise of reward to inform on other pocket thieves. The children said they did not know anyone. After the fruitless interrogations several jailers entered their cell and started savage beating.

⁶⁵It happened in May 1922. According to "Revolutionary Russia" (No.No. 16 – 18) Dr. Scheglov, imprisoned at Arkhangelsk concentration camp, was forced to clean the toilets.

⁶⁶"Revolutionary Russia", No. 14.

⁶⁷"Revolutionary Russia", No. 1.

⁶⁸"Socialist Messenger", 1923, No. 5.

⁶⁹Sinovari testified at Lausanne trial of torture by compressing genitals used in St. Petersburg.

⁷⁰Letter by I. A. Shebalin to "The Paths of Revolution".

⁷¹By the way, an underground "Worker's Flier" wrote in 1922 about shackling of the suspects in St. Petersburg. See also a statement of Left SR in 1923. ("Socialist Messenger" 1923, No. 5). They also mentioned torture by a "yellow house", i.e. by confinement with the mentally ill.

⁷²"Russia After Four Years Of Revolution".

At first they beat with fists, than when the children fell to the floor, they were kicked with boots. The children promised to turn everybody in. As the children did not know each other by the last names, they had to be driven around the city by cars and streetcars all day and taken to the railway terminals. At first they tried not to recognize and point at anyone. Then even more severe beating was repeated at night. The children started to turn some in. If it was a bad day and a child did not see anyone they knew or did not point at anyone, he would be beaten at night. That torture lasted for two weeks. To avoid beating, they started framing the innocent and unfamiliar. Another week after they were transferred to Bootyrskaya prison. Emaciated, bruised, disheveled, with permanently scared faces, they looked like the hunted down animals, prepared for certain and near death. They twitched, often cried and shouted while asleep. After 2 – 3 weeks of “rest” in Bootyrskaya prison, the children were returned to Che Ka. The long-time inmates told me, that for entire length of their arrest, for entire life, even during penal servitude under monarchy, they never heard such desperate screaming, as of those children, who realized that they were being taken back to that basement; and never experienced such burning hatred as for that violence against child thieves. The prison was crying, when scared and weeping children were lead down the corridors and then across the prison yard.

Have the conditions changed? We recently learned about a murder of an old revolutionary Kulikovsky during an interrogation in March 1923 by an investigator of Irkutsk State Political Administration (GPU). “The Days” reporter informed, that for refusing to talk during interrogation he was beaten with a butt of revolver, his skull was fractured and he died...

9.3 Tyranny of the Executioners

To clearly picture the essence of “red terror”, we would have to realize cynicism of its form – not only the fact that both guilty and innocent, political adversaries and unaffiliated, have been executed by firing squad, but also the methods of their execution. That outer shell is probably more important to understanding of “red terror”.

We already reviewed a clearly sadist – Sayenko of Kharkov (see p. 120). A few words about his assistant sailor Edward, according to Karelin: he was notorious for friendly chatting with the inmates and killing them with a shot to the head while laughing.

Averbuch, well informed about the events in Odessa, portrayed a chair of local Che Ka Kalinichenko. The legends were told about his “perversions” and savage tyranny: once during the celebration of his birthday he ordered to deliver “three fattest bourgeois” from the prison. His order was executed and in drunk rage he immediately shot them with a revolver.

He writes⁷³:

Once I happened to patronize cafeteria “Astra” in Preobrazhenskaya St, frequented only by the Bolshevik officials. And there by accident I heard a story, told by a notorious executioner “Basil” of how he dispatched two bourgeois, how they writhed and twitched in agony, how they kissed his hands and feet, and he still fulfilled his revolutionary duty.

Among the Odessa executioners was Johnston (a Negro), specially ordered from Moscow. “Johnston was a synonym of evil and cruelty”... “Pulling skin from a living human before execution, severing limbs during torture etc. – the negro executioner Johnston alone was capable of that”. Was he really alone? The “gloves”, removed from a human hand have been shown at an exhibition organized by the Bolsheviks in Moscow in 1920 – 1921. The Bolsheviks wrote, that it was a specimen of “whites” cruelty. But the rumors of those gloves, pulled by Sayenko in Kharkov reached Moscow long time ago. There was information that several such “gloves” have been found in the basement of Kharkov Che Ka. The Kharkov anarchists, transferred to Bootyrskaya prison, unanimously testified about those “gloves” pulled in Kharkov from the hands of the tortured.



Figure 9.4: Kharkov. Corpse of a hostage, retired General Putyat. Skin pulled from the right arm, genitals mutilated.

“We are being accused of Hottentot morale”, – said Lunacharski in a meeting of Moscow soviet 4 December 1918. “We accept that accusation”... And so Sayenko’s “gloves” could be an exhibit in Moscow as a proof of enemy’s cruelty...⁷⁴

Only a young woman executioner Vera Grebennyukova (“Dora”) could compete with Johnston in Odessa. The legends were told about her tyranny. She literally

⁷³“Odessa Che Ka”. Kishinev, 1920, p. 30.

⁷⁴Those gloves are presently exhibited in the Greater Palace of Kremlin. Edouard Herriot wrote about them in his memoirs “La Russie Nouvelle”.



Figure 9.5: Corpses of three hostage workers from a factory on strike. Middle: A. Ivanenko, eyeballs burned, lips and nose cut off. Hands of the others severed.

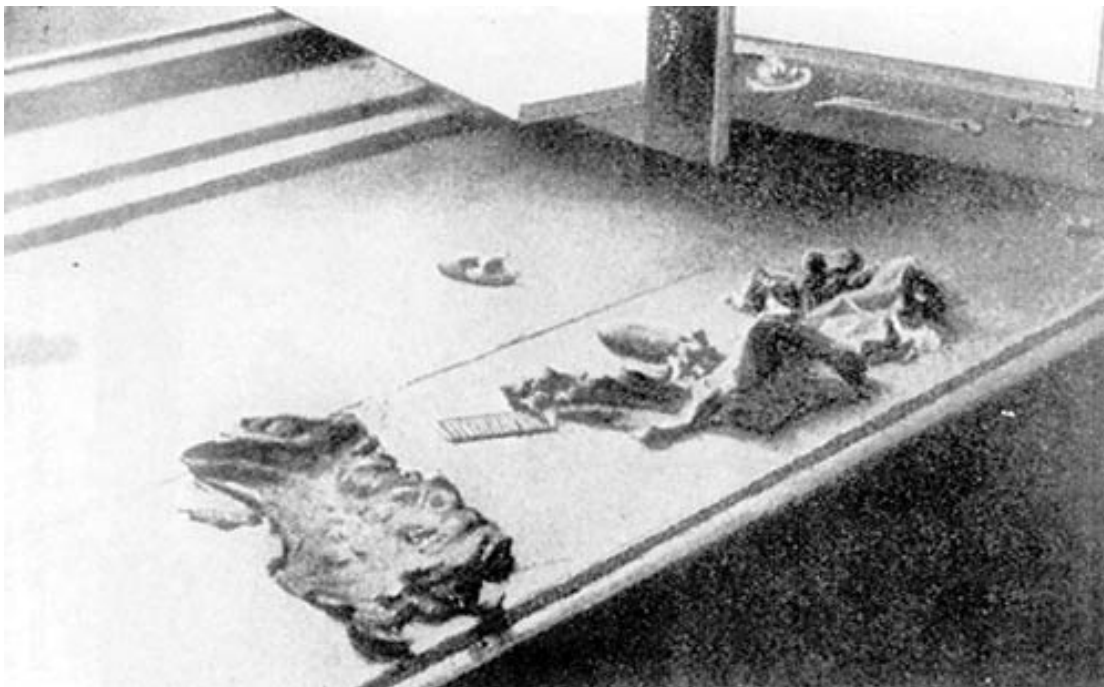


Figure 9.6: Skin, pulled from the hands of the victims of Kharkov Che Ka using a metal comb and special mandibles.



Figure 9.7: Skin, pulled from the limbs of the Rabinovich house victims in Lomonosov St., Kherson, where Kherson Che Ka operated the torture chambers.

mutilated her victims: pulled hair, severed limbs, ears, fractured cheek bones etc. In order to judge her activity, it is enough to provide the fact, that she alone executed 700 people in two months of service at Che Ka, i.e. almost 1/3 of those executed by all executioners of Che Ka⁷⁵.

The executed in Kiev were made to lie down into bloody mass, covering the floor and shot in the back of the head, crushing the skull. They were made to lie down on top of the previously executed. The to-be executed were released into the garden and hunted down one by one. A report by the Kiev sisters of charity registered the following facts. During full moon the well dressed commander of regional Che Ka Mikhailov fancied hunting the arrestees, who were disrobed and released into the garden, with a revolver in his hand⁷⁶. French writer Odette Keun, who considered herself a communist and due to the circumstances became familiar with practices of

⁷⁵“Odessa Che Ka”, p. 36.

⁷⁶“Archive of Revolution” VI.

Che Ka⁷⁷ prisons in Sevastopol, Simpheropol, Kharkov and Moscow, quoted another inmate in her memoirs as telling about such hunting of women even in St. Petersburg (she dated that seemingly improbable fact 1920!!!). There were 20 female counter-revolutionaries locked in the same cell as that other one. The soldiers came for them at night. Soon they heard screaming and the inmates saw those women completely naked, loaded into a cart. They were taken into a field and guaranteed, that those who would run faster would not be executed. Then all of them have been slaughtered...

According to S. M. Volkonski's memoirs⁷⁸ there was a "custom" in Briansk to shoot in the back after interrogation. The heads were crushed with an "iron hammer" in Siberia... One commoner woman testified that in Odessa "in the yard of Che Ka near my window Che Ka executed an agent of former criminal police. They were killing him with a club or a buttstock for more than an hour. He kept begging for mercy". A certain Valyavka, who executed hundreds of "counter revolutionaries" in Ekaterinoslav, had a habit of sending a dozen of people into a small yard surrounded with a special wall. Then Valyavka with a couple of associates went into the middle and opened fire⁷⁹.

Chair of Che Ka in the same Ekaterinoslav "comrade Trepalov" used to write against the names that he did not like an abbreviation "exec"; he wrote that so that it was often hard to determine what specific name it applied to. The executioners, to "save the effort" (during evacuation of the prison), executed the entire list of 50 according to the principle "down them all"⁸⁰.

St. Petersburg paper "Revolutionary Business"⁸¹ provided the following details about the execution of 60 under Tagantsev's trial.

Execution has been carried out at one of the stations of Irinovo railway. The arrested have been taken at sunrise to dig a mass grave. When it was half-ready, everyone was ordered to disrobe. They started shouting for help. Some of the condemned have been pushed into the grave and shot.

The rest have been pushed on top of the bodies and slaughtered in the same manner. Both the dead and moaning wounded have been buried after that.

The Moscow executioners daily carried out their bloody business in the special basements with paved floor and drainage for blood⁸². They were described in a story

⁷⁷She was deported by English police from Constantinople for communist agitation. That *sounded suspicious for the soviet government* and thus French writer learned about Che Ka routine. Odette Keun "Sous Lénine". Notes d'une femme, déportée en Russie par les Anglais, p. 179. See "In the Foreign Land".

⁷⁸"My memoirs", p, 263.

⁷⁹Z. Y. Arbatov. "Archive of Russian Revolution". XII, 89.

⁸⁰Z. Y. Arbatov. "Archive of Russian Revolution". XII, 119.

⁸¹March 1922.

⁸²According to one of the witnesses in Coven's "Echo" this is how the executions were performed in a basement of 13 – 14 Sretenka St: "there is a rifle in a stand in one side of a basement, aimed at a target where the victim's head should be. If the criminal was short, he was put on a step". "The Latest News", 17 July 1921.

“Vessel of Death”, dedicated in “Che Ka” almanac to the executions of the criminals – the so-called bandits. There are three executioners here: Emelyanov, Pankratov, Zhukov, all members of the communist party, affluent and well nourished. As all executioners, they were paid per body: they received clothes and valuables still in possession of the executed; they “pull the victims’ golden teeth”, collect “golden crucifixes” etc.

S. S. Maslov told about a female executioner whom he saw himself. “Once every 2 – 3 days she showed up at the Central Prison Hospital of Moscow (in 1919) with a cigarette between the teeth, with a whip and a revolver without holster tucked in her belt. She always went into the wards where the to-be executed were. When the horror struck patients slowly gathered their belongings, said farewell to the roommates or started weeping, she yelled at them and sometimes whipped them like the dogs... “That was a very young woman... no older than 20 – 22”. There were more female executioners in Moscow. S. S. Maslov, “very familiar with the events in Vologda as an old official of local cooperatives and a member of Parliament from Vologda region”, tells about a local executioner (far from professional) Rebecca Palestinina (Meizel), previously a mere paramedic in one of the Tver region’s small towns, who personally executed over 100 people. The Kedrov family lived in a car near the station – adds E. D. Kuskova, who was exiled there at the time⁸³... The interrogations were carried out in the cars, and the executions outside nearby. During the interrogations Rebecca slapped the accused faces, yelled, struck the desk with her fists and frantically barked the orders: “for execution, up against the wall!” “I know of up to 10 cases, – writes Maslov – where women volunteered to “puncture the heads”. “Voice of Russia” reporter informs about actions of that Palestinina-Meisel (who was the notorious Kedrov’s wife) in Arkhangelsk region during Spring and Summer 1920 ⁸⁴:

After the pompous funerals of the empty red coffins Rebecca Palestinina started dispatching the old adversaries. She was a Bolshevik. That insane woman, cursed by the hundreds of widows and mothers who lost their children, has outdone all men of Russia Che Ka in her evil rage. She recalled all small grudges of her husband’s family and literally crucified them, and those who lived have been mentally killed. Cruel, hysterical, insane, she made up a story in her mind that the white officers were going to tie her to a horse and drag across town, believed in her imagined story, went to Solovetsky monastery and lead terror with her new husband Kedrov. Further she insisted on return of all arrested by Eydook’s commission from Moscow, who one after another have been taken to Kholmogory – a graveyard of Russian youth, where they have been stripped and drowned in sea. The city was being terrorized all Summer”.

Another note from the same newspaper adds:

Meizel-Kedrova personally executed 87 officers, 33 commoners, scuttled a barge with 500 refugees and soldiers of Miller’s army etc.

⁸³“The Latest News”, No. 731.

⁸⁴25 March 1922.

Here is another “character” from Odessa, that an eyewitness of 52 executions in one night told about⁸⁵. A Latvian woman with animal-like face was the senior executioner; the inmates called her “pug”. That sadist woman wore the breeches and always two revolvers tucked into the belt. “Comrade Lyuba” can compete with her (who seemed to have been executed for pilfering)⁸⁶, or an operative of Unech Che Ka, “animal, not a human”, who always appeared with two revolvers, many rounds of ammunition in a belt and carried a sword. That was her description according to a fugitive from Russia. “The locals talked about her whispering, apparently horrified”. Would history preserve her name for the next generations? Rybinsk had its own “animal of a woman” – a certain “Zina”. There were same in Ekaterinoslav, Sevastopol etc.

No matter how routine is executioners’ work – finally human mind can take it no more. And they carry out executions for the most part under the influence – they need a state of “alienation”, especially during the days of real human slaughter. I observed even hardened administration of Bootyrskaya prison turning to narcotics (cocaine, etc.) starting from the commander when the so-called “commissar of death” arrived for his victims and they had to summon the condemned from the cells.

“Almost in every cabinet – writes Nilstonsky about the Kiev Che Ka⁸⁷ – almost in every drawer we found the empty cocaine bottles, sometimes piles of the bottles”.

The executioners lost human shape when drugged.

“One of the high ranking excommers told me – sais a reliable witness⁸⁸ – that senior (Moscow) executioner Maga, who killed many thousands in his career (the excommmer gave an unimaginable figure of 11,000 who died at the hands of Maga), once having finished “operation” over 15 – 20 people, charged a commander of Che Ka Special Department prison Popov, who was present during execution out of virtue, yelling “put your clothes off, damn you”. “With red eyes, scary, bloodied, Maga was insane and frightening” – said the source. “Popov chickened, ran, a panic ensued and luckily other excommers have rushed and taken Maga down”...

And sometimes the executioner’s mind gave up. The above mentioned report by the sisters of charity of Kiev Red Cross said, that commissar of Che Ka Avdokhin sometimes gave up and confessed to the sisters. “Sisters, I feel horrible, head is burning... I cannot sleep... the dead are haunting me all night”... “When I recall the faces of Che Ka members: Avdokhin, Terehov, Asmolv, Nikiforov, Ugarov, Abnaver or Gusig, I am convinced, – wrote one of the sisters – that those were insane people, sadists, drug addicts – completely dehumanized”. Recently the Russian psychiatric wards registered a special “executioner disorder”, it became widespread – remorse and nightmares possess dozens of guilty of spilling blood. The observers noticed frequent scenes of that syndrome among the sailors and others, that can be often seen at the railroad terminals and on the trains. “The Days”⁸⁹ reporter from Moscow contends, that “at some point GPU managed to get rid of those insane by way of executing them and several have been so cured of nightmare of hallucinations, that were choking them”.

⁸⁵“Voice of Russia”, 27 January 1922.

⁸⁶“The Latest News”, 2 March 1921.

⁸⁷“Bloody Hangover Of Bolshevism”, 19.

⁸⁸“Che Ka” almanac. “One Year In Bootyrskaya Prison”, 146.

⁸⁹7 March 1924.

We can find many characters among the executioners with the clear signs of decay. I remember one 14 year old executioner, held at Bootyrskaya prison: that semi-idiot did not understand what he did, and pathetically spoke about his deeds. Che Ka investigator Hungarian national Remover has been arrested in Kiev in January 1922. She was accused of unauthorized execution of 80 arrested, mostly young men. Remover was considered insane on the basis of sexual psychopathy. Investigation found, that Remover personally executed not only the suspects, but also witnesses, summoned to Che Ka and having misfortune of arousing her sick sensitivity... One doctor recalled meeting a woman – “commissar Nesterenko” – at a hospital, who among other things made the red army soldiers rape women and girls, sometimes underage”⁹⁰.

Look up the archives of Denikin’s commission and you would realize that the top ranking Che Ka officials, not in executioner position, carried out the executions with their own hands. Vichman in Odessa executes in the cells whomever he wants, even though there are 6 special executioners at his disposal; (one of them was officially referred to as “cupid”). Atarbekov in Pyatigorsk uses a dagger for executions. Rover in Odessa killed a certain Grigoriev and his 12 year old son in front of a witness... Another excommmer in Odessa “fancied kneeling his victim in front of him, squeezing head with the knees and shooting in the back of the head”⁹¹. There is no end to those examples...

Death became common. We already talked about cynical epithets used in the Bolshevik newspapers for announcing the executions by firing squad. Terminology of death becomes simplified and cynical in general⁹²: “to write off”, “to exchange” (Odessa), “go looking for a father in Mogilev region”, “to send to Dukhonin’s staff”⁹³, Bul “played guitar” (Moscow), “I could not seal more than 38 ” i.e. execute with own hands (Ekaterinoslav), or even crustier: “clicked” (Odessa), “to send to Mashuk to sniff the violets” (Pyatigorsk); commander of St. Petersburg Che Ka loudly tells his wife over the phone: “I am taking grouses to Kronstadt today”⁹⁴.

Execution itself is carried out just as simplified and cynical, as we mentioned before. Death sentence is read in Odessa, then the condemned is disrobed and a board with number hung around his neck. By that number they will be called out⁹⁵. They even require a signature for reading the sentencing. They often collected biography data for the newspaper announcements from the cells after reading the sentencing⁹⁶. That “legality” of execution is observed in St. Petersburg too, where the sentences are being read in a special “arrivals room”. The newspaper of the Central Committee of

⁹⁰“New Russian Word”, 19 February 1924, New-York.

⁹¹“The Days”, 7 March 1924.

⁹²See also the examples by Kartsevsky “Language, War And Revolution”. Russian Universal Publishers, Berlin 1923.

⁹³Last name Dukhonin is based on Russian root “dukh”, for “spirit”. *Trans.*

⁹⁴Vyrubova’s memoirs. V. Krasnov recalls in his memoirs a peculiar scene of bullying, played in Stavropol by a group of sailors with a lawyer Levitsky at the head. They rode around the prison singing songs and playing accordion and yelled: “We are reading the last rites to you, bourgeois!”. (“Archive of Revolution”. VIII, 153).

⁹⁵“Common Business”, 9 November 1921.

⁹⁶Archive of Denikin’s Commission.

the Communist Party “The Truth”⁹⁷ ridiculed the publications of British press that a military orchestra was playing during the executions. That was during the days of terror in September 1918. That was the way the monarchy ministers were executed in Moscow, and not only them. Back then executions were carried out by the red army men at Khodynskoye field. The Chinese replaced the reds. Later an institute of professional executioners for hire was established and sometimes it was augmented by the part time workers.

A number of witnesses to Denikin’s Commission told about the executions in Nikolaev in 1919 to the sounds of spiritual music. The inmates themselves (criminals) carried out executions in Saratov and bought themselves pardon that way. The judges themselves executed in Turkmenia. The witnesses contend that even these days the same is customary in Odessa regional court – not even in Che Ka. I am not qualified to determine, whether it is good or bad when the same person who issued a verdict executes it too... Information that judge V. personally kills the inmates is from 1923: they disrobe them in the next room and immediately kill... Rumors are that Odessa Che Ka uses a new improved method of execution in 1923. The victims walk down a narrow dark corridor with a pit in the middle and two keyholes. They fall into the pit and are shot at from the keyholes, while the shooters cannot see the face of an executed.

I cannot help but quote another description of the executions of Moscow Che Ka, published in No. 4 of underground flier of the Left SR⁹⁸. That was the time of “debates about the powers of Che Ka and revolutionary tribunals”, i.e. of the power of Che Ka to death sentencing verdicts. The more peculiar is the scene, described by an eyewitness:

Every night, seldom with a gap, the condemned are being taken away “for sending to Irkutsk”. That is a popular term among the modern day’s excommers. Previously they were taken to Khodynskoe field. Now they are taken to No. 11, than to No. 7 in Varsonophievskiy Dr. There the condemned are taken in the groups of 30 – 12 – 8 – 4 (as it occurs) – to the 4th floor. There in a special room they strip to underwear and take them downstairs. They are lead across the yard to the stacks of firewood and shot into the back of the head with revolvers.

Sometimes the shots miss. The man falls, but does not die. Then they fire more rounds at him, point blank into the chest or head.

10 – 11 March R. Olehovskaya, sentenced to death for a petty offense, not even worth a prison term, could not be immediately killed. 7 bullets struck her head and chest. The body was still twitching. Then Kudryavtsev (excommer, former warrant officer, who recently became a communist and was overzealous) grabbed her by the throat, ripped the blouse and started twisting the throat and choking. The girl has not turned 19 yet.

⁹⁷20 May 1919.

⁹⁸April 1919.

Snow in the yard was red and brown. Everything was splattered with blood. They burned the bonfires two feet in diameter (due to abundance of firewood). Melting snow created horrible red streams.

Bloody stream overflowed the yard and spilled into the street and neighboring buildings. They rushed to hide the traces. Opened some hatch and threw that scary snow down the chute, blood of the people who just lived!..

The Bolsheviks proudly announce “we do not have guillotine”. Not sure what is better: public execution or secret execution in the chambers, cellars, masked by the sound of engines to muffle the shots... Let others talk about that... But we even noticed the public executions.

Not everywhere executions occur at night... In Arkhangelsk executions were carried out during the day in the Clifton factory square and “many local children gathered to watch”⁹⁹. They often killed during the day in Odessa too. Executions in Mogilev occur practically before the eyes of the families. “A truck stops in front of revolutionary tribunal of 16th army – says an eyewitness ¹⁰⁰ – at around 5 – 7 PM and a dozen of heavily armed executioners jump in with two spades. The condemned are put in the truck too and driven away. The truck returns in exactly one hour. The executioners jump off, dragging the bags with the boots, uniforms etc. left of the executed... All that occur during the day (3 hours time difference) before the eyes of the family members, women and children”.

Only someone under the spell of exceptional political cruelty, who lost all human senses, would not be turned off by the circumstances of royal family massacre in Ekaterinburg. The parents and children were crowded into one room and slaughtered before each other’s sight. As red army man Medvedev, one of the eyewitnesses of the “execution” said in his testimony to investigation in February 1919, preparation to the execution were slow and “everyone obviously figured out their fate”. History does not know another scene of massacre like that which marked the night from 16 to 17 July 1918¹⁰¹.

9.4 The Condemned

Death sentence has become truly “a common occurrence” in Russia. We know that in the past people climbed guillotine singing “La Marseillaise”... The sentenced to death in Russia Left SR in Odessa, loaded hogtied on a truck under 35 other bodies above them, are singing their “La Marseillaise”. Perhaps that normality of death is felt especially strong in prison. There are vivid pages in “Che Ka” almanac, that describe the emotions of an inmate, who found himself in a death ward¹⁰².

⁹⁹“The Latest News”, 21 September 1920.

¹⁰⁰“The Latest News”. No. 168.

¹⁰¹Medvedev’s testimony and others have been published by G. G. Telberg in America and reprinted in No. 5 of “Historian and Contemporary” magazine in Berlin.

¹⁰²Nilstonsky provided a description of “death ward” in Kiev. The condemned are locked in the basement. There is no light in the blind cellars. “One of those cells 8 by 4 foot housed 15 – 20,

They locked us in a “scary cell” under strong guard at 7 PM. Before we could grab the bunk beds, the lock clicked, the door squeaked and prison management came in, followed by the jailers.

– How many of you are here? – asked a supervisor a head man while overlooking the cell.

– 67.

– How come 67? The grave was dug for 90... – as if surprised, but calmly and slowly asked the supervisor.

Everyone froze, feeling a breath of death.

– Ah, well, – realized the supervisor, – I have forgotten: 30 people will be executed by the Special Department.

Nightmarish, endless hours of awaiting death lasted forever. A priest, who miraculously kept his crucifix, put it on, knelled and started praying. Many, including one communist, followed his example. Weeping was heard from somewhere. The sounds of detuned piano could be heard from outside, those were the worn out waltzes, sometimes replaced by overly joyful Russian folk songs, tearing apart already sick souls of the condemned – that was a rehearsal of Cultural Education Courses at the former prison church near our cell. Life intertwined with death due to evil irony of fate¹⁰³.

“The sounds of detuned piano could be heard from outside”... That was really scary in anticipation of death. Everyone experiences that “psychological torture” who witnesses an execution by firing squad with their own eyes. I recall one night in 1920 at Bootyrskaya prison. I was among the “privileged” prisoners. Late at night, in an empty prison yard, I happened to observe a scene, not sure if scary or frightening, but it registered in memory as a sharp needle due to its unnatural contrast.

A party was going on in a corridor where communists were jailed – piano, gypsy songs, stand-up comedian. That was a night with actors, organized by administration for the inmates of the detention center. Singing and music were flowing across the yard. I was sitting quietly and suddenly looked at the “room of souls”. There by the bars I saw a writhe face, stuck to the window and gulping air with the lips. That was one of the victims to be executed that night. There were many of them, around 20, waiting for their turn. “The commissar of death” was taking small groups away...

I do not remember anything further, but since then I was afraid to go into the yard outside of walking hours... I recalled an article from “Habitual effect” by V. G. Korolenko, where author quoted a letter, received from a prisoner who was present in prison when an execution was going to be carried out. A prison froze. It kind of died and no one dared to break that deathly silence. Has human heart encrusted from what has become a daily routine, or human life has lost its value, but people are getting used to executions. This is the horror of our psychological existence. I could

including women and the elderly. The condemned were not allowed to leave the cell and they had to pee and poop right there (p. 14)... After reading the sentencing in St. Petersburg the condemned are held for 1 1/2 more days. They are no longer given food or water; not allowed to go to the washroom – for the condemned are finished anyway!

¹⁰³“Che Ka” almanac, pp. 232 – 233.

not help but quoted “The Latest News”¹⁰⁴ reporter from Mogilev: “On the eve of field session in Gomel the posters about public trial of the deserters at the theater have been plastered on every corner. I went to see. Three are sitting in and judging the deserters. The chair yells at the accused and sentences to execution by firing squad. I fled from the theater and ran into the public in the foyer buying tickets to an evening show like nothing happened”...

And the condemned themselves? They are quietly going towards the end without fighting and protest and submit to being tied with wire. “If you could only see those people, sentenced to death and being taken to an execution, – wrote sister Medvedeva – they were already dead”... Others reduce to begging the executioners; the third struggle and are being beaten and taken to the cellar by force. Should we provide all the facts of that? “We were frightened, the heart stopped – wrote T. G. Kurakina in her memoirs about Kiev¹⁰⁵ – when they came at night for the condemned. Deep silence fell in the cell, those unfortunate knew how to die: they went outside silently, incredibly calm – only the pale faces and spirited eyes gave up the fact, that they were no longer of this world. But those unfortunate who did not want to die created even more negative feelings. That was horrible. They resisted to the last moment, grabbed the bunk beds, walls, door frames; the guards pushed them in the backs and they weeped, screamed – but the executioners dragged them forth and yet taunted them, saying: “What, do you not want to be put up against the wall? You do not want, but will have to be”.

Apparently not out of fear of death, but horrified with execution itself many try to commit suicide before execution. I recall a Tatar, who painfully cut his own throat with a shard of glass in Bootyrskaya prison in anticipation of execution. Many facts of such suicides, up to self-immolation, have been registered in “Che Ka” almanac, archives of Denikin’s Commission. The executioners always attempted to resuscitate the victim. What for? Just to finish them off themselves. “Communist” prison watches that the victim could not escape “revolutionary justice”... The archives of Denikin’s Commission registered stunning facts in that area. The corpses of the executed have been taken to a morgue in Odessa. A driver noticed, that one of the women was blinking and told a worker. A woman woke up inside morgue and, contrary to the worker’s insistence, started screaming: “I am cold”, “where is my crucifix?” (Another eyewitness said, that she started screaming when saw her husband’s corpse beside her). The executioners heard her and finished her off. Another witness told about one who woke up in a coffin – he was finished off too. Another case: a lid of one coffin lifted and a voice shouted: “Comrades! I am alive!”. Che Ka was called over the phone and replied: “Finish him off with a brick”. They escalated the call – to Vichman himself. The reply was humorous: “We will engage and send your way the best surgeon in Odessa”. An excommmer comes and finishes the survivor off with a shot from a revolver.

I will once again quote the finishing lines of the article “Vessel Of Death”¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁴No. 168, 1920.

¹⁰⁵“Russian Chronicles”, No. 5, pp. 199 – 200.

¹⁰⁶“Che Ka” almanac. p. 45.

The vengeful sword strikes not only direct enemies of Bolshevik state. Freezing breath of terror catches up with those, whose fathers and husbands already lie in mass graves. Stunned with overhanging doom and anticipating disaster for months, the mothers, wives and children learn about it long after the fact, by the circumstantial signs, and rush to the Che Ka cells, maddened with sorrow but unsure that this is the end...

I know of a number of cases, where Moscow Che Ka issued the permissions for visits with those, who were known to be in Lefortovo morgue.

Wives and children came with pogeys to the prisons, but instead of a visit they were given a routine answer:

– Not registered at this prison.

Or something confusing and misleading:

– Left with possessions within the city...

Not an official notice of execution, not a farewell visit, not a dead body for respectful family funeral...

Bolshevik terror is ruthless. It knows mercy neither to the enemies, nor to the children, mourning their fathers.

And when an avenger's hand rises in that situation, would public consciousness condemn an act of vengeance towards those, who were creators of all above mentioned? I recall the words of great Russian political writer Herzen, written more than 50 years ago. Here they are:

On the night of 26 June after the victory of National at Paris we heard the uniform volleys with short intervals... We looked each other in the eyes; everybody's faces turned green... "But those are executions", we said simultaneously and turned away from one another. I pressed my forehead into the window glass. Hatred for those moments lasts for decades, revenge takes entire life. Sorry are those, who forgive those moments¹⁰⁷.

Those were the disarmed enemies, but here... are the close families...

There is a description of a scary scene in the memoirs by S. M. Ustinov¹⁰⁸: "Along the major street, ahead of Volunteer Army troops, a disheveled, barefoot woman was spinning in an insane, wild dance... The Bolsheviks executed her husband before retreating the night before"...

9.5 Violence Against Women

Read the messages about violence committed against women, and you will no longer be surprised by unavoidable, almost natural revenge.

¹⁰⁷Herzen, "The Past And The Thoughts", part IV, 173.

¹⁰⁸The Notes of Counter-Intelligence Chief. (1915 – 1920). Berlin, p. 125.

We can find plenty of information in that regard in the amazing book that we quoted so often. Do the following lines speak volumes of what the women prisoners of Kholmogory concentration camp have to put up with¹⁰⁹.

...The cooks, laundrywomen and servants of prison administration are from among the inmates, and often from the intelligent. The commander's deputies call the girls they liked into their apartments under the pretense of cleaning (for example Okren used to do that) including at night time... Both commander and the deputies have consorts from among the prisoners. Refusing one or another work, disobeying administration – is something unacceptable: the prisoners are so intimidated, that they meekly put up with any humiliation and brutality. There were protests – one of such protesters, who openly expressed her dismay, was executed (when Bachoolis was a commander). Once an intelligent educated girl was summoned to a deputy commander at 3 AM; she flat out refused to go and what happened? Her cell-mates begged her not to refuse, otherwise both she and them would suffer the consequences.

The special department of Kuban Che Ka “posts the guards not only in the change room, but in the bath itself when the female inmates are bathing”...

Recall the teacher Dombrovsky, raped before execution...(see p. 118) One young woman, sentenced to execution by firing squad for speculation, was raped by the head of Kislovodsk Che Ka counter-intelligence, then slashed to death with a sword and he abused her corpse¹¹⁰. A reliable witness stated in his unpublished memoirs a 12 year old daughter of Gen. C. was raped before she and her mother have been executed according to the drivers who drove them to the place of execution...

The laughing and swearing drunk executioners surrounded the women, writhing in hysterics on the floor. They passed crude jokes, unbuttoned the dresses, searched... The ward supervisor begged: “Leave them alone. I know that you cannot be trusted around the women to be executed...”¹¹¹.

That happens everywhere. One of the exiled anarchists wrote recently in Berlin “Anarchy Messenger”¹¹² about Vologda transfer prison:

The warden warned us before leaving to be on alert: a guard or supervisor himself might show up at night with you know what on their mind. That was the custom. Almost all women in the incoming transfer parties are getting raped. And almost all jailers are sick and infect the women... The warning was not for nothing...

¹⁰⁹“Che Ka” almanac, pp. 246 – 247.

¹¹⁰Archive of Denikin’s Commission.

¹¹¹Quoted from the description of execution on the night 17 November 1919. “Revolutionary Russia” No. 10. wrote about rape of two socialists in Astrakhan.

¹¹²No. 3 – 4.

I recall a rape incident that occurred in the mens solitary confinement block on the top floor, in the high security ward of Special Department. The guards stated, that the arrested woman offered herself for 1/2 lb of bread. Okay, let us assume that was true. For 1/2 lb of bad rye bread! Does this fact require any comments? Sinavari talked about rapes in St. Petersburg in his testimony during Conradi trial.

But here is information of different sort regarding the activities of the same Kuban Extreme Commission.

That little town tsar, who held power of life or death of the residents in his hands, who carried out confiscations, commandeering and executions of people with impunity, was tired of lavish lifestyle pleasures and found satisfaction in gratification of his lust. There was no attractive woman, whom Sarayev has seen and not raped. The methods of violence are simple and primitive in their savage cruelty. The close family of the targeted victim is arrested – brother, husband or father, and sometimes all together, and get sentenced to execution by firing squad. Naturally, the woman tries to make arrangements, “runs from pillar to post”. Sarayev cleverly turns that to his advantage, making a disgusting ultimatum: she either “comes across” for the freedom of a family members, or they would be executed. In most cases the victim chooses the later in a struggle between death of family and her own falling. If Sarayev particularly liked that woman, the case dragged on longer, making the victim satisfy him the next night and so on. All that occurred with impunity among the terrorized residents, deprived of the elementary rights and means to protect their interests.

A chair of administrative committee in Pashkovskaya village came to liking of one cossack officer N’s wife. They organized his harassment. At first the official commandeered half of N’s house and moved in. But close proximity was not enough to attract the beauty to the official. Then the measures have been taken to get rid of the obstacle – the husband – and he was arrested and executed as a former officer, which means a counter-revolutionary.

There is no end to the facts of sexual harassment. They are all uniform and evidence of one thing – deprivation of rights, completely irresponsible tyranny of Bolshevik government...

“– You are very attractive, your husband is not worth of you, – told Che Ka investigator to Mrs. G, and calmly added, – I am releasing you, but will execute your husband on the charges of counter-revolution; but I may release him, if you will keep my company once released... Terrified, close to insanity G. told of the interrogation to the cell mates, and received unanimous advise to save her husband at any cost. She was soon released from Che Ka, the investigator visited her apartment a few times, but... her husband was still executed by firing squad.

An excommmer offered freedom to an officer’s widow M. on the condition of co-habitation. M. agreed and was freed, and the excommmer moved in with her.

"I hate him," – told M. her friend Mrs. T., – "but what can I do, widowed, with three small children... However, I am not so stressed anymore, not afraid of the searches, not worried, that any moment they would barge in and drag me to Che Ka".

I could supplement that list with the similar cases from the practice of Moscow institutions, and not only Moscow. I know from reliable source of a fact, that proves, that one of the top ranking Che Ka officials is guilty of such murder... As I cannot risk revealing the source, they cannot be named now.

"Every sailor had 4 – 5 lovers, mostly from among the officer widows and wives of the officers who were away" – tells the witness at Lausanne trial quoted above about Crimea ordeal. "To not come across, not surrender – means to be executed. The strong committed suicides. That was a widespread outcome". And further: "the drunk, mad of blood, grabbed a list and crossed out the last names of those, whom they did not like during the nightly orgies, where the sisters of charity and wives of arrested and escaped officers and other female hostages were forced to take part in. "The crossed" have been executed the same night"... "Orgies occurred systematically at Nikolayev Che Ka and Tribunal" – testified one witness to Denikin's Commission. Even the women who came with appeals for their family members – the arrestees were freed for taking part. Sister of charity Medvedeva from Kiev testified to that commission about an extremely cynical scene. "The excommers had a number of women at their disposal", – says Medvedeva. – "They approached women from the inappropriate point of view only. That was scary. Sorin loved orgies. This is what transpired on Holy Starutday at the former Demchenko Hall. Two appellants enter the hall, curtain opens on a stage where three completely naked women are playing grand piano. He saw the appellants, who told me that, in front of those".

Some "respecting women weeks" announced in Russia by "Worker's Newspaper" and "Proletarian Truth"! For infamous "nationalization of women" and so-called "days of free love", that caused so much ridicule in Bolshevik and other press, existed without doubt as facts of tyranny in the provinces. That was documentary confirmed.

9.6 "Oppressing Bourgeois"

"Terror – it is killing, spilling blood, executions. But it is not only execution, that most impacts thought and imagination of the enemy... The methods of terror are countless and varying, as countless and varying are expression of oppression and tyranny... Terror – it is execution everywhere, at every corner"... writes one of the participants of October revolution, one of the creators of that system of government, where "execution is bloody finalization, dark pinnacle of the system, which is stubbornly daily killing people's soul" in his new book "Moral Outlook of Revolution"¹¹³ It is a pity that Mr. Steinberg wrote that in October 1923 in Berlin and not in October 1917. It is too late to talk about "greatest sin of our revolution" now, in the atmosphere of "inexhaustible soul decay", that we observe. Without doubt, in order to get the gist of the events, christened "red terror", we must portray it in the rest of many areas of public life, where tyranny and violence take place previously unheard of. That

¹¹³pp. 20 – 23.

tyranny puts human lives in jeopardy. Not only “freedom of speech” has been suppressed everywhere, not only “heavy burden of censorship collapsed human thought”, but many Russian writers perished in the torture chambers and basements of the “institutions of revolutionary justice”. Let us recall A. P. Laurier, the most humane popular socialist, executed in Crimea for collaborating with “Southern Messages”, SR Zhilkin, editor of Arkhangelsk “Northern Revival”, Leonov – editor of “Northern Morning”, Aliasberg – reporter of the Odessa papers “Modern Word” and “Southern Word”, accused of “discrediting soviet government before Western proletariat”, Plehanov follower Bachmetiyev, executed in Nikolayev for reporting to “Free Word”; social-democrat Matskevich – editor of “Transitional Government Messenger”; A. S. Prugavin, who perished in Novo-Nikolayevsk prison, V. V. Wolk-Karachaevsky, who died of typhus in Booturskaya prison, Dushechkin – there too. Those are the names taken at random. But too many of them! So many scientists! The listings, recently published abroad by the scientist union are desperately far from complete.

Let us leave those sad memories alone for now. We want to touch upon another important form of terrorizing population, that exceeds everything else in its rudeness and lack of sense. We will talk about “oppression of bourgeois”. That concept applied to all intelligent and was especially widespread in the South¹¹⁴. There were designated dates, when total searches were conducted and almost all personal property except for bare minimum was confiscated “according to a quota”: one bedding sheet, two napkins etc. Following is a description of one such day in Ekaterinodar in 1921, announced at the anniversary of Commune de Paris¹¹⁵:

The armed to the teeth Bolsheviks accompanied by the squads of reds barged into all apartments, belonging to those, who had a misfortune to be nobles, merchants, prominent citizens, lawyers, officers before the revolution, but now were doctors, professors, engineers – in other words “bourgeois” – carried out detailed search, confiscated money and everything of value, dragged the residents outside dressed as they were without distinction of sex, age and even health condition, sometimes the almost dead of typhus, loaded into the waiting carts under heavy guard and drove them outside the city into the barns and barracks. Some “bourgeois” were locked into a concentration camp, some sent to Pertrovsk city for forced labor (!) at the fisheries of Caspian sea. Nightmarish scene of expelling hundreds of families continued for day and a half... Their property was confiscated for distribution among the workers. We do not know if it reached the workers, but know full well that it ended up at the marketplace and was bought back by the former owners from the speculators, and finding own suits on the commissars and dresses on their wives became a custom.

We should describe the instances of arbitrary taxes, that reached hyperbolic proportions especially in the first few years of Bolshevik ruling. Failing to pay them meant arrest, imprisonment and possible execution as a hostage at random.

¹¹⁴They tried to introduce that in Moscow not once.

¹¹⁵“Revolutionary Russia” Nos. 12 – 13 and 43.

I think that it would be sufficient to quote a speech by a decorated Bolshevik commander Muravyev on capturing Odessa in February 1918, which he delivered at the assembly of the "bourgeois"¹¹⁶ for characterization of those "tax contributions".

I arrived too late – the enemy is at the gate of Odessa... You are glad perhaps, but do not celebrate. I will not surrender Odessa... in case of dire need nothing will be left of your palaces, of your lives... You have to contribute 10 million Roubles in three days... Woe unto you, if you will fail to contribute... I will drown you with a rock around your neck and destroy your families.

Perhaps that was not so scary in reality. A. V. Peshehonov is trying to prove that in his brochure "Why Have I Not Emigrated?" The practice differed from the theory and Muravyev has not drowned the Odessa bourgeois and public figures. But according to the stories of what happened for example in Ekaterinodar, confirmed by many eyewitnesses whose stories I have written down at one moment or another, it becomes clear that "oppression of bourgeois" or "the sacred process of restoring city and country proletariat rights" is not something that can be sceptically laughed off. Peshehonov wrote about declaration of a "peaceful rebellion day" by the Bolsheviks in Odessa one year after the Muravyev's experiments (13 May 1919). The specially assembled squads (up to 60) would have to confiscate surplus food, shoes, clothes, money etc. from the "affluent class". We can find rich material to characterize the methods of carrying out the "peaceful rebellion" that culminated in the threat of arrest of those who failed to comply with the order and execution of the resisters, in Margolies's book "The Years Of Fire". The local Soviet of People's Deputies issued an order and the local Administrative Committee worked out a detailed plan which listed the types of property subject to confiscation – only 3 shirts, pairs of pants, socks etc. was left per capita.

"Some devil is not so black as it is painted", – writes Peshehonov in that respect¹¹⁷.

The commoners were horrified beyond belief and threw themselves around in the attempts to hide the most valuable articles, but I only laughed: this is obviously nonsense! Could they steal from several hundred thousands people in one day, and also find treasure that they hid in all kinds of cracks and holes?! One of the two is unavoidable: either the Bolshevik squads will get stuck in the first apartment buildings, or organized robbery will turn into chaos, street crowds will join in, and the Bolsheviks will be forced to quell a riot. Indeed the confiscation squads got stuck in the first apartments and another unexpected event occurred: they were met with curses in the workers quarters, and then it escalated into fights and shots were fired. The Bolsheviks all but had to stop their "peaceful rebellion" in order to avoid armed rebellion of the workers...

¹¹⁶Margulies. "The Years Of Fire", p. 85.

¹¹⁷A. V. Peshehonov. "Why Have I Not Emigrated?" p. 15

It seems that they managed to “confiscate surplus” in Odessa in 1920, but I was no longer there and have no idea how it was organized. Probably many managed to dodge it one way or another. Confiscation of surplus was not completed in Kharkov in 1920 either. At first they started blanket searches of all apartments, the night after they only searched the select ones, seeking out the most “bourgeois” residences, then – faced with influential protests – completely gave up. They never reached an apartment where I lived.

In reality they failed in Odessa too.

The reason being, – writes Margulies – that the Bolsheviks made a huge tactical mistake by not excluding apartments of the workers and soviet officials from the searches”... “When news of “peaceful rebellion” spread across the city – panic ensued. I am referring not to bourgeois, but specifically to the workers... Most of the factories stopped operation and the “communists” rushed to their homes to defend their property against illegal seizure. The wild scenes played out; the commissions, staffed mostly with youths and suspicious females, were met with cursing, swearing and in many cases with physical violence including drenching in boiling water... Tempers ran high... There was no other option than to stop confiscation; otherwise the isolated incidents of resistance had a chance to spill into a truly popular riot.

At 1 PM (“peaceful rebellion” started at 9 AM) an emergency wire with an order to stop the searches has been distributed. Administrative Committee issued a special appeal to the workers the next day:

...It pains us to admit, that the workers involuntarily protected the bourgeois... We could not specify in the plan that there would be no searches in the workers quarters, as the bourgeois would rush there in order to hide the stolen property! It was a sad misunderstanding, that failed an initiative, important for the workers.

Yes, devil is not so black as it is painted!

Only a month before that Odessa was apportioned a tax contribution of 500 million Roubles. Was that a figment of imagination? Evictions from the homes in 24 hours is not fictional in Odessa and other cities. It was not fictional, that women have been seized in the streets for forced labor at the hospitals; or forced labor for bourgeois in Sevastopol and other Crimea cities. We can find description of that labor in the archives of Denikin’s Commission. One of the witnesses testified, that “All men, who wore starched collars and all women wearing hats have been sent to forced labor”. They were hunted and seized in the streets and sent outside the city to dig the trenches.

The street raids have been replaced with nightly apartment raids. The captured bourgeois have been dragged into the militia detachments and in the morning, without regard to the age, sent for loading the rail cars and digging trenches. They were not used to menial labor and were inefficient at that not due to laziness, but due to lack of experience and old age of many, but the same curses and whips of the guards fell onto the temporary laborers. The women were sent to clean the barracks and the buildings confiscated for stationing the commissars and communist institutions. The young girls have been intentionally sent to forced labor in the first day of Passover. They were suddenly summoned to the detachments and sent to clean the red army barracks, dirty as hell. The students were not allowed to change from their festive dresses or pick up mops and rugs for cleaning. The commissars forced them to clean the toilets with their bare hands under the barrel of the gun and a whip¹¹⁸.

A week of “confiscating surplus” was carried out in Kiev.

The former commissar of Bolshevik justice was right, stating in his book, that arbitrary confiscations and evictions, that were rooted in the secret quotas and only on the surface “applicable to the rich and idle, but in reality struck the hungry and tired”, were a manifestation of terror, when they were enacted by the orders similar to No. 19 of 9 April 1918 in Vladikavkaz: “All bourgeois, both those who have paid tax contribution and those who have not, is under obligation to turn up at 8 PM to the Winter Theater. Failure to turn up is punishable with execution by firing squad” – it is real terror in the truest sense of the word. Would it not be enough to quote an interview of Peters to the communist reporters, published by Kiev “Izvestiya” 29 August 1919.

I recall how the St. Petersburg workers echoed my appeal to carry out mass searches of bourgeois. Up to 20,000 workers, sailors and red army men took part in those raids. Their work was above and beyond... They found 2000 bombs (!!), 3000 prismatic binoculars, 30,000 compasses and many other items of military issue. Those searches allowed us to find the tracks of the counter-revolutionary organizations, that were later discovered country-wide...

Unfortunately there is no such organized help in Kiev... The marauders and speculators, who inflate the prices, hide food that the city needs so badly. Yesterday we found stockpiles of food during the searches. Their owners, who failed to comply with my order to register the stockpiles, will be subjected to capital punishment.

That is no longer fictional. And the same issue of “Izvestiya” provided immediate feedback in the form of a list of 127 names of the executed by firing squad. The hostages, who so often paid with their lives during the civil war, were not fictional

¹¹⁸Handwritten essay on the Crimean events.

either. And not only during the retreats, but upon finding staged, provoked and real conspiracies against soviet government.

Chapter 10

“Graveyards Of The Living” and “Homes of the Dead” Prison and Exile.

The de-jure hostages and those who can be referred to as de-facto hostages overcrowd the prisons and all kinds of concentration camps. What are the living conditions there? – We already learned about that from a description of one such camp in the far North. Let us assume that “house of horrors” is an exception. For one cannot imagine, that only horror rules the country. But everyday life in Soviet Russia, and especially in prisons under immediate control of the Extreme Commissions is nothing but horror: “they did not treat us like that at the penal servitude colonies of the monarchy”– wrote Left SR Spiridonova in 1919, the same one who supported the Bolsheviks during the October 1917 coup. Imagining the living conditions of Saratov and Tsaritsyn “barracks” converted into prisons for lack of space, is not too hard.

The jailers of those prisons and concentration camps intentionally invented tyrannical measures over the prisoners. The old prison never knew so sophisticated methods of tyranny, that are commonplace in present – wrote the authors of memorandum about the soviet prisons in 1921¹. Kara, Zarentuy, Sakhalin all pale in comparison with the modern times². All that truly pales, when the prisoners are being forced to bury the corpses of the executed³; when women are forced to clean up blood from the floors after the executions, to clean walls splattered with blood and chunks of human brain – possibly of their family members: that is a torture indeed. But tyranny is ongoing – for example many were forced to clean up the outhouses with their bare hands; virtually every testimony before Denikin’s Commission mentioned that fact. In Odessa they specifically summoned the “bourgeois from French Boulevard”⁴; when those vomited while cleaning waste with intentionally so primitive tools, they were

¹Memorandum of a Congress of the Members of Russian Parliament in Paris, p. 12. The document included volumes of information on conditions of political prisoners.

²The locations of hard labor camps during the monarchy. *Trans.*

³It happened in Moscow, the same was noted by the Kiev sisters of charity who were forced to clean up the cellar, used for executions.

⁴An upscale neighborhood in Odessa under monarchy. *Trans.*

beaten with the buttstocks. Cleaning of toilets with bare hands was commonplace everywhere: that fate caught up with Gen. Ruzsky too. The political prisoners are housed in the infectious wards (there were incidents); the “bourgeois” in Theodosia, working on sweeping the streets, had to wear the confiscated high hats; the prisoners in Pyatigorsk get yelled at: “Get to your doghouses, mongrels!” etc.

It appears that methods of tyranny are specifically getting invented. Nightly interrogations, nightly searches... They wake up everyone in a cell and move them to a cellar. After two days they would move everyone back. That is a story about Odessa prison... We experienced those nightly searches and transfers etc. in Moscow. That would be senseless, if it was not a method of tyranny over the prisoners, special method of psychological pressure.

“The concentration camps” – once wrote to RCAC the SR prisoners – “are the places of wild tyranny, focus of epidemics unheard of, mass extinction”. And again there is no overstatement here on the side of the victims. We provided mortality statistics at Kholmogory camp. In 1922 of 5000 prisoners of Arkhangelsk camp from Kronstadt only 1500 survived⁵. Thus thousands diminished mere hundreds even without the executions.

Many former prisons now bear a title “Soviet detention house”, but in reality that is much worse than the “penal centers” under monarchy, at least by the living conditions. When and where the rules prohibited not only reading, but walking as a policy?!

Those are the official policies of the so called internal prison of Che Ka Special Department in Moscow, where the windows are covered with the special steel blinds (besides the bars), that seal the windows from outside – the cells are always dimmed. The solitary confinement cells at Gorokhovaya St. in St. Petersburg, prison of the local Che Ka, are a sort of “wooden coffins” (cells 6 by 3 feet with no windows or light). Where there were 3 solitary cells under monarchy, there are 13 now holding 24 people⁶. The same policy as in Moscow Special Department applies here. A built-in cabinet was used as a punitive cell in Kiev – a sister of charity once found 3 prisoners locked there: an old man, his daughter and her husband, an officer. What about the moist, dark cellars? SR Samorodova was held for about a month in Baku in 1922 “literally in a crypt – a deep basement cellar with no windows, absolutely dark day or night”. Other accused in the SR trial in Baku were kept in the similar “noxious cellars, with no windows, no light” during investigation (both workers and intelligent). A 16 year old high school student was made “to kneel on nails and shards of broken glass in a cellar with a heating oil tank”⁷.

The prisoners were at least fed under monarchy. And now? The rations at the Moscow prisons in 1918 included 1/2 lb of bread and broth with rotten potatoes and cabbage⁸. On top of that prohibition of parcels with food from the families for month

⁵“Socialist Messenger”, No. 15.

⁶“Socialist Messenger” 1923, No. 5.

⁷“Revolutionary Russia” 1924., No. 33 – 34.

⁸Bread ration in the following years was 1/2 – 1 lb. A letter by a peasant from Tambov, imprisoned in St. Petersburg, describes how sufficient was that ration: “we get 1 lb [of bread] every three days, and broth is not soup, but waste water; they do not put salt, and wastewater is nasty

at a time is widely practiced as a punishment and method of extracting required testimony⁹.

Enormous mortality of starvation was direct consequence of that policy – up to 75% at the prison hospital. The head of Taganskaya prison officially reported, and Bolshevik press published¹⁰ 40% mortality of starvation. It was published when several “sentimental” Bolsheviks were dismayed by what they learned and witnessed. An article by Dyakonov in “Izvestiya”¹¹ was titled “Graveyard Of The Living”. He wrote about the holding cells at Taganskaya prison:

Several cells are overcrowded by the sick with high fever up to 100.4 – 104 degrees. Everything is in the mix: camp fever and “Spanish”¹². Those half-dead creatures lie there for a week or longer; they are not being sent to a hospital. Temperature in the cell is 40 – 45 degrees, sometimes as low as 37.5. Some of the sick have thin blankets, others do not; they cover themselves with the coats. No bedding sheets, no pillow cases; the filthy boards are covered with a kind of mattress with no straw left. Underwear is worn for up to 2 months without change. The faces are emaciated, bodies like shadows. The expression is of people awaiting death. And not a single nurse for 100 of those prisoners.

The doctor on duty, who worked at that prison for 20 years, served there under the different regimes, said that death of starvation is frequent as of lately. Typhus and Spanish flu take a toll of several people a day.

The same filth is in all wards and cells, the same emaciated faces; the hungry, begging eyes staring from behind the iron bars and stretching the thin hands. Almost 1000 people are moaning from pain, about amnesty, and that they are waiting to be interviewed for 2 – 3 months, to be tried for over a year – that turns the scene we saw into a horrible scene of some nightmarish hallucination.

But enough with the facts.

Let those who can understand human suffering supplement that scene with the pain, experienced by a person, who is thrown into that house of horror.

Truly, a living soul, who languished behind the iron bars and thick walls for a month, has atoned for a most heinous crime.

And how many innocents are imprisoned there!

without salt” (“The Path Of Revolution”, p. 338). St. Petersburg “Revolutionary Business” (No. 2) so described conditions of 2000 Tambov peasants, including women and children, imprisoned at Vyborg prison in St. Petersburg in February 1922: “Not people, but scary shadows are walking about prison, moaning all day... Hunger extinction is literally going on. Several people die every day.

⁹Many prisons also practiced nationalization of the parcels. They were not delivered to the prisoners, but were pooled. Not hard to imagine what was the outcome. It is possible that the solitary confinement wards in St. Petersburg are either pooling the parcels or giving them to the guards.

¹⁰“Izvestiya”, 26 December 1918.

¹¹4 December 1918.

¹²Typhus and Spanish flu. *Trans.*

Can a more perfect torture be invented, than throwing a person into jail, depriving them of warmth, air, freedom of movement, feeding them seldom and allowing the pest insects that only death can save from eat him alive?..

It is a shame for our communist republic, bizarre, that we are not going to tolerate.

The comptrollers, commissars, communists, and just the officials – all of you.

Can you hear?

Rush to dig up the graves of the buried alive, do not wait for bloody tragedies. If you cannot do anything right away – use an amnesty.

We are not so afraid of the hundreds of released criminals, as the very existence of such prison is dangerous. Communism and revolution do not need assistance of such “houses of the dead”. We can find other means to protect them.

The same author wrote in another article: “The letters from other detention centers of Moscow and the provinces paint the same horrible picture of the “houses of the dead”.

“Bizarre, that we are not going to tolerate”... Well said, while the inmates of Che Ka are being held like cattle – sometimes hundreds at a time at a location, designed for a few dozens, among the billions of pests, with no food or change of clothes...

One of the renowned Russian political writers, who was arrested in Crimea at advanced age, was imprisoned in a cellar, where both men and women were locked. He spent 6 days there. It was so crowded, that it was impossible to lie down. One day so many news prisoners were brought in, that they could not even stand. Then parties were executed one after another and that created some space. The arrestees were not fed for several days, (apparently everyone in the cellar were considered doomed). Cold water was given once a day. The parcels were not accepted and the family members who brought them were dispersed with blank volleys...

Prisons became more organized with time, but in reality little has changed. The “graveyards of the living” and “houses of the dead” are still where they were, and the same miserable living conditions continue. They became even worse in some areas. Are we now receiving the news of mass beatings at the prisons, of the inmate strikes¹³, of hunger strikes we never heard of under monarchy (for example, SR Tarabookin – 16 days) that hundreds and thousands take part in – once entire Bootyrskaya prison went on a hunger strike: more than 1000 people; of suicides etc. It would be wrong to judge that Bolshevik prison from the perspective of personal experience from the old times. People of our gravity were somewhat privileged even under monarchy. There was the time, when the socialists, at least in Moscow, were allowed certain privileges above the rest. They achieved that with protests, hunger strikes, solidarity – they

¹³Those strikes of the socialists, always accompanied by the beatings, exiles etc., became commonplace; they occurred in Bootyrskaya prison in 1918, 19, 20, 21 and 22. We will not reproduce their descriptions as foreign press published a lot about them.

broke down established order. Only to a point – for they paid for those privileges dearly.

Here is a statement by the officially closed Moscow Political Red Cross, submitted in 1922 to the bureau of RCAC. It starts with:

Political Red Cross considers its duty to point the Bureau at systematic degradation of the condition of political prisoners as of lately. The conditions of their incarceration has degraded to those of the first days of civil war on Russian territory... The excesses, allowed in a nervous atmosphere of 1918... have been reproduced in day to day practice...

People in Russia get used to everything, they have gotten used to prison too. And so hundreds and thousands of the prisoners languish, sometimes quietly, with “dust-gray swollen faces, dim and lifeless eyes”; for months and years in the basements and cellars (with blinds on the windows) of the former Extreme Commissions, now the Departments of State Political Administration (GPU). “Any spirit of disobedience or self-determination is ruthlessly persecuted”. And that situation is equal between Odessa, Orel, Moscow and St. Petersburg, needless to say in the provinces.

Here is a striking description of political exile by G. M. Yudovich, transferred from Moscow to Ustsysolsk of North-Dvinsk region in the fall of 1921, over a chain of provincial prisons¹⁴.

We arrived at Vologda transfer prison late at night...

The supervisors met us with dirty swearing from the very first moment.

– Stand here!...

– Do not dare! Do not move! Be silent!...

They took away much of our property. Everything – be it a spoon or a cup – was important in our dire situation. I tried to protest and register a complaint. That of course got me nowhere.

Then they directed us into the cells.

I approached a door of the common female cell and groaned. No words can translate that incredible horror: 30 – 40 of half-dead creatures were moving among disgusting sticky mud. There were feces and mud even on the cell walls...

The day brought new horror: food. We were fed with half-rotten fish only. There were no grains – the jailers stole it. As Vologda transfer prison is a “central”, i.e. it constantly houses the prisoners being transferred, overcrowding is incredible and no one is concerned with food preparation. Kitchenwares are never washed. Everything is cooked in the dirty pots. The pots, used to cook disgusting broth, are teeming with incredible number of worms...

Vyatka follows Vologda.

¹⁴“Anarchy Messenger”, No. 3 – 4.

The conditions seemed to be better compared with Vologda. The cells were larger and not as filthy.

I asked for a shower, but they told me to enter the cell first, and they “will see to it later”...

40 women are locked in a large cell. I am the only “political”. There are 9 bunk beds made of boards. No mattresses, pillows, nothing. The women in tattered clothes, some almost naked, half-dead, are laying on the beds and floor...

The floor is concrete and never cleaned...

I cannot recall another night, so horrible as one spent in Vyatka prison. Billions of insects. The inmates are throwing themselves around, moaning, begging for water... Many have fever.

17 turn out to be sick with typhus by the morning. We are requesting to send them to a hospital and getting nowhere...

We were given “soup” at 8 PM. I never saw anything like that before: it was cooked from the dirty horse heads; the pieces of horse hides, hair, some slime, rags are floating in dark stinky liquid... Potatoes are not peeled.

People eat that horrible broth eagerly, take turns at swallowing, fighting for potato peel...

A few minutes later many of them vomit.

So ends a day and comes another nightmarish night...

G. M. Yudovich mentioned, that she was sick before exile and applied for a delay, pointing out that she had no warm clothes and could not travel to the North”. The reply was “to transfer immediately”. It always is. That is another form of tyranny of the prisoners. For example, a party of convicted to forced labor was rushed to Ekaterinburg from Ivanovo camp in Moscow on the night of 19 October 1920. There were famous public figures among the prisoners. We will quote only a few lines from the description of that transfer by one of its participants.

There were sick people aged 60 – 70 among the 96 prisoners; all their application to be allowed to stay were in vain. Many had no warm clothes after all, as weather during their arrest was still warm, and the first real snowfall was right on the 19th. Many had no shoes, no food. Everyone was rushed to pack and many left the basic necessities behind. The prisoners to be transferred were lead to a gallery, which was very cold, and had to wait for more than an hour, then were searched and taken to the yard. After several head counts they were lead into the streets under heavy guard and walked to a rail terminal of Northern railway (Yaroslavl terminal). The guards were rude along the way, rushed the prisoners, even though it was hard for the elderly carrying their stuff. Arrived at the terminal around 1 AM. Here we stood outside for more than 3 1/2 hours in snow storm (5 – 14 degree weather) due to lack of cars and absence of a responsible official, who had to accept the prisoners and load onto the cars. After 1 AM a party from Androniev camp arrived and stood nearby. We recognized

several prisoners among them, who were transferred from Ivanovo camp supposedly for release (by the way, there were 30 – 35 Polish nationals among the 96, who were considered “civilian prisoners of war”). Loading into the cars started at half past three. The train left only at 9 – 10 AM on 20 October, so it was not clear why we had to be rushed with packing up and wait in the cold at the terminal.

There were about 60 cars in a train, as about 100 people from Ordynka camp joined us from Ivanovo and Andronyev camps, and a few dozens from Novo-Peskovo and Pokrov camps. On top of that about 500 students of political courses for the red army commanders (formerly white officers of Kolchak and Denikin’s armies) and 450 candidates, i.e. about 1400 – 1500 prisoners in total. We learned the following about the students and candidates in transit. The officers, who qualified to serving in Red Army, all have been sent to a 6-week political course, which they had to pass in order to serve. The prominent figures from the communist party lectured them in the principles of soviet government and communism. The students from Alexandrov almost graduated, only a few days was left for them until graduation and distribution to the Red Army units. They were not under arrest and lived in the dorms of Alexandrov military school. The day before or on the morning of 19 they were suddenly crowded into Kozhukhov camp (in about 10 miles from Moscow) without explanation and joined the train on the night from 19 to 20. As to the candidates, they were transferred to the same courses from the various camps around the country and awaited entry, i.e. graduation of the previous group. They were free. Some of them lived in the dorms, others rented private apartments, and only had to show up to a daily checkpoint. That day, on the 19, those who showed up at checkpoint were detained as they were dressed, i.e. with no warm clothes, not allowed to pack their belongings from the apartments, and sent to the terminal for transfer to Ekaterinburg. The cars in the train were freight (not even insulated).

Food matched the conditions of transfer... Only 8 times in 12 days was given bread (often no more than 1/2 lb), twice small pieces of raw meat (we were lucky to procure the stoves), 2 – 3 times several spoonfuls of grain, 2 – 3 times one spoonful of cooking butter, 2 – 3 times 3 – 4 potatoes, twice a piece of herring, twice coffee, twice sugar, once salt and once tobacco (2 cigarettes per person) and one box of matches per cart. Even with the stoves, not everyone had a chance to cook, as many did not have pots; it took very long to cook for 35 and while waiting for their ration many did not eat for days at a time, and finally often there was no water. Some were lucky to pack some food from the camps and supplement the ration that way. Those who had no own food were starving or had to buy and barter any money and stuff they had (far not everyone did) for food (starting from 3 – 4th day of travel, when the train entered grain-producing Vyatka region). Money could buy almost nothing. Everything was used for barter – soap, thread, pencils, copper and tin kitchenwares, extra underwear and

clothes, blankets and sheets. As a result of that barter in order to still hunger for a few hours, many carried on with their travel with no warm clothes left¹⁵

I reckon, that for any one insufficiently familiar with the conditions of Russian politics of the day, it would be difficult to imagine Bolshevik prison with the inmates from 3 to 97 years old (there was an 8 year old “spy” in Bootyrskaya prison); those armies of exiled men, women, children and the elderly...

Prison is a never ending horror in Russia these days. And not only for the prisoners themselves, but for the families too. They learn about death of the family members accidentally. So many parents still do not know, whether their children are dead or alive. They are living with hope to find a close relative in some remote corner of Northern concentration camps. They are deprived of even the last relief – burying the corpses of the loved ones.

It can be the other way around. I know of an incident in Moscow, confirmed by an official document from 1920, when Che Ka notified the parents, that their 16 year old son, arrested under the case of lawn tennis club, was executed by firing squad 4 December. Meanwhile it was established, that he was executed on the 22. They issued that document so that parents would not make arrangements for their son’s release. The arrangements, according to Latsis, only mess with the process – this is why Latsis accelerated executions of those, for whom arrangements were going to be made.

The families run from pillar to post at the Che Ka institutions in order to find any information about the prisoners, but not getting any. Not even where they are locked up. The above mentioned document by Red Cross said:

Che Ka stopped providing information about the prisoners to their families... The families are being kept unaware of their members’ situation for weeks. For example, the families of those arrested 14 – 15 April (1921) by an order of the Secret Department (up to 400 in total) could not pass the parcels (primarily food) or learn their whereabouts for three weeks.

Can you imagine mental state of those, who are looking for the prisoners while the executions are being carried out? And those days repeat so often! Is that not a special kind of torture, shifted from an individual to a number of their family members?

Variety of grounds for arrests, sometimes mass arrests practiced by the Extreme Commissions is unimaginable. Demonstrating humane nature of soviet government, Latsis provided the arrest statistics by Che Ka in 1918 – 1919 at 128 thousand people. “And that was for entire Soviet Russia! Where is that unruly terror, that our commoners are accusing us of at every opportunity?!” If we would take into account, that that officially prison capacity in 1919 was 36 thousand, than even Latsis’s figure is nothing but small. But mortality statistics, just as that of the arrests, are understated in the utmost. Indeed, if some tiny Kineshma has a concentration camp for 1000 prisoners (the prisons are never vacant these days¹⁶); if the concentration camps

¹⁵The complete document was published by “Socialist Messenger” 20 May 1921.

¹⁶Bootyrskaya prison, designed for 1000 inmates, often housed up to 3 1/2 thousand.

just near Omsk house 25 thousand, it becomes clear, that we are dealing with hundreds of thousands country wide, as nearly all monasteries have been converted into the prisons.

With peculiar process, practiced by Che Ka (or GPU – does not matter), when hundreds of innocents are being arrested just in case, the prisons are doomed to be overpopulated.

Latsis pointed out in his articles, that more than half of the arrested were released in 1918 – 1919.

But we are going to be asked, where do the huge numbers of arrested innocents originate from? It happens due to the fact, that when entire institution, battalion or military school become implicated in a conspiracy, is there another method to prevent possible mistakes than *to arrest everyone, then separate the innocent* during a thorough investigation?

Apparently Bolshevik government was unique in the whole world in adopting that method of finding the guilty. As to security of the person, that was nothing more than a “bourgeois prejudice”. Entire battalion, entire institution... We in Moscow witnessed, how for example, 1000 office workers of Housing Department get arrested overnight for the “abuses”, or up to a hundred of ambushed get arrested at some institution or apartment¹⁷. “We cannot help but notice the ugly shapes, that widespread system of ambushes takes, when many random people, who have no connection with the politics, get arrested and imprisoned for prolonged terms. We can provide numerous examples, where the arrested during ambush were kept without interview for over a month”, – read a report by Political Red Cross. For example, 600 shoppers have been taken to Che Ka from an ambush at an art store of Dacciaro¹⁸ in Moscow. Once entire wedding was imprisoned in Bootyrskaya prison – the guests, cab drivers etc. 400 people were arrested in a case of cafeteria at Nikistky Blvd where food speculation was suspected. That occurred in all cities. Those raids sometimes reached hyperbolic proportions. According to rumors, 16 thousands were arrested in Odessa in July 1921. They were detained for three days. “Common Business”¹⁹ reporter explained that by a plan to prevent the unwanted segments from voting during the election of the Soviet. “The Latest News”²⁰ quoted an emigrant from Novorossiysk, that there was a designated “prison day” in that city, when a 24 hour curfew was imposed. The mass arrests were carried out those days and armies of people of all ages and classes were taken to Che Ka.

Rakovski wrote in an official document: “People get arrested only for a specific deed in Soviet Russia”. Only an official document could state that. Reality did not match that a little bit, of course.

¹⁷No wonder, that Odette Keun was convinced by her imprisonment at many prisons, that out of 10 residents, 8 were imprisoned by Che Ka in the big cities.

¹⁸The store mostly sold posters of the famous paintings. *Trans.*

¹⁹9 November 1921.

²⁰1920., No. 131.

“A decree of RCAC Bureau of 1 February 1919” – stated Red Cross report – “that prescribed the Che Ka investigators to complete investigation of the cases within one month, is not being followed”.

It was always like that. In 1918, when Peters stated that all 2000 of the arrested (29 October) have been interviewed, when in reality people were jailed for months without interview while Che Ka could not manage chaos; same was in 1919²¹, same was during re-organization of Che Ka to GPU in 1922. It remains the same now, even though it was officially announced by decree of RCAC, that every arrestee must be interrogated within 48 hours, that charges have to be laid no later than two weeks from arrest date, that investigation has to be completed in two months and the arrestee has to be released or sent to trial, that detention for a longer term than two months has to be approved by the top legislative body of Soviet Russia.

Everyone who believes in Soviet “habeas corpus act” is naive. There are no exceptions in that area. Perhaps there cannot be.

As to the arrest statistics, then even Bolshevik own official data, no matter how understated²², demonstrate, that tyranny of arrests is not decreasing. Information in the reports of Internal Affairs Commissariat and Justice Commissariat to the 10th Congress of the Soviets leads us to believe, that 10,638 were in exile on political grounds as of 1 December 1922; there were 48,819 political prisoners²³. The data was for Central Russia only. According to the lists of Supreme Administration of Detention Centers there were 72,685 arrested as of 1 July 1923 – of them 2/3 on political grounds²⁴. The composition of prisoner population has not changed compared with our mortality statistics of 1918. The workers and peasants accounted for 40% of the prisoners²⁵. Terror still is not following class theory to the day. That is only a system of government, employing tyranny.

Exile became enormous since 1922²⁶. All the methods of the past have been restored. Both Turukhansk and Narym camps, and Solovki. An appeal of Berlin Society For Aiding Political Prisoners and Exiled in Russia further reads:

In the Far North or in starving Turkmenia, in the small towns and villages, removed from their families, deprived of bread and elementary attributes of culture, many exiled are essentially condemned to death.

²¹ Compare to the article by a communist Dyakonov above.

²² Over 3000 were arrested during “liquidation” of the Menshevik party in May 1923, and over 1000 in Moscow alone. That “liquidation” was carried out in 30 cities; a new “wave of repression” rolled in July and swept hundreds, probably even thousands of lives... (Quoting an Appeal of “Society For Aiding Political Prisoners and Exiled in Russia”, Berlin, September 1923.)

²³ According to “The Days” reporter.

²⁴ What about thousands exiled from the Far East to the central regions? Thousands of hostages, languishing in the prisons of Tbilisi, Kutaisi etc?

²⁵ That matched the statistics of Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal for 1923: Intelligent 34%, peasants 29%, bourgeois 26%, workers 11%. (“The Chain Link” 1923. 18. VI.)

²⁶ For example, 12 doctors, who dared to criticize the actions of the government in connection with starvation, have been exiled.

Recently Portaminsk concentration camp on the Arctic Sea shore was in the spotlight. Starting late last year (1922) the large parties of the prisoners were transferred there from Moscow and other cities.

This is how the exiled described general conditions at Portaminsk:

The camp is situated in the ruins of a monastery, with no heating, no bunk beds or running water, which is given in limited quantity, with no sufficient meals and with absolutely no health care. Twice a year during Spring melt and Autumn snowfall Portaminsk is not accessible for weeks and there is no communication of the exiled with the mainland...²⁷

But Portaminsk capacity was insufficient. Solovki Archipelago became high destination for exile in the last year. Here is a description of the new exile location with over 200 prisoners.

The inmates are housed on 2.7 acres; leaving that lot is strictly prohibited and guards are ordered to fire without warning at the violators...

The island would be inaccessible in Winter.

Condemning people to physical and spiritual death, “communist” government especially cruelly creates the conditions, unheard of even in tragic history of Russian penal servitude and exile.

We can find a description of that “red penal servitude” in the Solovki Archipelago in a letter from Russia, published in No. 31 “of Revolutionary Russia”²⁸.

The main difference from pre-revolution penal servitude is in the fact, that entire administration, from top to bottom (except for the head of Administration) is composed of the criminals, imprisoned in that camp. Of course those are select individuals: for the most part they are the ex-commers, convicted for theft, extortion, torture and other misdeeds. Over there, away from any public and judicial control, powerless and silenced population of the “red” penal servitude is at the mercy of those “tried” excommers... It has no shoes, clothes and food, has to work for 14 hours a day and gets punished for any violation entirely at the whim of resourceful administration: with the sticks, whips, punishment cells and “stone sacks”, starvation, “standing outside among mosquitoes while naked”...

Savvatiyev hermitage, where the socialists are imprisoned, is situated deeper on the island. It occupies 2.7 acres near the lake and is fenced with barbed wire. “About 200 socialists and anarchists live there in a building, designed for 70. They are provided absolute freedom within that camp: they can starve, become sick, go insane and die without limits, without any attempt to intervene by administration. Any conversation with the

²⁷See description of wild cruelty, that occurred in Portaminsk and Kholmogory camps above in the “Mutilation and Torture” section. We highlighted this description as it exceeds anything possible in usual prison practice. This is torture, real but prolonged.

²⁸October – November 1923.

head of administration Nogtev is utmost simple, frank and cynical. He responded to an attempt to make demands in these general words: "It is about time you realized, that we won and you are the losers. We have absolutely no plans to improve your condition and care not for your issues". To the threat of mass hunger strike he responded: "In my opinion you are better off hanging yourself right away, so futile it is". Length and hardship of travel to Solovki Archipelago leaves the family members with no opportunity to provide substantial aid to the inmates, and ration is just as small as not to starve to death. The very sick and insane have no access to medical help and remain in general population among noise and in overcrowded conditions. It is impossible to arrange their transfer to the mainland. There is a hospital on the island, but the doctors are again convicted excommers...

But not the conditions are most horrible for the prisoners, but anticipation of 8 month long cut-off from the outside world. Nobody knows what is going to happen during that time. The letters from Solvki do not reach destination these days. The Siberian SR have been taken to another island tied and by force into a deserted hermitage, where they would be completely cut-off from their comrades at Savvatiyev...

Just after two months since publication of my book the "worst expectations" came true. We learned about a suicide at Solovki; we learned from an official publication about mass beating with fatal outcome. "Izvestiya" No. 34²⁹ published a fine-print note "regarding the events at Solovki": "An unfortunate incident occurred 19 December 1923 at 6 PM in the court of Savvatiyev hermitage, where the prisoners clashed with a squad of Red Army who guarded the said hermitage where the prisoners are housed". According to the chair of the commission for investigation of the incident, member of Bureau of Central Administrative Committee of USSR R. Smirnov – 6 people were killed and died of wounds; two "lightly wounded".

The fact of establishing a special commission for investigation and its brief official report we can deduct real scale of tragedy, that played out in the North, cut-off from the rest of the world. That is the fate of the socialists. What about fate of the other political prisoners in Solovki?... Everything we need to know we can read in an article by a "Socialist Messenger"³⁰ reporter.

There is a special prison in Solovki besides the concentration camps for the socialists – the so called "Kremlin"... "Kremlin" is a completely remote location from the detention camps of the socialists – it is a different world. The old criminal society with its old economy, old habits and old morale is concentrated there. The so called "economic" get sent there, i.e. people convicted on the "economic" charges – for bribery, theft etc. But there are political prisoners here too: the clergy, "counter-revolutionaries" etc.

²⁹10 February 1924

³⁰11 February 1921.

The horrors of regime at the “Kremlin”, despite the open cells, exceed any expectation. People get savagely beaten. The laboring get beaten for any mistake. Not only the guards carry sticks, but the party wardens too. The punishment are on part with inquisition: people are disrobed and left outside “with mosquitoes” (in the summer) or locked for a week or two in a dark cell where it is impossible to lay down (so small it is), or in a tower with ice in winter. Nutrition is horrible, for the rations get stolen.

Situation of the women is truly desperate. They are even more deprived of rights than the men, and regardless of their background, upbringing, education and habits have to fall. They are under total control of administration that taxes them “in kind”... The women get laid for the bread rations. The sexually transmitted diseases are just as widespread as scurvy and tuberculosis.

In sort – this is a truly slave camp with population completely deprived of their rights, with horrible conditions, starvation, beating, torture and humiliation...

That regime is the greatest disgrace for the Bolsheviks, even if it was applied to the gravest criminals only. But when the defeated political adversaries are put into that situation, there is not enough words of protest to condemn that dirty business.

And those people dare to shame some Sementovsky³¹, Kovalev and the likes for inhumane treatment of political prisoners! Are they any better?

No, they are worse, hundred times worse! At least there was no rude hypocrisy back then. And now they are judging the “executioners of tsar’s penal servitude”, sending solemn protests “against violence and repressions” to Finland, Latvia, Poland, France etc.; writing noisy articles about violence against the communists in the foreign prisons and... committing violence over human beings and their lives, unheard of previously!...

Reading the solemn resolutions and addresses to the “revolutionary fighters, languishing in the bourgeois prisons” adopted and signed by the Russian “Society Of The Former Political Prisoners” 12 March 1923 in a meeting, chaired by the communists Theodorovich, Vilenski-Sibiriyakov and Kramorov becomes disgusting and painful. They expressed assurance, that “time, when revolutionary pressure from proletariat will slam the doors of prisons open, where bourgeois keep their class adversaries”. The Society is creating an international organization “Revolutionary Red Cross For Aiding The Prisoners Of Capital”, that will not stop its activity until “the prison doors will be open worldwide”, as it was 6 years ago in Russia. Disgusting – as hypocrisy is unbearable. Painful – as people, whom I previously respected and harbored warmest feelings towards became implicated in that high hypocrisy...

The notorious “stone sacks”, that existed at the monastery virtually since the times of Ivan-The-Grave restored in Solovki. The prisoners get locked in those narrow and

³¹Inspector of prison administration under monarchy. According to the memoirs of political prisoners under the old regime he authorized transfer of sick prisoner into the hospital, which was against the policy. *Trans.*

deep cavities in the stone walls with no light “for a week or two”³².

The words of poet Polonsky from his diary in connection with the Turkish atrocities of 1876, that we used as an epigraph to the sections about Bolshevik atrocities, can be juxtaposed with a statement in a brochure about Russia by a French communist Pascal, published by the Communist International in St. Petersburg: “Terror is over. As a matter of fact there was never any terror. That word – terror – representing something very specific for a French, always makes me laugh when I am observing reservation, humility – I can say – friendliness of that “horrible Che Ka”. A. S. Izgoyev titled his review of my book “At a Human Slaughterhouse”³³. “When you are reading that catalog of human savagery... the very basis of terms humanity and human society shakes”... As the reader hopefully realized, E. D. Kuskova, always so sensitive towards violence, who wrote on 6 September 1922 in “The Latest News” that “It is for two years that there are no more explicit horrors” was wrong.

³²“At the Soviet Forced Labor”. A letter from Solovki. “Socialist Messenger”, 8 March 1924.

³³“Rudder”, 13 February 1924.

Chapter 11

“Pride And Decoration”

The corrupt of all parties and colors is flowing
naturally into Tuileries Palace and rotting there.

Herzen. 1850.

“The Extreme Commission is a pride and decoration of the communist party” – said Zinovyev once. All assessments are subjective and it seems that Latsis was more correct, stating that “Che Ka is the best that soviet organizations could provide”. From my point of view that is the damning verdict of Bolshevik regime.

The cynical methods of unchecked and unchallenged tyranny and violence, that activity of the Extreme Commissions expressed itself in on practice without doubt can be explained for the most part with personal composition of their staff. No political fanaticism can explain what we read in the previous chapters. Only the natural born maniacal sadists, only the categories, rejected by society, attracted by greed and an opportunity to rule, could rise up and carry out their bloody business at such scale. I reckon that healthy mind would break down in the oppressing atmosphere of blood orgies, played out in Russian arena in the last 5 years.

Study of the excommers males and females, who cropped up from the events, would be of interest to a psychologist and historian. All these Yakovlev¹, Stasova, Samoylov, Ostrovsky etc. – the convicted communists, wearing Che Ka robes², are still on the insufficiently researched page of public psychology and public pathology. But those issues are not yet within the scope of our rather statistical writing. Only a sadist, doing his bloody business, can find gratification in that blood and praise it in poetry, as did the author of notorious collection “Smile of Che Ka” published in Tbilisi. For him

There is no more joy, no better music,

¹Deputy Chair of Russia Che Ka. *Trans.*

²T. S. Vasher dedicated a chapter in her book “The Seen and Experienced” to a convicted Bolshevik Samoylova, Concordia Gromova (“comrade Natasha”), who signed hundreds of death sentences in Ekaterinoslav and organized the death squads, and Solovyeva, an inspirer of the officer executions in Sevastopol in 1918. See also an article by E. D. Kuskova about Samoylova: “Women Executioners” (“The Latest News”, No. 731).

Than crumbling of the bones and lives.
 This is why when our sight is tired,
 And anger starts to boil in the chest,
 I want to dash on your sentence
 A single firm: "Up to the wall! To execute!"

Sensitivity and cruelty often go hand in hand. And Eydook, a poet, fond of lyrical sentiments, can kill people with his own hands for the sake of "revolutionary business"...

The characteristics of another type of excommers, who originated from nobility or bourgeois, represent a special chapter in public pathology. There were such. But perhaps it is too early to talk about them, as the mistakes here can be fatal.

Without doubt the Extreme Commissions could not help but had to be permeated by the criminal elements from the day one.

"Punitive machine of "revolutionary power" – said Dzerzhinski in his note of 17 February 1922 – "had to represent crystal-clear segment of revolutionary justices of the peace and investigators, empowered by revolution". In 1922 it was too late to talk of what was supposed to happen, he had to talk rather of the outcome. "Che Ka staff" – contended the chief of that organization further – "have been carefully selected from the party ranks and included the ideologically pure individuals with impeccable past, for only prevalence of high quality staff Che Ka was capable of fulfilling the duties, *delegated to her by revolutionary proletariat (!?)*". Even if it was so in reality, than atmosphere of tyranny, instilled by the very creators of new political tradition in Russia, would inevitably corrupt even the best. The Che Ka historian Latsis had to admit that continuing staff turnover was required: "no matter how honest was a person, how crystal was their heart, work of Che Ka in the conditions severely impacting mind and dulling ethic feelings, takes its toll. Only rare exceptional officers were not impacted by those conditions". According to Latsis, Che Ka activity had corrupting effect on "on many young communists, whose character was not yet firm enough".

There was an investigator at Yaroslavl regional Che Ka, a former plumber. At first he "worked well, then started drinking". "His friend accordionist was his drinking buddy. He would get drunk and interrogate the arrested. And to beat boredom he would bring his friend along. While he is interrogating, that one played accordion... He was illiterate and could not write a proper report, only wrote: "white execut". That epic scene of Che Ka reality was recorded by one of the former investigators of the same Yaroslavl regional Che Ka, who was jailed in its basement with the author of the article "Sketches of Life In Prison" in "Che Ka" almanac...

The excommers are in all respects privileged segment of new "communist" society – not only in broad powers, but in economic sense.

Russia Che Ka in Moscow is a kind of state within the state. They own entire blocks of confiscated buildings – a few dozens. They have their own dressmaker shop, laundry, canteen, hairdresser, shoe repair, mechanic shop and so long so forth. There are huge stockpiles of confiscated food, wine and other property in their basements to supply the staff and not even accounted for or inventoried... Even during the days of

hunger every excommer was given privileged ration – sugar, butter, white flour etc³. Every theater had to send free tickets to the best seats to Che Ka etc.

We can observe similar situation in the other cities as well. Che Ka always occupies the best buildings. When Che Ka is established in Sevastopol, than nowhere but at Ferdinand Kist Hotel. A Che Ka quarter was founded in Odessa too, where all services, required by its residents can be found, including hair dresser, cinema etc. Zhitomir Che Ka even has its own theater company.

“The types of drunk sailor-excommer or a youth with a revolver tucked in the belt” – read a letter to “Common Business” – “will soon become a thing of the past. They are being replaced by polite investigators from the ranks of lawyers and undergraduate students”. That is probably close to reality – composition of excommers gradually shifts, specially in the provinces. But even more disgusting are those “well nourished, cared for and well dressed, at liberty to decide the fate of their prisoners”, so strikingly different from common impoverished population.

“The name of Che Ka must be not only loud, but clean”... Could that happen, when in Moscow alone up to 20,000 (!) of those agents with privileged rations was on payroll of Che Ka? There were more than 2000 staff in Russia Che Ka alone, 3/4 of them Latvian nationals. The Latvians are in general specially positioned in the Che Ka institutions. Their entire families faithfully serve new “communist order”. They are a kind of “foreign mercenaries” – Che Ka in Moscow was referred to as “Latvian quarter”. A brochure of Left SR so characterized that leaning of Che Ka towards the Latvian nationals: “They move to Moscow from Latvia as to America – to improve economic conditions”. The Latvian nationals, often speaking no Russian, carry out interrogations, searches, write the reports etc. The “funny” stories circulated about that, but of course not so funny for those who were the target of those activities.

Officially they called on the enthusiasts, but for the most part received marginal elements. Krylenko stated, that “criminal element permeated Che Ka. Too many and everywhere. That was unavoidable⁴. A clown from Turkmenia or a pimp are not an exception from a general rule, describing composition of the Extreme Commissions. But they might not be the criminals, as perhaps Puzyrev, a former driver of Prince Vladimir Aleksandrovish, who became a Che Ka investigator in Odessa. But quite often the prominent investigators were later exposed as bandits, murderers, thieves and fraudsters. There are enough documented facts. We could provide dozens of them. Plenty were mentioned in “Che Ka” almanac. For example a safe house of a gang of robbers in Ekaterinodar was found to be an apartment of Che Ka investigator Klimov; an agent of secret operative department of the same Che Ka Albert, recommended by the Youth Union to Kuban University, was exposed as a chief of another gang of robbers. Plenty of documents to that effect can be found in the archives of “Special Commission”⁵: we will see an array of former and present robbers. The Che Ka op-

³Food, not available for the ordinary people. *Trans.*

⁴Needless to say that according to Lenin himself there were “90 rascals for 100 good people” in the very communist party. But Lenin was compassionate about that fact. He said back in 1905: “Party is not a private school for the noble girls... Another rascal can be useful for us even by way of being a rascal”. (V. Voytinsky. “The Years Of Victories And Defeats”, II, 102.)

⁵Denikin’s Commission. *Trans.*

eratives in Moscow became implicated in gang activity. One of the Che Ka officers testified in 1919 that there were "many criminals" among Che Ka, who "issued themselves search orders, carried out racket and kidnapping". Many such bandits could be found among the staff of soviet administration. Odessa, perhaps due to its southern character, provided the most notorious examples. One of the lawyers, questioned by Denikin's Commission, stated: "Criminal element quickly figured out soviet government and became closely attached to it... Rumors quickly spread in the city, that a secretary of Che Ka comrade Mikhail was none other than notorious robber Mike Japanese, but 25 May 1919 No. 47 of "Izvestiya" published official rebuttal of that rumor, where Mike Japanese was referred to as "notorious robber". Several days later the newspapers, perhaps "Communist", published a letter by Mikhail Vinnitsky (an alias – Mike Japanese), stating that all his life he fought for the communist ideals and robbed only the bourgeois. Within short time comrade Mikhail Vinnitsky started to make a career: he converted his gang of thieves and robbers into a Special Soviet Battalion No. 54 and was appointed a commander... When draft of the communists was initiated, comrade Feldman himself was appointed a political commander to that battalion (the moving force behind the local Administrative Committee)⁶.

Odessa criminal Kotovski appeared before us in the position of red division commander. That Kotovski stood out as tolerant⁷. But other animals in human skin remain the same animals. Such is the former head of Tsaritsin soviet administration certain Osip Letny, who later became a chief of gang that committed countless murders and robberies. Such is the chair of Revolutionary Tribunal in Baku Haji-Ilyas and his mates, members of local Che Ka, who were executed in January 1921 on the charges of organizing a gang, that masqueraded robberies and racket as combating counter-revolution. Of course Haji-Ilyas "judged according to revolutionary consciousness", issued death sentences at his sole determination and personally executed those sentences. The figure of those murders is monstrous⁸.

"Bribes and fraud are two unavoidable satellites of bourgeois order" – read "Che Ka Weekly" in 1918. They should not repeat that today, when soviet government had to announce the "weeks against bribes" not once!

Pointing out trial by the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal of certain Kosarev, a comptroller in the Control and Inspection Commission, that was tasked with validating legality of activities of the rest of Che Ka departments. It was found that he was sentenced to 10 years of penal servitude for a murder of an old woman for robbery. Kosarev was tried in 1920 for delivering a cart of firewood instead of frozen poultry. In 1922 Moscow Revolutionary Tribunal tried a commander of one of provincial tribunals Tarabookin, who was exposed as a former bandit. He was tried for extortion. Tarabookin and his assistant killed a jeweler and misappropriated valuables worth 20 million Roubles.

Sometimes Bolshevik government savagely dispatched their own agents implicated in notorious bribes, cynical robberies etc. in administrative order. And still those were

⁶See also Vl. Margulies. "The Years Of Fire", p. 178.

⁷"Common Business", 11 March 1921.

⁸"The Latest News", 2 March 1921.

exceptions to the general rule of complete impunity. They could appeal for ruthless eradication of those “snakes”, discrediting soviet machine, as did Zaks while acting for Dzerzhinski⁹ and at the same time realize, that without those “snakes” the machine could not exist. We can register so many cases when the sentenced to execution by firing squad for the criminal acts were released from prison and immediately promoted.

“The old method of Secret Police – a sting – was condemned by the commission members” – stated proudly a chair of St. Petersburg Che Ka in a meeting of Northern Region Che Ka Association in October 1918 in St. Petersburg. In reality, starting with the case of British consul in Moscow Lockhart, who was invited to a meeting of fictional “white army committee” with Peters’ approval (as acknowledged by “The Truth” newspaper later), entire operation of Che Ka “machine” was based on crude stings, sanctioned from above. A special secret order signed by Dzerzhinsky was distributed 5 December 1920 by a Special Department, where paragraph 5 prescribed to “establish fictional white army organizations for expedient discovery of foreign agents on Russian territory”.

Apparently empowered by that order Latsis was an instigator of disgusting political stings in Kiev where false Chilean and Brazilian consuls from the ranks of Che Ka supposedly organized escape to the foreign countries but turned those who fell for it over to “revolutionary justice” as counter-revolutionaries. No. 1 of “Red Sword”¹⁰, published by Political Department of Special Corpsus of Ukraine Cha Ka, printed official notice of “grand” conspiracy leaded by Albert Petrovich Pirro, representative of Brazilian Republic at the government of Ukraine. According to official publication Pirro himself was executed¹¹ with four others: “investigation of other individuals, involved in that organization, is ongoing”. Among the executed was R. L. Poplavskaya, accused of “an attempt to emigrate to France to warn Clemenceau of a clandestine trip of a group of communists for propaganda”. Of course citizen Pirro was not executed, as we now learned that he was only a sting. It is still unknown what excommacted as fictional Pirro¹². Foreign press¹³ wrote about certain “baroness Stern”, active in 1920 in Odessa. That is also an interesting piece of information about Bolshevik methods of sting. Baroness Stern arrived from Constantinople as convicted communist according to the reporters of the quoted newspapers, local “Izvestiya” wrote about her, she was welcomed by the Bolshevik chiefs... She unveiled her “true” face to a German consul: she is supposedly a representative of the International Red Cross, who arrived from Germany in order to repatriate the German nationals. The Russians could be also helped to emigrate under false identity. In light of possibility for confiscation of valuables she proposed to take them for safekeeping. The emigrants were arrested by Che Ka at an agreed upon date on the information from “baroness

⁹“Che Ka Weekly”, No. 5.

¹⁰18 August 1919.

¹¹Was there a concept of diplomatic immunity? *Trans.*

¹²Information about “Consul Pirro” – the most notorious item of Bolshevik provocations, will be published in No. 5 “In The Foreign Land”. See “Socialist Messenger” 1921, No. 5 and “Archive Of Russian Revolution” III, p. 210.

¹³“The Latest News”, 24 November 1920; also “Common Business”.

Stern". "Stings were often used in Odessa" – read the documents of Denikin's Commission. Of course that is a ruse! – skeptics would argue. Was "Brazilian consul Pirro" a ruse too? Moscow had its own "representative" of Danish and Swedish Red Cross – certain Dane, especially interested in the "whites". I know the individuals with whom he tried to make connections, and there were those who naively swallowed the lure.

A case in Anapa, mentioned above, was nothing but a sting¹⁴ – by the order of Tersky district Che Ka 62 people, who attempted to escape from Anapa to Batumi with the assistance of undercover agents of Vladikavkaz Che Ka, were executed by firing squad. The case was very typical in its organization. The first group of 12 refugees headed by Baron Zusserman was warmly welcomed in Vladikavkaz, that was used for transit to Batumi: they were provided with housing, food and even taken out to the theaters and cinemas. Allegedly Zusserman lived with his family, without their knowledge, in an apartment of the chair of Che Ka! Meanwhile a larger group of 100 people gathered... "The comedy" ended... with unavoidable executions... "The Latest News"¹⁵ reporter writes that in 1921 "the following method of capturing the escaping "bourgeois" and "whites" was very popular along the border with Basarabia: the families in Basarabia sent a "reliable man" for someone. By accident or intentionally the "reliable man" is captured by Romanian Che Ka. An agent of the later shows up with the letter, organizes escape and when facts are put together arrests the "offender".

It is believed that the stings were¹⁶ a medical examiner of the commission, whose famous trial in the Summer 1920 led to so many outrageous executions; a building supervisor of Odessa Che Ka – organizer of the so-called "Evstafiyev conspiracy" in August 1921 in Odessa¹⁷; sailor Pankov at Tagantsev case in St. Petersburg¹⁸. There were elements of a sting in the case of St. Petersburg cooperators. The huge "conspiracy" on behalf of Poland in Smolensk in 1921, where up to 1500 were arrested according to rumors, was staged. The eyewitnesses say that the sting agents from Omsk Che Ka, dressed in officer uniforms, were seen in Ishim district during a peasant rebellion. The same occurred during "SR/Menshevik rebellion" in March 1921 in Saratov¹⁹.

The cases of Lev Cherniy, Fanny Baron and others, executed in 1921 on the criminal charges of counterfeiting are typical. The Berlin anarchists wrote in their brochure²⁰: "It was established, that not only the executed comrades had nothing to do with the criminal cases they were sentenced in, but also that the idea of printing counterfeit soviet bank notes originated from Moscow Che Ka. Two of its agents – Steiner (Kamenniy) and a driver made connections with some criminal elements, made acquaintance with some anarchists for the purpose of a sting and organized counterfeiting and expropriations. All that was done under supervision of Che Ka".

Recall the Lenin's wires regarding the anarchists quoted above and the whole

¹⁴"The Latest News", 14 October 1921.

¹⁵7 February 1922.

¹⁶"Common Business", 3 November 1920.

¹⁷"Common Business", 18 October 1921.

¹⁸"Common Business", 18 October 1921.

¹⁹See the details in "Will Of Russia" No. 299, 1921.

²⁰"Persecution of The Anarchists in Soviet Russia", Berlin, 1921, p. 26.

thing will become more than believable.

“Che Ka” almanac depicted the old Secret Police with its tricks and methods of psychological influence – remarked German communist Frederick Mink in his accurate essays on Russia²¹.

A letter to the “Common Business”²² reads:

A new detachment of Russia Che Ka was established on Foutain Rd. in the estate of Konelsky²³, disguised as Statistics Department of RSFSR Health Care Commissariat. Its true goal is foreign intelligence and domestic counter-intelligence. It is headed by the member of Odessa regional Che Ka and Russia Che Ka Special Department, notorious Latvian national Zakovski. Mikhailovsky – an excommmer from Moscow, transferred to Odessa as a “specialist”, was appointed to a very high ranking position of “resident in Basarabia, Poland and Galicia”. His concubine Xenia Vladimirovna Mikhailovskaya (maiden name von-Gerngross), daughter of a colonel (aliases “Papoose” and “Ada”), was appointed to a no less important position: she is an assistant to the resident and member of Russia Registration Administration (military intelligence).

The entire intelligence network in Basarabia and bordering Poland is under control of that organization.

The department of Health Care Commissariat operates in grand style. From time to time they stage fictional conspiracies against soviet regime to justify their pay check before central government.

Thus they recently exposed a white army intelligence organization that they themselves staged. “Ada” meets an officer using her cute face and naively tells him of an existing officer organization, produces as a proof the underground fliers calling for uniting all anti-Bolshevik forces to overthrow the hated soviet government which is about to fell (due to Wrangel’s offensive from Romania?). Those are printed on a typewriter at the “Statistics Department of Health Care Commissariat”. And if the naive officer is still suspicious, than money offered by “Ada” supposedly from the organization to support the officers in need finally sway him. He tells the friends about the fact of existence of an “organization”. Now there is a group of prospect members of an “organization” or at least of those who approve an idea of its existence. The goal is reached, Mikhaylovsky, Zakovski and a squad of excommers appear on the scene and arrest the group. There is no investigation for military counter-revolutioners and the innocent victims of disgusting sting get executed by firing squad.

“Che Ka stands on guard of revolution”... And when discussions begin in the Bolshevik circles about its reduction, taking under control – then the tried method

²¹“Räte-Russlands Not”. *Erlebnisse und Erkenntnisse während meiner achtmonatigen Forschungsreise in Sowjet-russland* (September 1920 bis April 1921). p. 45.

²²16 June 1921.

²³Joseph Lvovich Konelsky, the largest manufacturer of cigarette paper in Russia. *Trans.*

of intimidation developed by the Secret Police comes to the scene. The real and fake counter-revolution conspiracies are being discovered: "Che Ka stands on guard of revolution"! Perhaps the communists will recruit their own Azeph!

There is a special staff of "prostitutes" at Russia Che Ka in Moscow. They intentionally use 12 – 14 year old children, paid for their work with money, gifts and sweets. The hundreds get offered to buy their lives by agreeing to be secret agents of Che Ka. So many tragedies occurred due to that! Here is certain V. who agreed to Che Ka offer under the threat of her father's execution. Bitter remorse lead to self-immolation...²⁴ Similar story of suicide by one woman, who hung herself after framing the innocents appeared in "Times" famous editorial series "Russia to-day". They added: "We have to dwell in the bowels of middle ages to find a similarity with GPU."²⁵

Stings are popular at the ground level. The workers refer to the "communist cells" as "communist hounds" not for nothing, according to a so called "worker opposition" of the communist party. The prisons are teeming with the so called "brooders"^{26,27}. Countless big bribery, fraud, abuse etc. cases, that culminated with death sentences, have been fabricated by the Che Ka agents personally interested in a percentage of revenue from each case (the investigators was awarded 5% of the amount confiscated in a speculation trial). I know of a case initiated by Moscow Che Ka under the typical circumstances. Two investigators partying at certain R's apartment arrested the host and the guests after those loosened their lips too much. R's wife hired a lawyer P., who appealed to the Bureau of Che Ka with an affidavit. The outcome was unexpected: P. was arrested as he "did not have authority" to appeal to Che Ka He was imprisoned at Novo-Spassk concentration camp as a result.

The system of total searches, arrests, raids and ambushes is a specific method of "excommers helping themselves" according to one of the contributors to "Che Ka" almanac. Is that not true? The answer is in the announcement of the very Moscow Soviet, published in the newspapers 9 December 1919: it admitted, that all apartments where ambushes were held, were subjected to "total devastation" and were "robbed to the ground".

Yes, many Che Ka organizations were indeed "bandits and marauders" according to the Bolshevik commissar of justice Left SR Steinberg. When those "bandit and marauder organizations" were exposed, they found powerful allies among the true inspirers and leaders of the Extreme Commissions. Peters himself spoke in their defense back on 22 September 1918: "Recently – he wrote in No. 2 of "Che Ka Weekly" – the enemies of soviet government started disseminating disgusting libel of bribery, fraud and false accusations"... "No need to faint – he continued – if there were a few

²⁴"Memorandum" of socialist-revolutionary party mission to the Congress of Three Internationals in April 1922, p. 15.

²⁵The series were published in 1923. Russian translation: "Russia Of The Moment", p. 67.

²⁶Slang word for informants. *Trans.*

²⁷See my memoirs "Intelligent At The Bar of History", No. 3, "In the Foreign Land" regarding a sting in the trial of "Tactical Center", heard by Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal in Moscow in August 1920. Let us remind you about Semenov and Konopleva in the trial of SR party. See the quoted "Memorandum" of SR regarding the prison informants, ch. 5 "L'oeuvre de la Tcheka".

abuses: new people are not used to judicial wisdom". All accusations were dismissed as "shameless lies of the bourgeois".

Another excommmer published a dismissive statement in response to the accusations in No. 5 of the "Weekly": "That means our strength, as the scoundrels are practical people and do not associate with the weak". Is it surprising then, if one of the reports by Elston to Curzon²⁸ spoke of commonplace practice in Perm: the local merchants get arrested, released for ransom, arrested again and so on, and executed in the long run.

Kuban Che Ka is running a ring of imprisonment for ransom.

Huge ransoms were paid for release from arrest in Odessa according to many a testimony to Denikin's Commission. And Moscow? It was not an exception.

Tiraspol Che Ka and others, bordering Basarabia, created a human smuggling enterprise in 1920 – 1921. Certain S. M. S. provided a colorful description of that activity by the local Extreme Commission²⁹. The commander of Romanian Che Ka Special Department is at the head.

All towns and villages along Dnepr are teeming with the brokers offering transfer to Basarabia, "like by dreadnought". Lucky are those who deal with an ordinary broker, operating "above the board", i.e. who bribes some influential excommmer. The excommmers themselves often operate undercover as brokers. A "sudden" ambush appears in the last moment, when the victim is walking towards the river bank and arrests the refugee and their property. As the later is usually foreign currency or gold it serves as material evidence of a failed state crime, negotiations start and the refugee is released"...

The so called "underground" plays the most dirty part in those stories along with the excommmers. Officially they are agitators and propagandists, delegated by soviet government to Basarabia for underground operations. In fact they are smugglers.

They are the major "brokers" as well. One of them became talkative and described the process:

I go to Romanian Che Ka, produce a mandate, they register me, supply with literature, Romanian passport and cash and specify exactly when and where to cross the border. I only had to show the communist party membership to the Romanian border patrol.

Each of the major Ukrainian cities has its own border town, its own "window to Europe".

Sometimes the "window" slams shut.

Early in 1921 the villages of Podolsk region were very popular both in Odessa and Kiev. News of discovery of 80 corpses in various stages of decomposition in a cave

²⁸3 February 1919.

²⁹"The Latest News", 7 February 1922.

near Kamenki village spread along Dnepr in Spring. Those were the refugees, long considered to be in Basarabia.

But where Che Ka was still malnourished and needed well off clientèle, emigration occurred without hiccup. Since the morning the entire town knew that "there would be transfer". By 3 PM the entire families appeared in the streets carrying the bags and walked towards the well known assembly point. An official from Che Ka showed up and counted the heads (two children counted for one person). Then everyone jumped into a large cart and were driven to a crossing.

That continued for 2 – 3 months, until the superiors decided that they made enough.

The unfortunate who are trying to escape across the frozen river to Basarabia at night without first paying Che Ka 4 – 5 thousand old money get hunted down in Tiraspol.

The captured get flogged with the sticks and whips naked outside in the cold. The stings are very popular here...

According to a reporter of "The Latest News" one of the comptrollers of government commission for inquiry into GPU operations Skvortsov (formerly a worker) committed suicide in Moscow at Nikitsky Blvd on 16 February 1923. A sealed envelope addressed to the Bureau of the Communist Party Central Committee was found in his possession with a suicide note, which read:

Comrades! Cursory familiarity with paperwork of our major institution tasked with defense of the achievements of the working people, analysis of investigation documents and the methods intentionally used to strengthen our situation, necessary in the interests of the party according to comrade Unszlicht³⁰, forced me to forever abandon the horrors and outrage, that we used in the name of high ideals of communism, that I unwittingly took part in while employed as an official of the communist party. Redeeming my guilt with my own life, I am delivering the last request: wake up before it is too late and do not disgrace our great teacher Marx with your methods, do not antagonize the masses by tainting socialism.

Does anything need to be added to that "confession"?..

There were conscious Bolsheviks prior to that, especially in the early years, when the most cynical methods of Extreme Commission operation were still foreign to the intelligent mind. The "soft-bodied" (in Peters' terms) could not stand moral responsibility for bloodbath, organized on behalf of not just communist party, but of the entire proletariat. There were publications in the first few months of 1919, where the author of historic order regarding hostages Petrovsky had to admit, that the Extreme Commission brought "corruption" into the process of building soviet government without operational justification.

As we know, Peters stated in December 1918 that the Extreme Commissions are guided by revolutionary experience and consciousness, not a letter of law. What does

³⁰Józef Unszlicht, deputy chair of Russia Che Ka – GPU in 1921 – 1923. *Trans.*

that mean? Lenin himself explained it earlier: “In the name of reaching revolutionary goals, our targets, everything is fair game”³¹. “Everything is fair game – pathetically repeated those words the editor Leon Krayni in No. 1 of “Red Sword” – for we were the first to raise the sword not for oppression and enslavement, but for empowering and liberation of all from slavery. The wheel of history made a turn and morale changed accordingly. We have a new morale”... And we observe unheard of slavery appearing in Russia as a result of that turn of wheel of history.

Dyakonov, whose name we mentioned in connection with protest against the “graveyards of the living” (see p. 159), wrote February 1919:

It is about time we stopped chattering of the theory that legal protection is a bourgeois prejudice... Cannot you hear the voices of the real workers and peasants and even communists – not some counter-revolutionaries – sounding from the places of detention, from the factories, that demand abolishment of the practice, where a person can be imprisoned for months, tried by a Tribunal or executed at whim...

That is “tyranny and lawlessness”, and the author made a reservation that at some point revolution provided a justification for killing.

An elderly Bolshevik Olminsky wrote³²:

There can be differing opinions about red terror, but the events transpiring in the provinces are not red terror, but criminality.

He pointed out an example when a 16 year old boy, “thief and rogue”, was given power to kill people in a village.

Reaction of the institution, referred to by Zinoviyev as “decoration and pride of the communist party” was typical. Olminsky’s words seemed to them “blubbering of a cowardly baby”³³:

We have to state it directly, that the intelligent has nothing to do anymore, they discussed and wrote about everything and have nobody to argue with... They are creating fake inter-departmental strife in order to wag their tongues about...

“Inter-departmental strife” was a push towards limiting the power of Che Ka to issue the death sentence on its own, of bringing it under subordination to commissariat of internal affairs and justice, i.e. of subjecting its operation to at least some regulatory

³¹The Bolsheviks are inclined to mimic montagnar terminology. Lenin was not original here – he plagiarized Collot d’Herbois.

³²“Evening Izvestiya”, 3 February 1919.

³³“Che Ka Weekly”, No. 6. The Bolshevik instructors take care to prevent sentiments in the future. “Socialist Messenger” (1921, No. 19) quoted the following problem from a book by Nevsky and Khersonskaya titled “Collection Of the Problems For Extra-Curricular Library Work (published 1920): “A 12 year old girl is afraid of blood... Compile a list of books to read so that they would make her cast away aversion to red terror”.

framework. "Subjecting Che Ka operation to legal limits makes no sense" – replied an excommer Schklovski in "Che Ka Weekly". Those, who demand subordination of Che Ka to the dead laws, were "bribed by bourgeois". Krylenko, the creator of revolutionary tribunals, that competed with the extreme commissions in their bloody activities, took active part in those arguments.

Was that party strife going on under the slogan of introducing law to "revolutionary justice" after all? Administrative tyranny was replaced with a "comedy of trial", where the same members of Che Ka decided the questions of life or death. It was only about the shape, that was more appropriate to the tastes of public prosecutor with so much innocent blood on his hands... The tribunals are "faded carbon copies" of the commissions only – stated the former Bolshevik commissar of justice Steinberg. "Tribunal is tyranny over the enemies of soviet government" – reads a board over the entrance to Zhitomir tribunal.

The escalated executions in the capital during those arguments demonstrate reaction of Che Ka to those theoretical arguments. That was when the great princes Nickolas Mikhailovich³⁴ and George Mikhailovich, Dmitri Konstantinovich and Paul Alexandrovich were executed... Bolshevik press argued as to who won the struggle: Che Ka or its adversaries? Reality provided a definite answer. Reforms took place, but the nature remained the same, and methods of "red terror" have not changed. And if we would recall the words by one of the top ranking excommers Moroz³⁵: "There is no area, that Che Ka would not have to keep a watchful eye on". – we could understand moral and psychological conditions of modern Russian reality, where the GPU detachments operate under special instructions for political intelligence, with their special courses training in that espionage³⁶ – exactly like at the old Secret and gendarme departments of monarchy. It is rumored that many graduates of those institutions are on payroll of Che Ka. That should be regarded as another mysterious page from modern history. The most appropriate question should be: "Is that true?", as asked "Common Business"³⁷ in connection with piquant news of the relations between the "Bolsheviks and monarchists" regarding arrest of commissar for special duties of Russia Che Ka Artsishevsky and monarchist captain Mikhailov. There is no doubt about one thing: azeftism in all its shapes, according to Dzerzhinsky's order quoted above, would have to gain a firm foothold.

A letter from Pskov to "Riga Courier" in 1921 read:

Our living conditions are terrible. Every house, every apartment and the streets are teeming with spies like with ants... Communists live in every home and watch the residents with hungry eyes... Everyone feel like in prison, are afraid of each other, even within a family brother is looking over his shoulder at another brother, not knowing whether he is

³⁴A prominent historian.

³⁵"Izvestiya", 6 November 1919.

³⁶See G. I. Schreider. "New Bolshevik Science". "Will Of Russia", 20 September 1920. It reproduced a series of lectures, read at "The Central School Of Soviet and Party Operations". Truly a "spy faculty" on the premises of studying organization, goals and process of Che KA.

³⁷8 December 1921.

a communist. We all are exhausted and tired of throwing around in that accursed ant heap of espionage.

We could add another typical official document titled “instructions to the secret agents for January 1922”. That document prescribed the agents to:

1. Watch factory administration and intelligent workers, precisely determine their political orientation and inform of all anti-soviet agitation and propaganda.
2. Watch all gathering under the guise of playing cards, drinking (but with different goals), enter them as much as possible and inform of the goals and tasks with the names and exact addresses.
3. Watch intelligent, working at the soviet institutions and listen to their conversations, capture their political affiliation, find out their location after hours and immediately inform of everything suspicious.
4. Enter into all closed circles and family functions of the Messeiers intelligents, learn their disposition, become familiar with the organisers and goals of the parties.
5. Look for any connections of local intelligent with the others in the district, region, capital and foreign countries and immediately inform if any³⁸.

Zinoviyev wrote on the 5th bloody anniversary of the Extreme Commissions:

The sword we handed over to Che Ka is in a firm hand. The acronym GPU is no less frightening for the enemies than VCK³⁹. Those are the most popular letters on the international scale...

At some point “Black Repartitioning” referred to renaming of III^d Department into Department of State Police as to “grand ridicule of Russian society”. What should “reform” that converted VCK to GPU be referred to as, that was so fittingly summed up by Zinoviyev?... The letters VCK were translated into Russian commoner slang as “death to every person”. We do not know how commoner humorous speech translates GPU^{40,41}. But on the international scale it is a symbol of that “Medusa head” according to Kautski, that entire democracy is supposed to turn away from. Our consciousness has no right to put up with skepticism of Anatole France: “all revolutions create senseless victims”.

Moscow “The Truth” once repeated⁴² the earlier promise by Trotski “to slam the door before leaving so that whole world would hear”: “...those who are planning to replace us would have to build on the ruins, among graveyard silence”. That silence already fell on Russia.

³⁸“Voice of Russia”, 16 April 1922.

³⁹Acronim for Vserossiyskaya (Russia-wide) Che Ka. Trans

⁴⁰I heard that “God, forgive the dead” is popular.

⁴¹The most common translation in the long run was “God, help to escape”. *Trans.*

⁴²13 July 1921.

And we know with our shaken mind and we see with our fogged eyes what the dozens of previous generations did not know or see, of what the long generations of our distant descendants would only guess...

We experienced the Great Russian Revolution with its bright days and enormous catastrophic periods. We experienced four years of Bolshevik dictatorship that perhaps entire French 1793 pales in comparison with. And we know inside our shaken mind and we see with our fogged eyes that, what the dozens of previous generations did not know or see, of what many generations of our distant descendants would only guess...

We are no longer scared of mysterious and at previously incomprehensible Death, for it became our second life. We no longer tremble from harsh smell of human blood, for its hard vapors saturated the air we breath. We no longer tremble from the endless lines of those being taken to execution, for we have seen last agony of the children, executed by firing squad in the streets, have seen the mountains of mutilated and frozen victims of terrorist madness, and perhaps ourselves stood not once at the last step.

We got used to those scenes, like people get used to the sight of familiar streets, and we hark to the sounds of shots fired no more than to the sound of human voice.

That is why the country remains silent in the face of triumphant Death and its compressed chest cannot emit elemental scream of protest or at least of despair. It managed to survive those unforgettable four years of civil war somehow, but its poisoned soul remained imprisoned by Death.

Probably that is why Russia, being executed and tortured in the chambers now, is silent...

Those were the words of remarkable essay "Vessel Of Death".⁴³

We remain silent, but the dead from Saratov creek, Kharkov and Kuban torture chambers, Kholmogory death camp speak for us relentlessly.

No! The dead are not silent!

⁴³"Che Ka" almanac, 20.

Chapter 12

By way of conclusion

Chapter 13

A Few Remarks On Conradi Trial

As a matter of fact I did not take part in Lausanne trial. But when Polunin's defense lawyer approached me with a request for information for characterization of terror in Russia, I had no doubts, neither of political principles, nor moral, that I was obliged to provide everything I knew¹, regardless of my personal feelings towards assassination of Vorovsky: whether I would approach Conradi action as an act of personal revenge or political act. It was insignificant for my feelings, who would settle political accounts with whom at trial. "Scary truth, but truth indeed", and in any political situation that "truth" had to be told. Democracy must be the first to learn that greatest law of human honor.

The unscrupulous people called that point of view incitement to murder². I had no desire to argue with the writers whom I deeply despise for they have cast away the basic credo of writer ethics – independence of thought and word; I did not wish to convince those, who could not be convinced, for – according to Herzen – "logic can do little, when a person does not want to be persuaded".

But a few words have to be told now.

In reality only the individuals, who while calling others "morally blind", but cannot overcome the own political prejudice themselves, would attempt to discount public importance of Lausanne trial to mere "settling of political accounts", as was done for example in a recent address of SR party to the socialists of Western Europe regarding the threat by Moscow to dispatch the hostages from among the SR. "We, the Russian socialist-revolutionaries, had no opportunity to play a role in the battle between Russian counter-revolution behind Polunin and Conradi and the Bolshevik distortion of revolution behind the Vorovsky's dead body" – wrote the emigrant organization of SR party.

We are sworn enemies of Bolshevik tyranny and red terror... Many times we called the Bolsheviks to the task before the court of humanity for re-introduction – allegedly with the different goals (sic!) – of the same methods of government, that were a curse of our motherland under monar-

¹The summary of this book was sent to Ober a few days before the hearing. As evident from Ober's speech, published in its entirety, the later made use of my data in several instances.

²"On The Eve" accused me specifically of that.

chy; for implementing the great ideas of socialism (!!) using the methods completely opposite to their spirit. But *we do not afford that right* (!!) to those, who raise their voice and armed hand against newly born tyranny of the Bolsheviks for the sake of historical tyranny of the old regime. Conradi and Polunin were not heroes for us, but morally blind who criminally abused the sacred right of refuge provided by all democratic societies for settling political accounts...

They can and perhaps should firmly denounce any political assassination, that would sew the “poison seeds of new horrors and new killing”; perhaps the ethics, which denounces violence, would never, under no circumstances justify acts of vengeance and revenge no matter for which purpose; perhaps human has no right to approach the frightening issue of death from the perspective of utility... But our common psychology in any case would provide moral justification to only that assassination, where the actor, committing a crime against humanity, forfeits his own life. This is why everyone, who dares to take responsibility for spilling human blood, who consider themselves righteous to commit an act of revenge, must avenge where there is violence; perhaps that is why anyone walking onto the path of terrorist struggle has no right to violate the “sacred law of refuge”.

But why does the political party, that from the very beginning of its political struggle always walked the path of terrorism, believes that it is the only one allowed to appeal to “the court of humanity”?

And who gave us right to deprive Conradi of the stimulus of that, perhaps criminal, heroism, that leads Russian citizen and patriot to avenge those thousands of martyrs, for those thousands of victims of terror, whose blood so deeply soaked Russian soil?

Without doubt Vorovski’s assassin did not avenge the false methods of “implementing the great ideas of socialism”. But there is something more powerful in human life, and who gave us a right to deprive Conradi of love to violated motherland, in whose name he, according to his own words, committed his crime? Who gave F. Dan a right to call Conradi “senile avenger for personal injuries and suffering”?

“Commoner” ideology of the jury members of Swiss democratic court system, despite difficult international political situation, managed to rise up to understanding higher objective truth and acquitting the assassins regardless of political empathy or antipathy of the judges towards the accused.

Why? For the same reason, I think, why Berlin circuit court acquitted in 1921 the assassin of the Grand Vizier of Turkey Talaat-Pasha – the young Armenian student Talirian, – and back then SR press welcomed that verdict, as did democratic press of Germany itself, as a “verdict of official court, which coincided with legal feelings of people masses”.

Reality, exposed before the Lausanne court, was too frightening: at least the judges tried Bolshevik reality³ and not “political arguments between revolution and counter-revolution”. “Humanity” dressed in judicial process, perhaps for the very first time

³Vorovsky himself fell a victim of that reality, taking responsibility for it, as he was a member of Russian communist party and occupied government positions.

rendered a verdict to Bolshevik terror. And that acquittal should serve as *memento mori* for those, who are continuing their violence.

Let us set aside so popular in some circles references to “million-strong worker masses”. Who did not resort to using them?! That is pure speculation of public opinion, as Louie Blanc once said.

Perhaps I am a bad “democrat” and a bad “socialist”, for according to Mr. Dan⁴, every democrat must make every possible effort to “put counter-revolution into the dock and nailed to the pillory” – but I fail to understand that “democratic” stance, and in this case I am not weary of rejecting “democratic” and “socialist” prejudice.

I recall the remarkable final words by a French writer Odette Keun, almost a communist, in her recent book about Russia: “I am moving the European governments in the name of those who still live amidst those horrors in Russia, to set forth a condition in any negotiations with Russian government to relax the current regime, that absorbed and exceeded hell of the dark ages”. Only that reality passes before my eyes, but not the accursed, perhaps, past or mysterious, most likely dark, future.

“To be silent at this time” – ends the above quoted address to the European socialists – “means to become complicit in the new atrocities, new crimes. Let the powerful voice of world humanity stop the hand of executioners, who are playing with a noose above the heads of their doomed victims before it is too late”.

Hypnosis of “fascism” can only distract from our appeals to “world humanity” at this time.

⁴“Under the Mask of Legal Defense”. “Socialist Messenger” No. 20. Below I reproduce with minor editions an article from the “Days” regarding Martov’s brochure against capital punishment, published by “Socialist Messenger”. That article might serve as a reply to the Menshevik paper contributors.

Chapter 14

Why?

Regarding Martov's Book On Capital Punishment

What a joy that the great revolution would occur without evils and tears. History too often informed of the actions of predator beasts. We can hope to start human history.

Honoré de Mirabeau, 27 June 1789

How wrong was de Mirabeau! How wrong was Jean Jaurès, who wrote that the words of “the great tribune” would have to become a slogan for the impending proletarian revolution. “Proletarii, remember”, added Jaurès elsewhere quoting Babeuf, “that cruelty – is leftover slavery, as it is evidence of barbarity inside ourselves, that is an attribute of oppressive regime!”...

But “human history” has not yet started in our days. That creates an edging feeling when reading the strong appeal by Y. O. Martov against capital punishment published by “Socialist Messenger” as a special edition. It is a document written truly with “blood of the heart and the sap of his nerves”. “The entire power of his wish, passion, protest, whipping sarcasm” – said the editors – “Martov threw into the face of the executioners to stay their criminal hand”.

I would love to reproduce Martov's article line by line, to quote its strong passages, written in defense of that teaching, that declared “brotherhood of laboring people as the humankind top goal”, in the name of which “bloody rampage” of terror is being committed in modern Russia. Let us quote the last few lines only. He concluded:

One cannot be silent. In the name of the working class honor, in the name of socialism and revolution's honor, in the name of duty before the home country, in the name of duty before Worker International, in the name of the ideals of humanity, in the name of disgust towards the gallows of monarchy, in the name of love for the shadows of perished fighters for freedom – let a strong voice of working class sound throughout Russia:

Down with capital punishment!
The executioners-cannibals to the trial by people!"

One cannot be silent! Every word of that appeal indeed “strikes like a hammer; buzzes like a bell”. And still Martov’s appeal “did not get heard”.

The associates of the late chief of Russian social-democracy so explain that fact: “surrounded by imperialist intervention and blockade, threatened by restoration and counter-revolutionary armies, working class was paralyzed in his struggle against terrorist dictatorship”.

Is that so? Do the explanations not lay in another psychological plane instead? The editors of “Socialist Messenger” made a significant chronological mistake intentionally or not. It dated Martov’s appeal Autumn 1918, whereas it was written in the Spring of that year in connection with a death sentence issued by the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal to captain Schastny (see p. 37). He was murdered 28 May. That chronological error is the only reason, perhaps, that Martov made virtually no mention of the activity of the Extreme Commissions.

Where were those restoration and counter-revolutionary armies then? How did imperialist intervention and blockade manifest themselves? But the gist is not in that chronological error. There was internal contradiction between the ardent appeal of Martov to the working class: “unanimously and loudly state to the world, that proletarian Russia has nothing in common with that terror, that barbarity of capital punishment without trial”, – and that ambivalent stance that leadership of worker party took at the time.

One cannot condemn with “disgust”, call to active protest and at the same time find synergies, connecting with the party, labeled “country-wide executioners”. R. Abramovich so described those synergies in a preface to Kautsky’s book “From Democracy To Slavery Of the State”: “In all those years we never lost the sight of the fact, that the Bolsheviks fulfill, although with non-Marxist methods, an objective historical task before Russian revolution as a whole”.

Gorky defined those tasks even more flashy in a letter to the French workers regarding starvation in 1921: “by unavoidable will of history the Russian workers are conducting a social experiment and starvation is threatening to interrupt that grand experiment”...

“Russian proletariat, your name is being used to commit that travesty,” – wrote Martov, castigating Schastny’s case – “that bloody comedy of cold-blooded manslaughter”. “No, that is not a court”... And I will never forget that depressive feeling that each of us experienced two years later in the session of the same Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal, when myself, Martov’s brother (Vladimir Tsederbaum-Levitsky), Rozanov and others were tried in the case of so-called “Tactical Center”. Many of us faced the real possibility of execution, and perhaps an accident redeemed us from the brace of death. At a critical moment in the “comedy of trial” before the speech by the prosecutor Krylenko the tribunal received an amicus brief of the Menshevik party central committee, stating that Rozanov et al were expelled from the party for participation in counter-revolution. That statement was read in public. “The socialists” rushed to

distance themselves from the “counter-revolutionaries” before the verdict in order to maintain purity of “socialist” tactics.

Those, who held court were “oath-breakers” of the revolution, blasphemously blessing the “cold-blooded murder of civilian hostages”. They were handed a weapon: we consider those whom you judge the traitors of socialism. I will never forget that moment and not from the perspective of personal emotions...

Hypnosis of counter-revolution, of possibility of restoration, dimmed perception of reality of that unheard of reaction, that Bolshevism produced. Traditional psychology of socialist circles was still standing in the way of realizing the simple truth, so simply formulated by Kautski: the deeds of counter-revolutionaries are important, not their background; does it matter whether they belong to proletariat and its heralds or to the old proprietors? Yes, one can execute entire armies of bourgeois and still act in counter-revolutionary fashion... Some Russian socialists could not understand that simple truth and perhaps still cannot. Is it a surprise, that their protests against terror did not gain response among the socialists of Western Europe for so long, or gained, but the same half-baked stance as the protester’s own. Those in attendance in Galle during Martov’s address in 1920 could yell “Executioners! Monsters!” when he mentioned the hostages being executed “in revenge for the deeds of the husbands and fathers” ¹ and at the same time acknowledge, that official protest could be “perceived as supportive of counter-revolutionary segment”. The same goes for the British “Labor Party” and “Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière”... “If some socialists remain the mute witnesses of that crime” – wrote 10 March 1921 I. Tseretelli in a letter to the socialists on occupation of Georgia – “than it can be explained with only two reasons: they either do not know the truth, or are afraid, that their protest would be perceived as an act of intervening in Russian affairs”... The crime was committed and reprisal loomed. And again the central committee of Georgian social-democratic party appealed to the “consciousness of world proletariat” and begged for help:

After trampling freedom and independence of Georgian republic they are physically eradicating the best forces of Georgian working class. The only way to save the Georgian fighters is intervention of European proletariat. Will European proletariat allow the thousands of its class comrades, who sacrificed their lives for freedom and socialism, perish at the hands of cruel invaders?

There could be no response that was sought, for none other than social-democrats (both Georgian and Russian) were the ones, who appeared before democracy as the staunchest propagandists of non-interference during the civil war, of the idea, justifying moral indifference, that the world demonstrated towards the news of terror horrors. As a matter of fact, the editors of “Socialist Messenger” admitted that long ago in an article “Recognition And Terror”:

¹“Will Of Russia”, 21 October 1920.

Even the most moderate European socialists were inclined to give lenience to Bolshevik terror during the heroic epoch of Bolshevism, during the civil war ²

Kautski wrote in “Terrorism And Communism”:

No world revolution, no external help can remove paralysis of Bolshevik method. The goal of European socialism as regards to communism is completely different: to make sure that moral catastrophe of one particular socialist method would not become a catastrophe of socialism in general, that a clear distinction is made between that and Marxist method and that public opinion accepted that distinction”.

Radical socialist press, that pushes the idea, that contemporary form of soviet government is a true implementation of socialism, does not completely understand the goals of social revolution.

Perhaps that prejudice has been eliminated: “No one should confuse Bolshevik regime with the worker masses in Russia and its great revolution – read an appeal of International Anarchist Union, printed 24 July 1922 by Bruxelles “Peuple”. But association remained – the same kind of thing. Popular consciousness can be only trained in definitive and unconditional denouncement of evil.

Were we not afraid of condemnation from the popular socialist parties, for example at the latest congress in Hamburg, afraid to tell the complete truth in order to not to play to the benefit of world reaction?

But distorted half-truth indeed is often worse than a lie. How different is a stance of British labor party, that abstained from voting on Russian issue at Hamburg congress, from direct statement by L. O. Frossard at Orleans congress of Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière:

Even if I knew something bad about soviet Russia, I would never make that public to prevent damage to Russian revolution.

And only when that historic prejudice would be eliminated, that which to this day makes some seek moral justification of terror even during French revolution, only then the appeal “Down with capital punishment! The executioners-cannibals to the trial by people!” would be actual.

Unfortunately it has not been eliminated among the leaders. It was not understood and realized by psychology of the masses.

We are still finding literary attempts to negate impression from the “horrible regime” by reference that the other side is committing – or better, did commit – no better atrocities.

“But can theft be justified by a reference that others steal too?” – asked Kautski.

There is no place in our time for that “historic objectivism”, that our own Herzen called “false truth”. First of all it cannot create inspiration, so necessary today.

²“Socialist Messenger” 1924, No. 5.

West-European proletariat – noted Kautski in his response to Trotski – warmly welcomed the Bolsheviks, “like a Messiah”, but now “turned away outraged by that horrible Medusa head”. And we must not be afraid to tell the whole truth, as is not afraid Kautski. He wrote 29 September 1922 in a preface to Russian edition of “Proletarian Revolution And Its Programme”: no party, struggling for liberation of proletariat, can have anything in common with the Moscow executioners.

And only complete intolerance can bring red terror to an end.

“The monster tasted hot human blood”... But we are people! “Down with capital punishment! The executioners-cannibals to the trial by people!”

P. S. “Our party will never yield an honor of fighting against Bolshevik terror to anyone” – wrote recently in “Socialist Messenger” F. Dan regarding the part “democrats and socialists” took in Conradi trial. “During the days of most savage tyranny, it raised the damning and protesting voice and came to defense of its victims without inquiring about their class background or political affiliation. Only late Y. Martov found strength to openly register protest in Soviet Russia against massacre of the royal family”. Without diminishing Martov’s achievements in that area, we must still make a reservation: not only Martov found strength to protest – the others simply paid for the protests with their lives; Martov alone was able to openly publish his protests, as only the paper of Menshevik party was allowed by the Bolsheviks to be printed.

Ambivalence of struggle against terror in the Menshevik party itself (as it was not about socialists) is evident from an article in Kharkov paper of that party “Our Voice”. The front page editorial 28 March 1919 was dedicated to “red terror”. Using the outdated references to the old historic works of Kautski and Marx’s testimony to Keln court: “we are merciless and demand no mercy for us”, “Our Voice” attempted to prove, that history justified Jacobin terror “directed at the overthrown social classes”. “Classic epoch of terror during French revolution” – added the newspaper – “still causes moral outrage of bourgeois historians... Our evaluation of one or another acts of terror never originated from Manilov’s sentiments. We justified them from the perspective of revolutionary rationale or threat”.

That position was more typical for the certain types of socialists, than passing passionate inspirations against violence towards human life. The question of rationale of terror is immoral in itself. First of all that ambivalence must be avoided by those, who are claiming to be true democrats of the future, referring to the “millions of worker masses” does not cut it.

Appendix A

“Vessel Of Death” Documenting Operation Of the Extreme Commissions

There can be life events torturous to think about and even more torturous to document, for a cowardly thought is shying away from them, while human words are weak and miserable before the face of greatest tragedy, unrolling day after day, virtually before our eyes...

At some point, while the crushing the first Russian revolution, monarchy marked its victory with Bacchanalia of death squads and executions. – The entire country shook from horror of cruel tyranny, silently bled¹. Press, serving the victorious, vituperated and cheered, unsatisfiable in revenge and uncontrollable in its hatred of revolution; and the other, born in the days of popular awakening, was silent, crushed and locked in the iron vise of restored censorship.

But in those dark, deeply tragic months, amidst forced silence and dumb oppression, twice tolled the bell of outraged public consciousness and for a moment made the whole world focus its sight where bottomless sorrow and hungry death became “habitual effect” of Russian reality.

Lev Tolstoy rose up with all his giant height and pronounced unforgettable words regarding executioner’s lubricated noose and being ready to share the fate of crucified

¹These accusations are overstated. In reality, no more than 3000 revolutionary terrorists were executed by the troops and sentenced to execution by the courts. The largest mass killing of the time – Lena Gold Mining massacre – produced 270 dead and 250 wounded. The minister and police chief responsible for the massacre have been sacked. Compare that to a massacre of 948 workers at the same Lena Gold Mining, committed by NKVD in 1938.

While there was no more than 3000 executions of the revolutionary terrorists, 3611 public officials have been killed and injured in the acts of revolutionary terror between October 1905 – October 1906. By the end of 1907 the figure reached 4500. The total count of 9000 victims of terrorism in 1905 – 1907 included 2180 dead and 2530 wounded. According to official statistics there were 19,957 acts of terror between January 1908 and mid-May 1910 with 732 public officials and 3051 private citizens killed. 1022 public officials and 2829 private citizens were wounded in the same interval.

Politically motivated armed robberies, referred to as “expropriations”, became popular among the revolutionaries. According to Russia Ministry of Finance the banks lost about 1,000,000 Roubles between January 1905 and June 1906. *Trans.*

people.

Sensitive as popular consciousness itself Korolenko spoke up and lifted a curtain before the endless forest of gallows – a horrible forest, that, as in a fairy tale, all but covered Russian land. And in tune with tolling of those bell-like voices moaning of compassion and protest sounded across the country, for back then people have not yet lost an ability to feel and almighty death has not yet killed their will to live.

That was 15 years ago during victorious celebration of monarchy, during the dying days of the first revolution...

And now, after a chain of years passed, almighty death rules Russia again, and again powerless and crucified country bleeds again.

But from side to side of Russian land the voice of concerned popular consciousness can be heard no more, there are no giants of spirit, daring to say powerful "Stop" to the Death.

What happened to people's soul? What does its deathly silence mean?

We experienced the Great Russian Revolution with its bright days and enormous catastrophic periods. We experienced four years of Bolshevik dictatorship that perhaps entire French 1793 pales in comparison with. And we know inside our shaken mind and we see with our fogged eyes that, what the dozens of previous generations did not know or see, of what many generations of our distant descendants would only guess...

We are no longer scared of mysterious and at previously incomprehensible Death, for it became our second life. We no longer tremble from harsh smell of human blood, for its hard vapors saturated the air we breath. We no longer tremble from the endless lines of those being taken to execution, for we have seen last agony of the children, executed by firing squad in the streets, have seen the mountains of mutilated and frozen victims of terrorist madness, and perhaps ourselves stood not once at the last step.

We got used to those scenes, like people get used to the sight of familiar streets, and we hark to the sounds of shots fired no more than to the sound of human voice.

That is why the country remains silent in the face of triumphant Death and its compressed chest cannot emit elemental scream of protest or at least of despair. It managed to survive those unforgettable four years of civil war somehow, but its poisoned soul remained imprisoned by Death. Probably that is why Russia, being executed and tortured in the chambers now, is silent...

Bolshevik terror made history by now.

If in the first two years after October coup the Bolsheviks fancied going into challenging stance of Robespierre while the home-grown unsatisfiable Marats demanded more and more blood; if very terror of those years was flashy, shapeless and elemental, than after subduing government machine the carriers of dictatorship experienced growing urge to shape terror in certain form, subordinate it to the certain institutions, and most important – to silence it, make it less noisy, less noticeable.

That urge was not only stipulated by a danger of becoming stuck and drowning in the same bloody anarchy it initiated.

Alone in its social experiments, unrecognized by the world powers and desperately separated from them with a burning curtain of terror, this government foresaw the fatal consequences of its isolation and anxiously looked for a solution. It was then when peculiar regime of soviet “order of justice” was formed – that cynical two-faced Janus, subserviently looking at Europe with one face, and at the Asia of savage Mongols with the other. Then the “legalities” rose from the depths of the communist torture chambers and a shameless decree of abolishment of capital punishment appeared in the “Collection of laws and decrees of the government”...

To accommodate Europe, the terrorist monster dressed up in white human clothes, but predatory claws of a beast and unsatisfiable soul of a cannibal are still hiding under those.

Terror has not passed away. But from the city squares and bloodied sidewalks it has hidden in the dark basements of Che Ka to continue carrying out its black art behind the impenetrable walls away from human consciousness.

Terror has not passed away. But shapeless and chaotic at first, it little by little shaped into a wire frame of complex vengeful machine with infinite number of instances and links, formal process and all attributes of “revolutionary justice”, but always with the same unavoidable end result – death in a cellar at the hand of a professional executioner.

That faceless machine, activated with a firm Bolshevik hand, daily quietly and systemically executes virtually unconscious Russia by firing squad. And the greater in the victim count, the deeper it digs into its cellars.

The newspapers print virtually no news of daily executions anymore and the official political writers prefer to replace the very term “execution by firing squad” with the hazy mysterious “extreme penalty”. And only when another counter-revolutionary conspiracy is being discovered, and communist fatherland is in danger, the columns of “Izvestiya” and “The Truth” print the long lists of people, squashed by a terror machine. And then the shaken country learns the names of silenced victims of “revolutionary justice”...

Terror has not passed away. And that is probably why the time has come to talk about it on full scale. The day will come, when put together, the immense human suffering and human lives perished will merge into enormous stunning mosaic of the four years experienced and the modern cannibals, who installed communist government with their beastly hands, will be tried by history.

But we, the surviving witnesses of terror, who are continuously feeling its heavy breath, who saw blood and new Death – we cannot yet talk about it in sufficient detail. For that what we saw and know are the isolated incidents, small facts-particles, thrown by the tornado of terror into our mind.

But it is possible, that we must talk and write about those random facts, imprinted in memory, true and undecorated by popular hearsay right now, when “terror is continuing” and when its bizarre history is being written day after day.

These notes should be viewed as a personal document, composed of the own stories by the condemned and witnesses of their last days and minutes, which does not claim to be complete. This is not “history” of terror. This is not an attempt of its political

or ethical evaluation. Only a few small facts of the executions of criminal convicts, carried out in a cellar of Moscow Che Ka in a very short period of time from late January to June 1921.

Political terror, still grave and fierce, still devouring thousands of human lives and still staying in the focus of the carriers of dictatorship, was left out of scope of this writing. That fact alone should explain true nature of these notes to the reader.

No matter how much the home grown "Fouquier de Tinville" – Krylenko – would write about "revolutionary justice", no matter how fiercely he would fight to monopolize power of capital punishment under his revolutionary tribunals, the fact remains: all institutions of Bolshevik justice continued until the very last days and still continuing to execute by firing squad: "revolutionary tribunals", "railway tribunals", all kinds of anonymous "threesomes" and "fivesomes" of the Extreme Commissions.

Vengeful sword of terror equally ruthlessly falls onto the heads of the sentenced in the "trials" of the tribunals and in the openly primitive torture chambers of Che Ka.

The only difference is that justice machine of the tribunals "works" somewhat slower than the mobile "threesomes" of Che Ka, dispensing "revolutionary justice" out of court in absentia, without witnesses and defense – acting upon the investigator's report alone.

The only difference is that sentenced by a tribunal knows about his fate from a verdict read, while the detained by Che Ka session learns about its order in the very last moment while being taken out for execution by firing squad... Sometimes even on the threshold of the cellar.

But both of them systematically and firmly carry out the system of ruthless terror. Both know no language other than that of death...

I had to observe those unfortunate souls with frozen eyes, whispering their doomed: "Extreme punishment..."

They were brought back from the tribunals, still not completely understanding scary meaning of those two words and locked into the "high security" cells together with the same condemned awaiting their last moment.

They mechanically wrote incoherent appeals for clemency under dictation of others and the guaranteed "48 hours" dragged for them like painful eternity.

Climbing to a window or sticking an ear to a door viewer, they harked to prison silence and the firm steps of the guards or sounds of trucks driving into the yard made them tremble with deathly shake...

Some were taken out for execution at the end of the second day and they left the cells in a hurry and almost unconscious. Fate smiled to the others and a life-saving document of suspended sentenced was inserted into the door viewer. But sometimes the news of pardon was delivered verbally by a guard and the sentenced remained uncertain until the end of whether his life was spared for at least some time.

That started the torturous and flexed months of delay, of seizures from internal struggle between life and death without prospect and real hope, with no moment of peace and rest.

But RCAC usually did not hurry, as it was a question of sparing human life. And its final verdicts sometimes took 4 – 6 – 8 months to arrive. During that time people

grew older, thinned and their souls slowly faded away... And later, some accursed night came the news that death sentence was confirmed by RCAC and the condemned left forever “with possessions within the city”, unable to explain, why those “48 hours” stretched for him into that unbearable sticky torture...

They walked the predetermined path of tribunal justice and that fatal path ended for them in the same cellar, where bloody operation of Che Ka “threesomes” ended as well. Who knows which of those paths is more humane and easier...

The major institutions of Che Ka are situated at 14 Great Lubyanka, in the building of former Moscow Insurance Corporation. Machine of Death is operating here day and night and complete circle of converting a person from an accused into a sentenced and from a sentenced into a mutilated corpse occurs here...

The “offices” of the investigators, whose reports the “session” bases its rubber-stamp cruel sentences on, are situated in the main building. The sentenced await their last moment behind that, in a small basement of a single-story addition. Right here in the yard, attached to Lesser Lubyanka, is a cellar, redesigned for Che Ka executioner. There, in the middle of downtown, within the former walls of a peaceful insurance company, one of the dirtiest blind tools of terror is hiding and destroying hundreds and thousands of human lives in silence.

Office No. 55 of the senior investigator Wul is probably one of the scariest in the suite. All criminal and especially “bandit” cases are concentrated here. Usually there is no mercy and death sentence is a usual and practically unavoidable norm in those.

Wul is a permanent and only reporter in the “threesome”, he directs and completes work of the less senior investigator in all those cases and the outcome of hearing always depends on him.

Still young (around 30) with slightly curly hair and straight shiny eyes, animated, energetic and calmly polite in conversation. Wul causes everyone entering his officer to tremble for a rare case does not end with a death sentence, rare interrogation avoids savage beating.

When a junior investigator cannot reach confession, he threatens to send to Wul and often that alone mention is enough to extract a “wholehearted confession”.

Wul investigates the most important cases himself and his methods of interrogation will play important role in the general picture of Che Ka justice. Here is one of many examples of Wul’s interrogations conveyed personally by Jan Otremski.

He was accused of firing shots at the windows of Basmany Soviet. A Mauser with several clips of ammunition was found during the search of his residence, which apparently he won in a card game... with one of Dzerzhinsky’s aid-de-camps. According to Otremski he had nothing to do with the accusations and was framed by some speculators for a disagreement about profit sharing.

Unusual origins of the Mauser elevated Wul’s attention to this case and he decided to get to the bottom of it at all cost.

“Wul meet me very politely” – said Otremski, wiping bloodied face with a handkerchief. – “He offered me a chair, took out a golden cigarette case and asked if I “had a morning coffee”. Before I could answer, he picked up phone, called and told

something to an officer who came. Few moments later a tray with two cups of coffee, sugar, white bread and butter was standing in front of us".

"Help yourself" – said Wul – "we will talk about the case while having a glass of coffee".

A phone rang and I heard the following conversation by Wul:

"Jan Otremski is right in my office now... I am certain that we will not have to execute him... He will confess wholeheartedly and will become our valuable co-worker..."

At the moment I failed to realize, that entire conversation was staged for me and became scared.

"They are wondering if you are still alive..." – said Wul with a smile and pushed a plate with bread to me. But I could neither eat nor drink as smelled a trap and was too shaken.

"Confess in everything, Otremski," – continued Wul – "and we will forget your background. You will enter our service." He started persuading me and within the next 15 – 20 minutes kept switching from tempting promises to threats. From my side I firmly denied a part in shooting up Basmany Soviet and refused to serve Che Ka.

Seeing my persistence, he finally became enraged, got up, grabbed a rifle from the corner and started beating me with a buttstock. After several strikes at the head and chest I fell to the floor bleeding. After a minute I woke up, got up and somehow left Wul's office followed by his crude cursing...

Jan Otremski was a Polish citizen and notified Polish Red Cross about that savage beating, attaching bloodied handkerchief as evidence. But Polish citizenship could not save his life and soon after that "interrogation" – 14 May 1921 – he was executed on the grounds of Wul's report...

I focused on the typical details of Otremski interrogation in order to not overload further story with the dozens of similar facts. Wul practices that system of "interrogations" day after day systematically and calmly, seldom changing the particulars.

In case of suspicion he searches the suspect himself to make sure that they are disarmed and defenseless enough. Sometimes he prefers to beat not over the head, but by the muscles and elbows of the stretched arms; but otherwise the same routine: cigarettes, coffee, white bread, offer of cooperation with criminal investigation and... rifle buttstock.

And so day after day with total inaction of the tortured. It is called "Wul played guitar" in the jargon of the beaten bandits.

Wul, a member of Russia Communist Party, bears an order of Red Flag on his chest for that talented and persistent playing.

Like in the good old days, communist secret police and criminal world are so closely connected, that it is sometimes impossible to draw the line between the hunter and the hunted, between "revolutionary law" enforcement and its violators.

Yesterday's bandit becomes loyal agent of Che Ka today and yesterday's excomer ends up in a cellar in the hands of an executioner. Under-inspector of Moscow Che Ka criminal branch Morozov, former subordinate and friend of Wul, exposed in corruption, was sentenced to death based on a report of the same Wul, while the

career criminals “Coat”, “Sour Cream”, Zubruyck et al turned into the agents of criminal investigation after Wul successfully “played guitar” and are presently turning in their comrades in trade. It is worth mentioning, that the turned in bandits during the interrogations get accused not only of the “current” crimes, but also of those they committed in the time historical while cooperating with the “Coats and “Sour Creams”. And often they respond to the threats by Wul: “Ask “Coat” (or “Sour Cream”)” – “we worked together in that case”.

While the countless “Coats”, using entire range of investigation, betrayal and complex stings², supply resources for execution and tireless Wul, using the “threesome” to calmly and effectively tag the condemned, the executioner, who is hiding from daylight and human eye, is the last link in a bloody chain of Che Ka justice. At the time of the events, described here, greedy, dumb and cruel red army soldier Punkratov was Che Ka executioner. He replaced the executioner Emelyanov who died of typhus and mental disorder.

That man, who executed several hundreds of victims with his own hands, was a quiet peasant in Ryazan region and lived happily with his father. He was conscripted in 1913 and ended up at the war front a few months later. There he was promoted to sergeant-major. That position drastically changed his character and for the first time his eyes lit with dread fire.

He was decommissioned in 1917 but soon after conscripted again, this time by the Bolsheviks and due to his sergeant-major background immediately appointed deputy commander of the special battalion of Moscow Che Ka. Here Punkratov became close friends with an executioner Emelyanov and replaced him after his death.

Blond, 27 years old, medium height, with broad shoulders, Punkratov drew attention to his shaved head and shining gray eyes on a face red from continuous drinking.

He always smelled of alcohol.

He rented an apartment in Sretenka St. with his roommate 25 year old Efrosinya Ivanovna – a prostitute from Tverskoy Blvd.

Every morning he came to Moscow Che Ka and sat in the prison building until about 3 PM doing nothing. Here he usually ate lunch.

He knew all long time inmates by name and remembered every detail of their “case”. He was polite to some, gave them cigarettes and let it be known, that due to his position could do a lot to ease their fate. On the contrary he used severe supervisory tone with the others and cursed them for no reason. He could not stand questions about the executions.

That was how he spent the first half of day. But sometimes even during those hours he had to do work. He was indispensable when order among the arrestees had to be restored, and commander Rodionov summoned him for physical influence...

²I know of a number of instances, when the big cases of bribes, fraud, theft and other “abuses of power” – the cases that always ended with death sentences – were intentionally staged by the agents of Che Ka, personally interested in percentage from each “arranged” case. Unfortunately description of a number of those would only bloat these notes.

He personally registered for execution all sentenced by Moscow Che Ka "three-some" and various tribunals as he loved paperwork. Sometimes he had a kind of humanity rush and then he stated with importance:

— I cannot register this one: his case is too insignificant and perhaps he would be pardoned.

Those fortunate would than be taken back to prison.

For the most part Pankratov fetched his victims himself. He treated them rudely, was deaf like a wall to their pleading and complaints and constantly swore.

By 6 PM he drove them all to Moscow Che Ka, sat somewhere in the corner, smoked and silently waited "dusk". An hour later, agitated, with the feverishly burning eyes, he descended into the cellar and carried out his executioner business...

On the nights when there was no "work" Pankratov left, always leaving precise location where he could be found "in case of emergency". The "emergencies" indeed occurred from time to time.

One night Pankratov went with his townsman and future replacement Zhukov to a shoemaker to try the new boots. Before he could put a foot into one boot, a courier walked in and informed, that Pankratov was summoned to Moscow Che Ka. Pankratov asked Zhukov to wait and left, but returned in some 40 – 50 minutes and continued trying the boots. He executed someone during that time.

Another time Pankratov was summoned to Moscow Che Ka right from Korsh's theater, where he went with Efrosinya Ivanovna and Zhukov. He had to grab a cab and go to Lubyanka, and his company walked home. Pankratov returned in an hour after executing three bandits. He was very drunk and had tea in gloomy silence...

What was how Pankratov's duty intertwined with personal time and leisure.

Pankratov was rich and well nourished. He ate and drank a lot, played cards often and lost a lot of money. He always had money, as his income was substantial and stable. On top of big salary he received all possessions of the executed. He kept the best and sold the rest. All valuables remaining on the body were his. Most of all he was interested in gold teeth and pulled them from the mouths before rigor set in...

Che Ka rewarded Pankratov for hard difficult work and paid him well. On top of common Che Ka rations he received special daily ration of wine, meat and white bread, plus more for every executed.

He was economical person and after every working day wrote a time sheet for accounting.

Pankratov's live was thus affluent and he had nothing to complain about. But little by little he started getting tired and having nightmares at night... And then mass executions started... He felt that he was giving up and becoming insane...

He became scared and decided to quit. Luckily Zhukov was right here – reliable and decent successor. Zhukov also inherited the rental apartment and Efrosinya Ivanovna... And Pankratov left a few days later. Rumors are that he got a job of director at some collective farm...

Infinite river of human blood was spilled by that executioner, he caused untold cruelty and mental torture of the last minutes, that boggled mind and last will of the condemned was extinguished.

Like Wul, Punkratov was a Communist Party member. Like Wul he loved his trade and like him, became so creative with killing people, as was possible with his uncomplicated beastly character.

Punkratov knew how to prepare the doomed victims to the last minute and perfectly mastered technique of execution. With severe beating or dirty cynical swearing or dread sparks in his feverish eyes he turned the most violent criminals into passive and subdued creatures, that hypnotically complied, rushed to disrobe, afraid to disobey any order and waited for the fatal shot while mentally already dead...

The next few lines will tell about the last hours and minutes of the condemned.

As it was mentioned, a single-story addition was situated behind the main building with the suite of investigator offices. Previously there was insurance company archive there. To the left of the entrance are two offices, converted into the general holding cells, and three small "high security" solitary cells. Usually the just arrested and those who are summoned for an interview are kept here and people seldom stay here for a long time.

To the right of the entrance is a large peculiar room, with a narrow railed catwalk along all four walls and spiral stairs into the basement. That is the scary "Vessel" that takes the condemned to the shores of Death in its bulge...

There are two small solitary cells in one of the bulge's walls. Here the people spend their last Earthly hours scared into insanity.

The "Vessel" is almost always quit and silent. The "bulge" walls are impenetrable to human voice from the yard and the painted windows of the top floor pass virtually no daylight. There is no day or night here, for electric light is lit around o'clock. There is no space and time here, for every minute seems frozen eternity in the vise of the cellar. All connections with life are broken here, for the only stairwell into the living world is guarded by the watchful sentries, and the condemned walks up the stairs only once in order to leave the "Vessel" to set his subdued foot onto the shore of Death.

Every night after sunset a door opens up near the stairs, high voice of the executioner sounds and another condemned leaves the "bulge". The new condemned take his place...

Majority of the condemned spend only one day here. But there are others, who languish in the "Vessel" for the long weeks, day after day waiting for their turn. Every night they survive painful agony again and again and every morning they are awaiting dusk in deathly sorrow...

Is it possible to convey the entire bottomless depths of horror and despair, that keep the doomed inmates of the "Vessel" in its mouth? Does anyone, who never walked down the spiral stair into the "bulge", know of those? Human imagination is powerless, as are the human words... And only weak and faded reflections of that stunning tragedy, that plays out in silence of Che Ka cellars right in the middle of Moscow, reach our mind...

Here are a few random episodes from practice of mysterious and scary "Vessel", told simply and truthfully by several "fortunate" awaiting death down there and subsequently "pardoned" by RCAC.

In late January of 1921 I was locked in the "Vessel" where two more condemned were awaiting execution. They were accused of armed robbery of 287 million Roubles from a vehicle in Tretyakovsky Dr. Their co-accused were locked in an adjacent cell and also awaited a meeting with death.

The sentenced by Che Ka "threesome" were usually executed on Wednesdays and Saturdays. This is why they clearly realized that they were living their last day on Wednesday, January 26. Despite that they were very calm and even asked the head man during lunch to "give them more cnunky [soup]. Do not forget, that you are feeding us for the last time"...

Indeed, a guard on duty came around 6 PM and ordered to remove all occasional and temporary staying inmates from the basement. It became clear, that they would be taken out for execution. Both our cells were open, but we could not talk with the inmates of another cell as the guard watched every move. They still managed to destroy some messages...

In half an hour the executioner Punkratov descended to the basement accompanied by commander Rodionov. The condemned were summoned from the cells and ordered to disrobe. They put off the coats, jackets and shirt quickly, as if in a hurry... All faces were pale. Some were wobbling and even fell, but got up right away. They smoked one cigarette after another and did not talk. Then just as silently and almost running they went up the spiral stairs... And we froze where we were as if stunned and watched them leaving. I was thinking that the same fate awaited me...

The guards came a minute later for the possessions of those who left. Remaining food was immediately shared and other things was later worn by the guards and the executioner Punkratov...

About 20 minutes later after the condemned left a truck passed through the gates of Moscow Che Ka... It was taking away the corpses of already executed to Lefortovo morgue for autopsy and burial in a mass grave. The executed were tried in absentia and awaited death for 11/2 month. They wrote on a wall of our cell: "Bandits were locked here. Executed January 26 for 287 millions". Their names remained unknown.

On Saturday, January 29, i.e. three months after the above executions, 19 of sentenced in absentia by Moscow Che Ka session were brought into the "Vessel" from Bootyrskaya prison. 13 of those 19 were bandits accused of various armed robberies. Two – 19 year old criminal investigator and 22 year old Che Ka investigator Utkin – for forging a search warrant and misappropriating 300 thousand Roubles. And four militia men – for allowing several robbers to steal food from a sealed rail car. All four – young people, of whom 19 year old peasant Medvedev was the first time offender.

All of them were extremely agitated, cried and begged the executioner on their knees to "make inquiries" as they "were completely innocent". But Punkratov showered them with curses and even beat one of them. The investigator Utkin and militia man Medvedev were most sorry. Utkin's buddy investigator H. asked me for paper and quickly wrote a statement, that Utkin was innocent and should be pardoned in all fairness. The rest of militia men immediately wrote the same statement about Medvedev. Commander Rodionov took both statements to the Moscow Che Ka session.

At 7 PM Pankratov's voice was heard over noise and crying of the condemned: "Disrobe!" All somehow fell silent and started to put the clothes off. Then kissed each other and rushed up the stairs. Only two were left: Medvedev and one of his comrades, 23 year old Egorov. The possessions of the condemned were again gathered and taken somewhere, while food was shared and eaten by the guards. The share of the executioner was left for him and even we received some.

In hour and a half Rodionov returned and got the militia men waiting in the cell to sign some paper. Both thought that they were pardoned. But in less than 5 minutes after he left Egorov was summoned upstairs and executed, and few more minutes later Medvedev was told, that his execution was commuted for 15 years of concentration camp. I could not describe his joy. Can only say that he was pulling out his hair...

Early in February in one of the Saturday Zhurinsky – a 55 year old man with gray hair was brought into the "Vessel". He was accused of loaning big money to a number of prominent Moscow bourgeois, counting on unavoidable fall of soviet government. Moscow tribunal sentenced him to execution, but appealed to RCAC for clemency and awaited his fate for four months. Finally he was notified, that RCAC confirmed the sentence. On the premise of sudden visit by the family he was transferred from Bootyrskaya cell to a dog house and by night fall he was in the "Vessel".

The old man talked very little and replied to the guard's offer to have dinner: "Does it make sense to eat before execution?" and started crying. Then he took a copy of the verdict out of his pocket and threw it on the floor. Soon came Pankratov and yelled: "Come outside!" without even mentioning name and did not tell to disrobe. Zhurinsky left stepping firmly and decisively... And 2 – 3 minutes later truck engine roared taking still warm corpse to Lefortovo morgue.

About five days later three sentenced to execution by Moscow tribunal for counterfeiting were transferred from the same prison to the "Vessel": 49 year old Nikulin, 36 year old accountant of soviet institution Smirnov and 26 year old factory clerk Vasilyev. All three were married and each had several children. They appealed for clemency to RCAC and waited for resolution for 6 months. In the end the verdict was confirmed. They were grabbed during a walk in the prison yard and not allowed to collect their possessions from the cells.

This is how another inmate of the "Vessel" described their last minutes:

At first the three conducted themselves very calmly, talked at lengths with myself and other inmates. They wrote the farewell letters to the families and one of the cell-mates, who expected his sentence to be commuted to "no more than a year of concentration camp" agreed to deliver them. But soon after he too was executed and the letters did not reach destination.

The oldest, Nikulin, kept asking to tell his wife that he calmly awaited death. But I twice saw that he started crying. The comrades consoled him as much as they could. They were very upset that could not grab cyanide from the cell... Smirnov even cried from disappointment.

One of them asked: "What time do they execute?"

I replied: "Around 7 PM."

At sundown one of them said: "Let us look at sunlight one last time."

Nikulin raised his head and sighed: "Right now I am still walking and seeing how it is getting dark, and in 3/4 hour a bullet will puncture my temple..."

He could not help but started crying again.

"All my life I did not believe in God, but now do believe."

Smirnov sadly replied to that: "Believe or not, it smells of death anyway."

Then he told us: "Comrades, never rely on anyone and live by your own mind. And the main thing: do not eager easy gain. I perished in pursuit of that... How I would like to fix that error... But apparently it is late... It is hard to die..."

Vasilyev kept walking back and forth, sometimes laid down on the bunk bed.

"All in vain" – he exclaimed in trembling voice.

Only quarter of an hour was left...

Later he recalled: "When we went to trial, three coffins were carried the other way... I felt it was a bad sign..."

It was about 5 – 10 minutes to 7 PM. They tried to talk all the time. Looked out of the window and smoked. Vasilyev took off his sweatshirt and gave it to my cellmate, and Nikulin gave me 1,000 roubles he found in a pocket. Dinner was served but the condemned did not eat and gave us everything. They started deciding who would go first. Usually they called by the list and Vasilyev's name would be the first.

"Well," – he said – "I will go first."

Someone's head popped up above at exactly 7 PM and yelled to the guard on duty: "Send one up!"

All three shook, put off the hats. They came to us to bid farewell. Than kissed each other and crowded into the corner, but none came out.

"One go outside" – yelled the guard loudly. But none moved.

"Come outside all right" – yelled he in broken voice and tears rolled down his cheeks. We started crying too from looking at him.

The condemned still stood, holding the hats with their heads down and quietly asked each other to decide... It was very sad to look at them, and grave silence was even worse.

But suddenly Smirnov put on his hat, lit a cigarette, buttoned his coat and rushed upstairs. Half way up he stopped, looked back at us, raised his eyes and said: "Never crossed myself..." And he crossed. Then looked at us again, nodded and one last time yelled: "Farewell".

"See you" I dropped.

"Not see you, but farewell" – he corrected me and carried on.

At the door he was asked name and address, quickly replied and left through the door...

Vasilyev and Nikulin froze in the corner...

Less than a minute later the same voice yelled from above: "Another come outside".

Nikulin hugged Vasilyev and they went together, but Vasilyev was stopped at the door. That very moment Nikulin left through the door... Vasilyev froze on the spot and fixed his pained eyes on the door.

He was called out in a minute or two. But he jumped back in horror, wobbled and fell almost unconscious. He was propped up and carried out of the door... Half an hour later noise of truck engine was heard. The corpses were taken away...

Late in April, on Easter eve, several condemned were transferred here. One of them – Garpushin – was sentenced to execution by a railway tribunal for printing counterfeit tickets and transporting food by rail. He was convicted for the same before, but pardoned and released under amnesty. But this time the sentence was supposed to be carried out in 48 hours and he was sent to the “Vessel”. There were also 25 year old bandit Eremin and deputy supervisor of some station of Alexandrov railway, sentenced to execution for breaking into a car and stealing 8 bags of oats. I do not remember his name.

All sat and awaited death any hour. Supervisor came Easter Sunday around noon and called out... Garpushin requested a permission to change into clean clothes. He was allowed. But he was not the first summoned – the station deputy supervisor was. He left...

Then they called Eremin. Garpushin was next, but for some reason no one was coming for him. 10 minutes of horrible waiting passed, but suddenly door opened and... Eremin entered, whom we already considered executed. He told us the following:

When I was brought into the cellar, the station deputy supervisor was already dead in a pool of blood. The executioner Punkratov was sitting in the corner on a bench with a Colt in his hand. When I approached, he told me something, do not remember what. Then told me to disrobe. I put off a trench coat, boots and started unwrapping the foot wraps that already soaked in blood. Suddenly a red army man came running, gave a note to Punkratov and ordered execution to stop. And seeing a rail way man’s corpse on the floor dropped:

“Still managed to send one to afterlife.”

Punkratov angrily replied: “You should have slept even longer up there. This one would have followed...”

Then approached me, slapped on the shoulder and said: “Lucky you, but do not tell anyone what you saw here.”

Offered me a cigarette. They brought bread and soup from somewhere, but I could not eat...

Eremin, Garpushin and another condemned Lobachev were sent to Bootyrskaya prison at once, and poor station deputy supervisor perished just like that, only because an office girl from RCAC was a few minutes late with her paper on Easter Sunday... Five months later those fortunate were “pardoned”. But according to those, who saw Eremin, could not recover from his experience. He became quiet and “fool-in-Christ”...

In mid-May, not too long before publishing of decree that removed power of Che Ka to sentence in the big cases, executioner Punkratov resigned and position passed to the above mentioned Zhukov.

The story of him appearing at Moscow Che Ka is following: discharged from he army, Zhukov came to Moscow looking for work and ran into his townsman executioner Punkratov. He arranged for Zhukov to be hired as a commissar at Moscow Che Ka and offered to share an apartment.

Before becoming an executioner, Zhukov often stood guard on the “Vessel”, took the inmates to the washroom and peacefully talked to them about his life.

"Here – said one prisoner – we met closely. He was 29 years old and blind on one eye. He was dressed very poorly and always complained, that he is impoverished and his family is starving in the country. I offered him 15,000 Roubles for delivering a letter and bringing back some stuff. He would not agree for some time, saying that lives with Punkratov, who might find out about his violation. But finally agreed and went to my home. He had tea at my place and apparently did not regret his side income. Later he did similar favors to my cellmates for big money.

But lavish and nourish lifestyle of Punkratov was bothering him and he often enviously talked about his roommate: "Punkratov lives like a bourgeois, and I am dog-poor, have nothing."

Told us how Punkratov is enriching himself, pulling golden teeth of the victims, taking the gold crosses, rings and other valuables... That continued until mid-May, when it was Zhukov's turn to become rich: he replaced his townsman and became an executioner himself.

The small groups of condemned were transferred to the "Vessel" from Bootyrskaya prison on May 14, 23 in total. They were sentenced to execution by Moscow Che Ka on the charges of banditry. The root cause of such great number of condemned in one night was probably in a push of the "threesome" to dispose of its victims *before the new decree came into force...*

As soon as they were brought in, investigator Wul, whose prisoners they were, came downstairs. Seeing him they condemned became noisy and tried to talk to him. But nothing could be understood among common noise. Having looked at them all, Wul smiled, waved his hand and left. The curses and swearing followed him... Many considered themselves innocent. At that moment a bandit "Purple" entered our cell and asked everyone to leave. We left, not realizing what was the matter. But several minutes later we heard moaning. I rushed back in and saw "Purple" on the bunk bed with his throat slit. The wound was not too deep, as he used a safety razor blade. I called a guard. Two guards immediately grabbed him, bleeding and carried into Zhukov's cellar.

Zhukov promptly finished him off...

None of the condemned was surprised by that incident and did not even care to go into the cell to see the dying buddy. They, awaiting death every moment, did not care. "Purple" wrote on a wall: "Slit my throat to not fall into the hands of the living parasites. Farewell, my wife..." But his fate was different: he still died at the hand of an executioner.

Commander Gorbатов with the executioner Zhukov descended around midnight. They started summoning for execution one prisoner at a time at the routine intervals of 1 – 2 minutes... Some disrobed quickly, others tore their clothes unwilling to leave anything to the executioner. When a notorious bandit Ignatov who was dressed in expensive jacket, pants and virtually new boots, was summoned, he was ordered to go upstairs dressed... The executioner Zhukov was dressed like dandy the day after.

The last was a man from Georgia (cannot recall his name), accused of armed robbery of the Moscow city commander.

"What do they want to execute me for?.. I will not come... Will not come..."

Three guards tried to take him by force, but he put up a fight. They sent for Zhukov, who was waiting for his last victim in the cellar. He came and hit him twice in the side with a butt of revolver, then cracked his skull with a strong strike. Georgian fell unconscious, bleeding. Two guards lifted him and carried into the cellar, where Zhukov finished him off, like “Purple” with a single shot...

Half an hour they came to collect the possessions of the executed and the sound of truck engine told us that their bodies were being taken to Lefortovo morgue. 23 people were executed that night...

Since that night Zhukov no longer talked to us and did not recognize. He was always dressed like dandy, smoked cigarettes, no longer borrowed tobacco from us and no longer complained about his poverty. He reached lavish lifestyle of his predecessor and became just as happy and content with his fate.

In late February and March 28 more people, sentenced to execution by the session of Moscow Che Ka for banditism, passed through the “Vessel”. All of them were tried in absentia and learned their fate in the last moment. I will not dwell on the last moments of their lives... But here are two episodes from April that an eyewitness told me about.

Three bandits, sentenced by railway tribunal to execution for an armed robbery, were transferred here from Taganskaya prison early in April. 48 hours passed since issuance of the verdict. They arrived tied and severely beaten, as they put up a fight in prison, realizing that they were being taken out for execution.

They were untied here and put into the cells. Awaiting the executioner they have written down their names on the walls, talked to us and requested to pass a few small things – a coin or a button – to the families.

My cellmate Shelackin hoped for a release and volunteered to deliver the items, but he was executed May 14 and the notes and items ended up in Moscow Che Ka...

The executioner showed up at usual time, but no one was coming out voluntarily. Then they were beaten one after another, tied and carried upstairs. They did so to the first two. When they came for the next one – young (21 years old) bandit Geonov – they found him hung in a cell... Jacket and pants, tied together and to the heating pipe, were his noose. No one noticed when it happened. They rushed to release him from the noose and resuscitate, but it was too late...

Not much can be added to that story.

Every minute of approaching Death tightened an iron ring of Doom around the condemned, the scarier and scarier.

All human traditions quickly became the past, all those little “rights” and “guarantees”, that the worst bandit enjoyed a quarter of an hour ago even in Che Ka basement. And the executioner, who came to talk to use out of boredom in the morning, and investigator Wul, who fed them white buns, and the anonymous guards,

who peacefully served as sentries, who served dinner an hour ago and took them to a washroom – all of them, as under a spell, turned into the wild beasts with one common goal, one desire: to manage to tear apart the victim thrown to them.

They disrobed the still living people and later argued about their clothes. They tied still living and instinctively resisting death by hands and feet, like the animals get tied at the slaughterhouses, and carried them away to the executioner.

There were the likes of Medvedev among that faceless mass of the assistants in execution – those intoxicated from blood, who were as cruel as Zhukov or Punkratov... There were indifferent servicemen, who took part in executions as part of their "duty" and for whom execution of people was the same annoying, but unavoidable routine as war. But there were others too – the individuals, who ended up in Che Ka basement by accident or ignorance, but retained human consciousness and could not take that stunning pressure of the last suffering.

I personally met one of those random participants of terror, who quit for some made up reason. That 36 year old worker, a carpenter by trade, removed from peaceful labor by European war, was thrown into the Special battalion of Che Ka, where he guarded the "enemies of worker-peasant government" rifle in hand. It was hard for him to talk about the "Vessel" and executions. But from individual phrases he dropped, I learned how he took the people to the door of doom, how ran away to not hear the screams and moans, and how several horrible moments later a sound of a single shot caught up with him...

"I was an honest soldier" – said he once. – "I went to the bayonet attacks on Germans several times, was twice wounded and say a lot of sorrow and lots of blood. But that all was not so scary, as the accursed cellar at Lubyanka".

If entering from Lesser Lubyanka St, that would be the first door on your right. There are several basements and one of them is used as an execution chamber. It has paved floor with a trough and drain. The walls are pitted by bullets. Smell of stale blood in the air. And a small bench in the corner, where an agitated executioner awaited his victims.

Usually the executioner "worked" alone. But there was instances, when it was not sufficient, and then some volunteer form among the guards or the red army men from a Special Battalion joined in. During Punkratov's and Zhukov's time that was a duty of a young soldier Andrianov.

After the paperwork and formalities are complete, the corpses are taken to Lefortovo morgue for autopsy and burial. That is the end of the cycle on the path of already dead body and soulless machine of Death releases it from its iron grip.

"Revolutionary justice" has been served.

But its sword of vengeance pursues not only direct enemies of Bolshevik state. Freezing breath of terror reaches those, whose fathers and husbands are already resting in the mass graves.

The vengeful sword strikes not only direct enemies of Bolshevik state. Freezing breath of terror catches up with those, whose fathers and husbands already lie in mass graves. Stunned with overhanging doom and anticipating disaster for months,

the mothers, wives and children learn about it long after the fact, by the circumstantial signs, and rush to the Che Ka cells, maddened with sorrow but unsure that this is the end...

I know of a number of cases, where Moscow Che Ka issued the permissions for visits with those, who were known to be in Lefortovo morgue.

Wives and children came with pogeys to the prisons, but instead of a visit they were given a routine answer:

– Not registered at this prison.

Or something confusing and misleading:

– Left with possessions within the city...

Not an official notice of execution, not a farewell visit, not a dead body for respectful family funeral...

Bolshevik terror is ruthless. It knows mercy neither to the enemies, nor to the children, mourning their fathers.

This is the end of my quick notes.

I intentionally dedicated them not to those, who fell under the sword of terror while fighting for their political ideas, but to those criminals and bandits, who are equally unacceptable to all political regimes.

But perhaps the Stations of the Cross of those specific people with dim thoughts and still sleeping social consciousness can create more contrast with vast historic crime of those, who in the name of communism tried to cure the social injustices with such methods, and who carried out terror (and what terror!) while creating a new free society...

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