In the Social Storm

Memoirs of the Russian Revolution

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I was born February 17th, 1889, in the city of Yekotirenodar (the gift of Catherine the Great), now known as Krasnodar, located in the province of Kuban, in the northern part of southern Russia. I was the fourth child of a middle-class family. My father had a shop that manufactured fur hats for the Cossacks.

When I was five years old we moved 125 miles south to the city of Novorossiysk on the shores of the Black Sea.

It was my parents' ambition that I should become a doctor. My mother particularly, who could neither read nor write, was prepared to make any sacrifice to fulfill this dream. Since only a very small percentage of Jewish children were accepted at the Gymnasium, I was tutored privately to prepare me for examinations. My parents' ambitions for me were to remain only dreams though for from an early age my thoughts were concerned mainly with the simple questions of why the majority of the people had nothing while the few had so much.

In Russia, the transfer of prisoners from one city to another in large groups was called Etap. Since Novorossiysk was a port city, groups of these prisoners were continually coming through town, transferring from ships to trains. They would come in by ship, spend the night in the city, and the next day be marched up the main street to the train station.

The picture of these worn-out groups of human beings, chained hand and foot, and the clink of their irons were with me all of my childhood as a continual reminder of oppression.

When I was twelve years old I accidentally found a handful of underground revolutionary literature. I brought it home innocently enough and nearly got a beating from my father when he saw it. The fear in the faces of my parents and the few pages that I read started my mind working, and within a year I was involved in the underground revolutionary movement in our city.

I continued studying with my tutor but my thoughts were too deeply involved with the revolutionary movement and I made little progress. With every pamphlet or book that I read in the underground I got further away from any possibility of becoming a doctor. Within a few months, after a bitter fight with my parents, I finally told them I had no intention of becoming a doctor and that I would run away from home if they insisted that I continue with my studies. The work with my tutor and two years of grammar school was the extent of my formal education but I continued to educate myself by reading world literature.

I was 16 when revolution began in Russia in 1905. Novorossiysk was the second city in Russian (after St. Petersburg) to organize a Soviet Republic, which existed for six weeks and in which I took an active part.

Naturally, when the repressive general reaction of the Tsarist government reached Novorossiysk, I had to leave the city in a hurry to escape arrest. I hid out in various parts of Russia and finally decided to look for better luck outside the country. In 1907, after stopping in Germany, Switzerland and France, I was on my way to the United States.

The dark side of immigrant life in the United States in those days is a story in itself. Suffice it to say we were not treated then as the Cuban Catholics are now, with government subsidies. An immigrant from Europe considered himself lucky if he could get $3.00 a week for 48 hours of backbreaking labor. We were often hungry, but also often happy, for we had certain inner values that gave us the hope to go on with our poor lives. We all kept our free time filled with activity and there was always the hope and dream that some day we would be able to return home.

Filled with this dream I did manage to return to Russia in 1910 but after ten months I had to flee for my life and returned again to the United States.

In the following years economic conditions improved slightly for the immigrants and the edges of their dream of returning home were dulled. Many of them married and settled down to raise families and began to regard their dream as an illusion.

Then, in the early months of 1917 the immigrant community was suddenly wakened from their lethargy when the shattering news of a revolution in Russia came through. The Tsar was ousted and the illusion became a possible dream again.

The immigrant colony came back to life with the electrifying news of a General Amnesty for all political prisoners and political immigrants and, at least for a time, even the animosity between some of the socialist groupings disappeared and warm human relations established themselves in the happy holiday atmosphere of going home.

On June 16th, 1917, we left the U.S. on the way to the new Russia, and, after more than a month of travel, my family and I arrived in Novorossiysk on July 18th, 1917. This book is my own story of that time; of my own active participation in the great Russian social revolution.

Even though I eventually had to leave the shores of the beautiful Black Sea again, and several times brushed closely with death, I am not sorry that I returned when I did. Even now, at 82, I would do it again if the opportunity arose.

Much has been written on the history of the various colonies, communes and co-operatives which experimented with new social orders but I consider the experiment I have presented in this book the first serious large-scale attempt to create a nucleus for a free society based on the foundation of full equality and human dignity.

I have attempted to present my own appraisal of everyday life, from my viewpoint as a private citizen and an anarchist activist, with as little personal bias and prejudice as possible. I have tried to present the reality I saw, a reality one can only live through once in a century.

It is impossible to forget that winter night in March, 1917, when we came out of the Chicago Opera House and heard the newsboys shouting loudly: ”Revolution in Russia! Tsar Nicholas abdicates!” Each one of us bought a paper and we rushed into a restaurant where we read every word twice and then looked for the news between the lines. We saw that the Romanoff dynasty had come to an end, yet our minds were still full of suspicion, and we couldn’t get used to the idea that our long fight to liberate Russia from the Tsar and his corrupt government had at last been successful. We were skeptical and thought that it might be merely an attempt to depose

the Tsar which would have no lasting effect. But the next day brought more and fuller news and our doubts began to vanish. The Russian colonies all over the United States began to celebrate and high-spirited political meetings were held by every political group. In the joy of the moment every radical seemed to feel it was his duty to attend the functions of other parties and groups and it was in every way a time of brotherly feeling.

As soon as the first news of the Russian Revolution reached them the vast majority of the political refugees then living in the United States thought immediately of returning to Russia to help build a new society and to help defend the new freedoms which had been won with so much suffering. At first these desires seemed far from fulfillment, partly because the great majority had no financial means and also because of the massive disruption of transportation facilities incurred by the first World War. However, the dream of returning came true when Kerensky came into power and the Provisional Government decided that it would pay all the expenses for political refugees and their families who wished to return to Russia.

The first small group, which included Leon Trotsky, left immediately. It was detained for a while in Halifax, Canada, but was set free and allowed to go on as a result of representations by Kerensky's government.

Soon afterwards a special committee of representatives of all the Russian political groupings was formed in New York, and this committee, working in co-operation with the Russian consul, became the clearinghouse for those who were entitled to a free passage home. A similar committee was later formed in Chicago to represent the political refugees in the mid-Western states; in a few weeks it approved several hundred applications, and soon the first group was ready to leave Chicago, accompanied by a contingent from Detroit.

Since the Atlantic was a dangerous place to cross at this time it was decided that all the political refugees would leave from the Pacific coast and go through Siberia to whatever point in Russia they wished to reach.

The departure of the first group from Chicago was a sight never to be forgotten. It seemed as though the whole Russian and Jewish radical colony had come to the station to see their friends go home. Later, during April, May and June, 1917, contingents from the Eastern States were constantly passing through Chicago and each arrival became the excuse for another celebration.

The first months of the Russian Revolution brought a feeling of brotherhood between the various political groups, but this spirit didn't last long. The well-known Bolshevik, Bukharin, came to Chicago to give a few lectures on the revolution, predicting that a "proletarian" revolution would soon take place in Russia. After his lectures, the small Bolshevik group in Chicago began to act as if they would soon take over affairs, and their representatives on the Political Refugee Committee began to claim that they were the only real representatives of the Russian people and that, for this reason, they alone had the right to decide who could go back to Russia.

Their declarations resulted in a bitter fight, which lasted through one meeting of the committee until past midnight. When the rest of the members saw that it was impossible to reach an understanding with the Marxists they decided to go to another hall to terminate the business on the agenda. Accordingly, at 3 a.m., all the members of the Committee, except the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, went to the Russian I.W.W. hall on Roosevelt Road. [The Bolsheviks (majority) and the Mensheviks (minority) were the two aspects of the once Russian Social Democratic Party that divided up in 1903. Lenin then became the supreme leader of the Bolsheviks or Maximalists who were socialists opposed to class conciliation and "peaceful coexistence" with the bourgeoisie. Ed.] The first question discussed there was the election of a special committee that would go next

day to the Russian Consul and explain to him what had happened. About 5 a.m., a certain Mr. Berg, later to become more famous under the name of Borodin, came to us and proposed that we should not be hasty but should find a way to work with the Bolsheviks. His proposal wasn't accepted and we told him that we'd let the Russian Consul decide the matter.

Later in the morning, when our committee arrived at the Consul's office, the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were already there. Our Chairman and Secretary explained what had happened the previous night. The Consul was shrewd enough to understand what the Bolsheviks were driving at, and he said that he would acknowledge no one committee and would deal only with our present Chairman and Secretary, giving passports and money solely on their recommendations. So, in the end, the Bolsheviks had to come to our Committee and to accept the common decisions.

When the last group of returning refugees left Chicago in June, 1917, the activities of the Anarchist Red Cross which we had worked on for so long, seemed to have reached an end; neither those who left for Russia nor those who remained in the United States dreamed that in a few years they would have to organize another Anarchist Red Cross to help the new political prisoners in Russia. We could not foresee that the brutalities of the Tsar's government would seem like child's play in comparison with those that the new despots of Russia would initiate. The whole thinking world imagined that Russia was on the way to becoming one of the most democratic countries in the world.

However, before we come to the new tragedy of Russia, it's appropriate to trace the adventures of those who returned in that year of 1917. More than ninety percent of those who went back were later to die in the Bolshevik terror. From those of us who escaped, we've managed to collect the following information on the trip back to Russia.

We journeyed by train from Chicago to Vancouver, B.C. where the Russian Consul was waiting for the train. He had made arrangements ahead of time for our hotel accommodations. A large group of other refugees was already there, and two days later the whole contingent crossed to Victoria, on Vancouver Island, and there boarded the liner Empress of Asia.

The ten-day voyage across the Pacific was an experience in itself. The whole second-class portion of the ship was occupied by the political refugees. It looked like a small, happy Russian community. Among the passengers were many outstanding personalities, including the anarchist writer Voline, whose two important books were published in the 1950's. John Reed, author of Ten Days That Shook the World, was with us. At that time he was a follower of Emma Goldman but later became a Bolshevik. William Shatov and many other writers and speakers were also passengers.

As soon as we had settled down on the ship an educational committee was elected and, since a mimeograph was available, a daily paper was published under the title The Float, which commented on life in the ship's community and contained articles on the Russian revolution, satirical writing, and many cartoons by John Reed. Voline gave a series of lectures on the history of the Russian revolutionary movement, others spoke on different subjects, and there were musical and other entertainments, so the passengers were constantly busy in one way or another and the voyage passed like a dream.

When we arrived in Yokohama there were already so many returning Russians that the passengers aboard the Empress of Asia had to stay in native Japanese hotels. The reason for the congestion was the relative backwardness of Japanese transportation facilities at this time.

There were two ways of getting from Japan to Russia; one was a short sea trip to Korea and then by train through Korea and Manchuria and the other was by small boat to Vladivostok that

involved a longer and usually rough and unpleasant sea voyage. Except for one very small group, everyone decided to go by train, and a party was sent off each day according to the number of tickets that could be obtained from the railroad.

Shortly after our party arrived some unpleasant rumors began to spread in Yokohama about a clash between returning refugees and the Russian authorities in Harbin. What had actually happened nobody knew, but the tale scared a few families and they decided to remain for the time being in Japan. This was the first crack in the holiday spirit with which the party had set out and now everyone began to think about what might happen when they reached the Russian border.

The Chicago party crossed the border at a small station where they had to change to a Russian train. Not far from the station the Russian border guards were walking around so some of the returning refugees started talking with them. They found out that all the poor soldiers actually knew was that there was no longer a Tsar in Russian; but they were quite happy about being able to impart this news to us.

As we approached Harbin where the train would connect with the main Vladivostok-Moscow line the refugees began to feel some uncertainty in view of the rumors they had heard earlier in Japan. They could see the blaze of lights in the station and then, as the train slowed down, a military band struck up the Marseillaise and a crowd of people ran towards the carriages. The refugees couldn't understand what was happening or why the music was playing but soon men and women started crowding into their cars and hugging them. They introduced themselves as members of the Reception Committee for Political Refugees; afterwards, as they got down from the train, all the people who had gathered at the station greeted the newcomers enthusiastically. We were astonished and moved by this reception, which seemed to us a manifestation of the warmth of the Russian people, and of the effects of the great change that had taken place in our homeland.

Nevertheless, we were still puzzled by the rumors that had been circulating in Japan, and so on the second day we mentioned these to the Harbin Reception Committee, who gave the following account of the actual incident. A group of refugees from Pittsburgh, including some rather violent individuals, arrived in the city and demanded that they should be sent immediately to Central Russia. The Reception Committee explained that before this could happen each of them would have to be checked by a special committee to establish the authenticity of his revolutionary activities in Russia; the main object of this investigation was to detect any former spies or provocateurs from the old Tsarist police who might be trying to return to Russia. The Pittsburgh group refused to agree to this and went to see the manager of the railroad who happened to be a former Tsarist General. He refused to give them the traveling permits but, being an old reactionary, he saw an opportunity to stir up the feelings of those who were still against the revolution and so one evening a group of these stalwarts went to the carriage where the Pittsburgh group was staying and tried to burn it. The incident could have ended tragically, but fortunately, at that moment a train full of sailors from Vladivostok happened to arrive and they interfered in the matter. After this experience the Pittsburgh group realized the need for vigilance and thus submitted to the committee's investigation. In a few days they were allowed to leave.

While we were in Harbin we could already feel the spirit of renewal that was in the Russian air at this time and this feeling continued as we traveled on through Siberia towards our various destinations. Everywhere the words "Political Prisoners" or "Refugees" acted like magic potions and at every large station committees of young men and women met the trains and provided us

with food and any other help that we needed. Constantly, in this atmosphere of brotherly love, one felt the gratitude that the people showed towards those who had sacrificed their years and their freedom to help in the liberation of Russia. In these idyllic early months of the revolution there appeared among the Russian people that intensity of human feeling towards each other that occurs rarely - perhaps not more than once in a century - in the history of any people.

In Siberia, where the majority of political prisoners and exiles were concentrated, the news of the revolution had been received with profound emotion. In the city of Krasnoyarsk, a center from which the Tsarist government sent exiles to the remote corners of the Siberian wilderness, the Governor received a telegram from the Provisional Government in Petrograd, informing him of the change of regimes. He was in no hurry to tell the people of the liberation but the telegraphist who had received the message passed the news to a few of his friends and it quickly spread among the resident exiles. Excitement ran high and in the evening a large deputation went to the city hall to see the Mayor and ask him to call on the Governor in order to find out the text of the telegram. The people who'd gathered outside city hall were so excited that the Mayor decided to take out a copy of the telegram which had been given to him and to read it to them. At first the news was so surprising that nobody knew whether or not to believe it but before long their joy was unbounded and all through the night the celebrations went on in the streets of the city.

A few days later the exiles began to arrive from the remote places to which they'd been banned. They walked as free men in the city but there was still the shadow of fear in their faces - the fear of the dark past from which they had just emerged. Their clothing was ragged, their shoes were worn out, and most of them were half-starved, so a committee was organized to take care of them. It had no funds but here too the new spirit of free Russia was made manifest for the merchants of the city offered to provide, without payment, whatever was needed to help the exiles. Even the noblewomen of Krasnoyarsk came to the committee and offered their help.

Yes, a social revolution can produce a miracle of brotherhood, and if the political parties which were busy fighting for power had turned their attention to keeping up these miracles, Russia and the whole world might now be far advanced on the road towards real freedom. Instead however, we must now consider the bitter reality of what the politics of power actually brought about in Russia.

On July 18th, 1917, I arrived in the city of Novorossiysk, at the foot of the Caucasus Mountains on the shores of the Black Sea. It was in this city that I had grown up and it was here that I had first joined the revolutionary movement.

Even in 1917, Novorossiysk had a tradition of revolutionary activity. During the ill-fated revolt of 1905 only two cities had succeeded in forming Soviets or Councils that seized control; one was St. Petersburg and the other Novorossiysk.

The city had a population of about 70,000 at that time and it possessed an important harbor which served as the focus of a dynamic revolutionary elite who had inculcated a high degree of class-consciousness among the dock laborers as well as among the workers in the cement factories and on the railroads.

An example of the somewhat advanced ideas of the masses of this city was their attitude towards the Jews. When the ferocious wave of pogroms which followed in the wake of the revolution of 1905 reached the confines of Novorossiysk, where about 100 Jewish families made their homes, the notorious Black Hundreds, the instigators and perpetrators of the anti-Semitic outbreaks, did their utmost to persuade the local Russian populace to launch an attack against the Jews. They failed ignominiously and decided to bring in a gang of thugs from Rostov-on-Don.

When the pogrom-makers reached Novorossiysk and revealed themselves, word was quickly passed along to the harbor workers, who immediately mobilized their forces, surrounded the imported hooligans and gave them a severe beating. It is to the eternal credit of Novorossiysk that it was never the scene of a pogrom against the Jews.

However, up to the time of the 1917 revolution, no anarchist group existed in Novorossiysk. In prior years, individual anarchists had visited the city from time to time and one could occasionally come across them at the clandestine revolutionary gatherings, but when I returned to the city after an absence of many years, I did not know whether any of my comrades were there or whether any kind of group had been formed. I did encounter some fellow revolutionaries with whom I had once participated in the Maximalist movement, but they were unable to supply me with any information. To add to the confusion, I had arrived at a time when the Social-Revolutionaries and the Bolsheviks were waging relentless warfare against Kerensky's Provisional Regime.

In addition to the daily rallies staged on the streets, the local Soviet held meetings every Sunday and at these meetings I made some acquaintances. At these Soviet assemblies, almost all the factions had set up tables for the sale of their literature. I immediately contacted comrades in other cities and, after a few weeks, began receiving packages containing our anarchist periodicals and pamphlets. Petrograd sent GolosTruda ("The Voice of Labor") and from Moscow came Anarchia ("Anarchy"); from Rostov-on-Don we received Chleb E Volya ("Bread and Freedom"). With these supplies I was able to set up my "business" of disseminating our anarchist literature.

It is difficult to convey adequately the vibrant enthusiasm that pervaded Russia in those days - the intense quest for new ideas, for a new philosophy of action. The entire Russian nation seemed to be rushing breathlessly forward, and this headlong surge seemed most natural at the time. The anarchist publications I had to offer were something new and as soon as I displayed them on our literature table they were eagerly snatched up.

In time a group would form around my literature table. Endless questions were flung at me and I engaged regularly in debates about anarchism. At times these arguments would become overheated, with a resulting rising noise level and the chairman of the Soviet would begin to pound his gavel and shout at me: "Comrade anarchist, you have every right to sell your literature, but you must not disturb our meeting!"

During one of these exchanges, while the tumult was swirling around me, I noticed a woman and a young man standing nearby. Both of them were holding copies of the three periodicals that I had sold them and they were smiling at me in a very friendly fashion. When the crowd finally settled down in their seats they moved over to my table, shook hands with me and introduced themselves. The woman was Katya Garbova and the man Vanya Budnik, both members of our movement. She informed me that there were several more comrades in Novorossiysk that I should meet and we agreed that we would meet the next day and try to contact in all the fellow-anarchists who were in the city.

We arranged a meeting and eight comrades showed up, including five who had been active for some time in our movement. Katya Garbova had only recently returned from forced labor in Siberia and three of the group had arrived recently from the United States. After some discussion we agreed unanimously to form a group. The question then naturally arose as to what form our projected activity should take and what stand we should adopt with respect to the struggle the left-wing Social-Revolutionaries were conducting against the Kerensky Regime.

We adopted a resolution with respect to the political situation of that time that, inasmuch as we were in principle opposed to all types of government, our group would not actively participate

in the political contest which the partisan factions were waging; that we were prepared to lend our support to accelerate the course of the social revolution; and that we would exert our utmost energy to organizing the workers with a view toward seizing control of industry, with factory committees assuming the function of administering the plants.

With that goal in mind, we began to organize an Economic Soviet, which was to direct production while co-operatives were to take over the task of providing the population with essential commodities.

We also decided to assign a delegate to the local political Soviet to observe the proceedings only, with no voting privileges.

The many aspects of the revolution itself generated among the eight of us a lively debate that lasted through several meetings. This was due to the fact that, even among the eight of us there existed strong differences of opinion. Three of the comrades were still new to the movement and lacking in experience. The three arrivals from America had received training in a School for Organizational Activity, and they ardently defended the Revolution. Katya Garbova and another comrade still dwelt in a dream world of that romantic anarchism which had characterized our movement in the years gone by. The two latter comrades insisted that our newly formed group should confine itself to anarchistic propaganda, and they were not averse to expropriation to obtain funds for our mission.

This issue of expropriation generated considerable ill feeling. However, with the aid of the three new comrades, we succeeded in winning our point, and also convinced Katya, who was a very astute individual, that expropriation could not lead to any constructive results. Finally the last co-worker to join our group came to agree with the correctness of our approach and our unit was ready for action.

When we first began to offer our literature and periodicals at the Soviet sessions, the public bought our offerings largely for curiosity's sake - at that time, the masses at large eagerly reached out for anything that was new. It was not long however, before evidence appeared that our literature was making a deep impression on those who read it. This was particularly true of the paper GolosTruda.

At first we were the targets of the usual good-natured jokes about "bombs and expropriation." However, when the workers became more familiar with the ideas set forth in GolasTruda, they began to understand that our group was different in many ways from the political parties. They became aware that we were not pursuing power, and their attitudes toward us underwent a change. We began receiving invitations to address factory gatherings. As we came to see that our propaganda was registering heavily with the city masses we were impelled to seek closer relations with the workers by having the men from our group secure jobs in the factories, thus establishing closer links with the proletariat of the city.

We were so enthralled with our early success that we were quite oblivious to the enormous difficulties involved in the task we had undertaken. These difficulties were forcibly brought to our attention as the frequent meetings and rallies brought our handful of members quickly to the point of exhaustion.

Finally, at one session of our group, the question came up as to how we could secure reinforcement in personnel, as well as badly needed additional literature to help us with our campaign. We had learned that a group of comrades was operating in Rostov-on-Don, issuing the periodical Chleb E Volya, and that there were two similar groups in Kharkov: the anarcho-syndicalists, who were publishing "The Worker's Path", and the anarcho-communist circle. The group decided that

I should journey to these two cities and attempt to interest several comrades in coming to work with our organization. I agreed to undertake the mission.

Rostov-on-Don was primarily a commercial center with a few industries. The main category of workers there was the large number of men employed on the railroad as Rostov was the principal artery for the railroad lines to the Caucasus and to the Black and Caspian Seas.

On my first day in Rostov I visited the clubrooms of the "Bread and Freedom" group and found there a large number of members, mostly workers and students. That same day their weekly journal, also titled "Bread and Freedom", was published. The whole place was a beehive of activity: in one room the newspaper was being prepared for distribution; in another topics of the day were being debated. In a larger hall a student was speaking on the subject "What is Anarchism and What are Its Goals?" The audience listened with deep interest to the lecturer's analysis of the anarchist philosophy, as it was quite a new concept for most of them.

It was growing late when the last of the public finally filed out leaving only the active members of the group. This provided the opportunity for a group meeting at which I presented my report on what we were accomplishing in Novorossiysk and the objectives of my journey. The comrades present displayed keen interest in our plan of operations but they were in the same boat we were - in quest of more active workers. In fact, they urged me to remain and work with them. It was obvious there were no prospects here for completing my mission so I arranged with them to send us their publication regularly and the following day I departed for Kharkov.

In Kharkov I encountered several of the political émigrés from the United States some of whom were finding it difficult to adjust to the developments of the day and the course the revolution was taking. Others, of course, missed the higher American standard of living.

I must digress briefly here to explain something that played a significant role during those honeymoon days of the Russian revolution. As soon as the revolution had liquidated the old regime the various revolutionary factions began to occupy large houses, printing plants and other buildings in order to be able to expand their spheres of activity. The anarchists of course, did likewise. Near Petrograd for instance, they occupied a villa known as Dache Durnovo, but the police, together with cadets from a nearby military academy, attacked the building and tried to dislodge them. One of our young comrades was killed in that fight.

In Moscow there was the Dom Anarchy, ("House of Anarchism") which the Bolsheviks attacked with cannon after seizing power. In other cities similar actions occurred on a smaller scale and continued sporadically until after October, when the Bolsheviks launched a campaign to liquidate the occupied houses and printing plants.

Precisely at the time of my arrival in Kharkov I encountered a tense situation which could have resulted in the sacrifice of many men, as had happened elsewhere. Here the anarcho-communist group had seized a house that extended over two city squares - a veritable palace. To this day I cannot understand why one constructed such a palatial residence in the nineteenth century. Beneath the house there were a number of tunnels leading out and surfacing several blocks away. When I arrived there was a great commotion in the city at large and a terrific agitation in the press over the fact that the political commissar of the Kerensky regime had issued an ultimatum to the anarchists to evacuate the palace by a certain date.

The day I arrived in Kharkov, the anarchist group held a special meeting to decide what response to make to this ultimatum, since the commissar had threatened to seize the palace by force the following day.

It was a stormy meeting with one vehement speech succeeding another and it was evident that the old-time anarchist romanticism had come to life again. The more fiery speakers held to the view that the anarchists must offer resistance, but there were others of a more sober temperament who pointed out that in this "palace" lived a number of women and children and that resistance could only result in a slaughter of these innocents. Of course those who spoke in this vein were derided as not possessing courage.

While the debating went on, dynamite was placed in the tunnels under the palace and electrical wiring drawn through. Machine gun emplacements were set up on the roof and in the upstairs rooms. One room was turned into an arsenal, stocked with rifles, revolvers and bombs. Everything was in readiness for a small-scale war. The meeting finally adopted a proposal that, if the palace should be attacked and if they were unable to repel the attack, it was to be blown up by the dynamite kept in the tunnels.

The situation was such that even those who opposed resistance and sought a means to avert bloodshed were unable to leave the palace. They felt they had a moral obligation not to abandon their comrades in such a crisis. Personally, I had come to seek co-workers for a constructive anarchist project, and now found myself trapped in a military venture for which I saw no rhyme or reason.

In spite of my own feelings, I must admit that, from a military standpoint, the plans for resistance were well organized. Following the meeting, the younger element went to their posts. Throughout the night, patrols were dispatched to see if military units of the commissar had begun to concentrate around the palace. However, all intelligence indicated it was quiet in the city. Dawn came, but no assault. Later on it was ascertained that several influential revolutionaries had intervened and persuaded the commissar not to resort to military force to capture the palace and a tragic and futile bloodbath was averted.

In two or three days after that tense incident, the atmosphere became a bit more relaxed and I felt warranted in attending a group session to report on the plans of our Novorossiysk group and my own main purpose in coming to Kharkov. At first, some of the comrades were suspicious that we were anarcho-syndicalists and therefore persona non grata. However the greater part of the comrades took a favorable view of our plans and applauded our effort. In spite of their warm feelings I was only able to persuade two members to accompany me and to assist in the massive project - George, a chauffeur and émigré from Paris and another young comrade named Volodia. George was not so much attracted by the nature of our work as by the prospect of his wife and child spending the winter in the warmer climate of the Caucasus, but Volodia possessed genuine enthusiasm for our cause.

The main psychological reason for such a small number out of this large group volunteering their services was the ingrained romanticism that prevailed in the anarchist movement. The majority of the comrades had only recently been liberated from hard labor in prison or from exile; they had not yet recovered themselves nor come to grips with the new realities created by the February revolution. The fact is that most of them soon stepped down from the stage and were lost to the Russian anarchist movement; even though at that point in time they were ready to give up their lives, as they had demonstrated on that perilous night, it was impossible to interest them in constructive endeavors which had none of the romantic appeal they sought.

After attending a few more of the daily sessions of the groups I realized that the prospects were dim for accomplishing anything with them. Accordingly, as soon as the two volunteers were ready, we packed a large bundle of literature together and set out for Novorossiysk. None of the

anarcho-syndicalist faction were willing to accompany me, though this group included several well-known émigrés. They published a journal called "The Worker's Path," and conducted their main agitation among the employees of the factories and railroads. Their membership was rather modest but they would often engage in heated debates with the anarcho-communists, principally in a park located in the center of Kharkov where public gatherings and discussions were held every evening.

Rattling along in the dimly lit coach on the way back to Novorossiysk, I had ample time to reflect on what I had observed in Kharkov. The thought kept running through my mind that, if these two groups who were really so close together ideologically, would devote less time to assailing each other on minor points and more in following a constructive program of building a new life on a foundation of freedom, the anarchist movement in Russia during the era of the great revolution would certainly have been able to record a great many more lasting historical achievements.

In those days anything that sought to halt the surge of the mighty social current flowing at that time was shattered and annihilated. The slightest attempts to move against this overpowering current were doomed by history to suffer destruction. Turning back through the leaves of that tempestuous chapter in Russian and world history, it is easy to apply hindsight and observe what became of such attempts.

Observe the sequence of events: Czar Nicholas II abdicates his throne; the Duma takes a more liberal turn and promises certain reforms. But the social tempest is heedless and sweeps onward over them. Kerensky forms a Socialist government; a National Conference of all liberal and radical elements of Russia is called, but then Kerensky insists on carrying on the war against Germany. Again the sequel - the social current roars a thunderous NO and sweeps on.

For more than three centuries the Russian peasantry had been waiting to recover the land, but Kerensky and the other Socialists contend that first of all one must elect a constituent assembly and pass appropriate legislation, and only then would it be possible to carry out the agrarian reforms. The mighty social hurricane says to the peasants: "You have waited long enough! Don't be fooled again. For whom and for what are you waiting? The land belongs to you now!"

In the same way, the broad mass of workers were resolved to take over the industries of the country and they too were cautioned to bide their time.

Every passing day brought in its wake new events. Time after time, attempts were made to check or divert this cosmic storm; but there was no power on Earth capable of controlling it. Let us observe for a moment what affects this potent storm brought to the city of Novorossiysk.

Kerensky's attempt to launch an offensive on the German front resulted in a moral and physical debacle. The entire front began to collapse, and these mighty events signaled Kerensky's doom. During the period of August, September and October, anyone with his eyes open could see what was taking place throughout Mother Russia; could see the pulse which would lead to colossal happenings. In every village, town and urban center and particularly in Petrograd and Moscow, one could sense this. In Petrograd itself the power structure had already separated into two parts: the government with Kerensky and the Duma at the head; and, paralleling it, the Soviets which were waxing stronger from day to day, along with the broad mass of workers, peasants and soldiers. Quite frequently now, these Soviets wielded more power than the Commissars of the Kerensky regime.

In Novorossiysk, which, though situated rather far from the center, had a dynamic revolutionary cadre, a movement liberated from the control of the Kerensky government became apparent

even before October. To be sure, the Soviet and similar organizations were officially conducted by the Kerensky regime, but in practice everything was in readiness for the expected revolt in the crucial center of Russia so that when it did occur, everything could be changed over to the new foundations of social co-operation without bloodshed.

Novorossiysk was prepared for any development and in this preparation our group played a substantial role. I can affirm with confidence that we even played the leading role. There were larger organizations in the city - Bolsheviks and Left Social-Revolutionaries - but our small, close-knit anarchist unit had a greater impact on the working class. Furthermore, the more enlightened members of the Bolsheviks and Left Social-Revolutionaries manifested a strong sympathy for the activities of our group. Thus, the constructive work of our Unit attracted sympathetic interest and help not only from the masses of workers but also among our so-called political adversaries.

When I returned from Kharkov with my two comrades, I submitted a report on my trip, pointing out that I saw no possibility of procuring more colleagues to help in our work and proposing that, if we were determined to achieve constructive results, we must do so with the forces now available to us.

Once again there emerged the question of finances, this time brought up by Comrade George, who had come with me from Kharkov. This, in turn, brought up the question of expropriation of course, but this time it didn't take us long to convince our new co-worker that our group had no intention of undertaking such steps, for we were striving to build a new life founded on social justice and did not feel we could build on this sort of foundation. This led to a series of meetings that lasted far into the night and continued for a solid week. In the course of these meetings, and springing from our discussions, there began to crystallize a picture of what our principal task should be.

We then decided that our first undertaking should be to agitate among the workers, urging them to confiscate all industry. Furthermore, they should organize in every factory and plant "internal committees," functioning very much as shop committees do among the more democratic unions in the U.S. But where a shop committee in the U.S. deals with simple economic activities, our internal committees were to fulfill quite a different function, for they were to enable the workers on the job to conduct industrial operations without the bosses.

We designated a special committee of three comrades to prepare a draft of a statute. Comrade Katya Garbova was considered a very competent worker and well equipped for such a task and Comrade Vanya Budnik and myself joined her. The following day, the committee met and Comrade Garbova presented an outline of the by-laws. After a brief discussion and a few corrections, we adopted the draft. It is now more than a half-century since that time and I do not have copies of that project and must therefore reproduce its contents from memory.

The title of our project in Russian was Ustav Komitetov Vnutrenovo Rasporyadka (Statutes for Interior Shop Committees) and its principal features or clauses were as follows:

(l) In every factory and shop, each faction would select a delegate, and these delegates would constitute an "Internal Affairs Committee," which would take over all functions related to the management of production and distribution and would, in addition, exercise administrative duties. Every element represented would conduct its own internal affairs and the General Committee possessed only the authority to coordinate all proposals stemming from the workers in the various departments.

(2) The committee was to elect a president and a secretary, who would be relieved of their regular jobs and take over the administrative functions.

(3) An "Economic Soviet" was to be organized, composed of two delegates from each factory or shop. This Soviet would have no executive powers, its task being limited to the coordination of work at the various points and the extension of assistance where it might be needed.

The Economic Soviet was also assigned the mission of collaborating with the Cooperative Movement, so that the latter might take over the finished products and exchange them for the raw materials required by the shops and the factories, as well as for the consumer goods needed by the workers and their families. In addition, this Soviet, with the aid of the Cooperatives, was directed to procure essential commodities for the population of the city.

(4) All organizations were to be built from the bottom upward. Each and every citizen was considered to be morally responsible in his job as well as in his private life. Thus, the new social order would be constructed on the basis of collective responsibility. No individual had a right to expect that anyone else would provide for him or work for him. This meant that every individual was to be the architect of his own life, and all persons acting in unison would fashion the new community, which would endeavor to expand the great social revolution.

(5) Taking into account the fact that there was no possibility in the immediate future of abolishing money as a medium of exchange, it was recommended that every worker, regardless of the nature of their employment, would receive 300 rubles a month in wages, plus 25% additional for every person whom he supported. In other words, equal compensation was to be introduced for all, from the unskilled worker to the head engineer; equal pay without distinction.

There were numerous other technical proposals pertaining to the "Internal Affairs Committees," but those cited above were the principal ones. The draft of the project was discussed for several days at meetings of our group. When it was finally adopted, we decided to call meetings of the various shops and plants, and to prepare the working masses for the new social order that seemed to permeate the atmosphere already. A keen sense of anticipation was prevalent all around us.

Our small group had proceeded this far in the flush of earnest enthusiasm for our great dream; now we were faced with the reality of implementing our ideas concretely. Three of the members of our group had taken part in trade union activity previously and had some experience with strikes and organizing. None of the rest of the group had any experience along these lines, so it became the task of the three of us with the experience to educate the rest of the group, by lectures and talks, until they had at least a rudimentary knowledge of the functions and workings of trade unions. They were willing learners and riding high on a wave of enthusiasm. They accepted immediately the most important premise we were operating with: that we, as anarchists, were not going out to help the people by building towers for them or by promising them a better social order. We were going forth to try to help them build a new society themselves. They, a collective of determined individuals, had to create for themselves a new society based on equality, freedom and social justice.

We decided to start our organizational chore with a large meeting in one of the cement factories. Since we were on good terms with the workers there the meeting was easily arranged in a few days. As it turned out, not only the workers of the factory and their families came, but they had also invited everyone from the administration and since such a large meeting couldn't be kept secret in the city, many activists from the various political sects and parties also attended. Many of them were simply curious to see what the small Anarchist group would accomplish. And, of course, there was an element of excitement too, a quality of the unknown, since no one

knew what the representatives of the central government would do or what their reaction would be to this attempt to destroy the principle of private property and to start building a new society.

The factory did not have a hall large enough to hold the crowd but it was ideally situated in a valley between two mountains, so the meeting was held in a field near the factory.

One of the active workers from the factory opened the meeting with a short talk, explaining the reason for the gathering, and then introduced our comrade Katya Garbova. She was an excellent speaker and proceeded to paint a graphic picture of the situation all over Russia, especially the dichotomy between the empty promises of the various political parties about freedom after the revolution and the reality - true in all of Russia, but particularly in St. Petersburg - which saw the political parties locked in a great struggle against each other, none interested in the welfare of the people, each interested only in seizing power for their own ends. In the meantime the Kerensky government was attempting to continue a war that was ruining the country.

She reminded them that they, the Russian people, had won the great social revolution and that now it was time for them to start to build a new and a free society. "It is for this reason and this reason only that we come to you today, to remind you that it is time that the workers started to think and actively to build that free society. If you do not take over the industries and become the masters of your own lives, the political parties will take over in your name and you will remain industrial slaves. It is up to you and only you can decide what to do. We did not come here to advise you what to do. Our only aim is to help you if you wish to attempt to start building a newer, freer form of society. We believe that, in order to do so, we must make for ourselves a completely new environment, in which a human being can live and function in freedom; only with such an approach will we be able to start reconstructing the art of living again."

She told them that we had a prospectus for their consideration and introduced me - I had prepared myself to present our suggestions. There was a moment of intense silence when Katya completed her impassioned plea and then an explosion of thousands of voices as the people gave Katya a standing ovation. Even some of the administration were on their feet cheering.

The following is the essence of my own speech:

"Since the brave and hungry women of Petrograd started to roll the great wheel of the revolution, many human lives have been lost and many false impressions have been promulgated. The world's current impression is that anarchists are only fit to throw bombs and are not fit for any constructive works. This misconception dates from the attempts of Karl Marx to spiritually destroy the great thinker and fighter for human rights, Mikhail Bakunin. These ideas are still pressed by the state socialists and others who wish to keep the human race in a fit state for exploitation.

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"I would like to make one more point before I present our prospectus. The situation all over Russia, with political parties warring with each other as to who will take power and control the lives of the people is not new to us. We have seen the same situation all over the world, in many lands. What is happening in Russia has happened before, particularly as regards the Social Revolutionary Party, which has always told the Russian peasantry that the land belongs to them and who have promised the people their dream will come true after the revolution. The revolution

has come and now they say that the peasantry must wait until a law is passed. Haven't we waited long enough already?

"The Social Democrats have always preached that the proletarians are the master class and some of them have even said that the factories and shops belong to the workers - again all empty promises.

"Our small anarchist group comes to you with a proposition. We think that enough has been destroyed by the revolution. We feel that the time has come for constructive work in our everyday lives to build a new and free society. We have been accused of being utopians and dreamers and I am glad to be considered so. What our accusers do not tell you is that we dreamers are ready at any time to try to start building that dream into a reality - that is what we came to you tonight to speak about."

I then read the prospectus for the takeover by the workers of the factories and shops all over the Novorossiysk region, and continued:

"I must tell you that the lines I have read to you will remain dead lines if we do not make this prospectus a milestone in our miserable lives. Change will only come if every one of us decides that he or she wants this change and is willing to work for it.

"There is one other important point and that is that we do not expect or depend on any political party or any other human being to do anything for us. The first step toward a new society is for each and every one of us to understand that we, the people, must do the work ourselves. Only we, working together, can bring about this utopian dream of a free society.

"Your factory is the first to be presented with this idea. In the coming weeks we will cover everyone in the other factories and shops and we hope that by the end of the month we will have an opinion by the workers on our prospectus. We would like to suggest that you call a meeting of everyone connected with your work and take up the matter of our prospectus. We would suggest that you try to do this without any outside influence, inviting only those involved with the factory. If you accept in principle our prospectus, we would suggest that the meeting elect two delegates to a conference to be called for the purpose of organizing an economic soviet, which would coordinate the work of the factories' Internal Shop Committees."

The enthusiasm was so great that everyone wanted to express his or her thoughts and it was after midnight when the meeting finally came to an end. The reactions were almost all positive and we were sure, when we left the meeting that we were on the right track.

The news of our plans went through the city by word of mouth like a tidal wave and by the next evening our small headquarters was packed with workers from the other shops and factories, all of them demanding that we come and speak to their meetings. The demand was so great and our resources so limited that we finally had to determine where to go next by lottery. It took nearly two weeks to complete the meetings and at every one of them the workers accepted our proposals and elected two delegates to the conference.

Our success soon began to worry the political higher-ups and the main Kerensky commissar invited a committee from our group to meet with him and asked for an explanation as to our intentions. Since we were on good terms with him we had no qualms about telling him flatly that we felt that we had the right to carry on our propaganda and educate the workers and we also told him that if the workers did decide to take over the means of production, we were prepared to help them in any way we could. We advised him not to interfere and reminded him that the Kerensky government had plenty of trouble already with Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

At the next meeting of the political soviet, an item regarding our activities was placed on the agenda that resulted in a very hot debate. The various opponents of the Kerensky regime joined in defending our activities but our own group had already resolved not to take any part in the debate. At the end of it the main commissar took the floor and made a statement to the effect that he felt the question was outside the sphere of jurisdiction of the soviet. He stated that we had broken no laws yet and had the same right as any other group to carry on educational activities. It would seem from this that the commissar had decided to accept our advice and we came out of the meeting with a political victory.

But in the meantime rumors reached us that a good part of the Bolshevik leadership was unhappy with our activities and they were instructing those of the workers who were party members to try to discourage the workers from implementing our ideas. None of this worried us particularly since we knew already that the high wave of enthusiasm among the workers had worked over into even the Bolshevik ranks and many of them were already advocating our plan.

The day of the conference fell in mid-September when the air of Russian was already charged with discontent and so the revolutionary spirit was high as we opened the conference. One after another the assembled delegates reported that the meetings of their factories and shops had accepted our prospectus and that they were instructed by their meetings to take part in organizing a regional economic soviet of the internal factory and shop committees. From the reports of the delegates it was obvious that spirits were very high and that the workers were ready and eager to start this new experience.

As is often the case in such situations, emotions dominated logic and the workers were even ready to fight and die for the idea at this time. But our group didn't look for physical sacrifices. Our sole aim was to develop a constructive approach toward a new life. We were also worried about the attitude of the Kerensky government that still held the power around us. If triggered, they could still turn the whole situation into a blood bath.

With this in mind, we had a hurried conference and came to the understanding that, since the workers accepted our prospectus as the base for taking over the industries, we should recommend that the conference elect a tentative committee to help organize and elect the internal shop committees. These committees were to be instructed that, without taking over the actual factory or shop, they should begin learning all they could about the practical operation of their sections so that when the moment arrived and the management refused to cooperate with us, we would be able to function and continue the work without them.

Two of our group presented this view, noting that while we might like to act immediately, we needed more knowledge of the practical aspects of running the industries involved and also had to watch the political situation in order to avoid unnecessary trouble. This was somewhat disappointing to some of the delegates who wished to act immediately but after some discussion our recommendations were accepted and a tentative committee of fifteen delegates was elected.

It seemed almost a miracle to us that such a thing could occur in Novorossiysk in 1917. The great majority of these workers came from peasant backgrounds and very few of them had any education but they instinctively grasped the social ideas in ways that more sophisticated peoples might not have. Even the driving force, our small anarchist group, did not have the same faith in this dream that they did. When, after half a century, I go over these events in my mind, I am still amazed how these people, without knowledge or experience, were able to grasp these ideas so quickly and apply them so well.

I cannot point to the exact time when the ”miracle” began to happen. Certainly our two months of educational work had some effect - talking to the workers, explaining to them what was going on all over Russia, stressing the magnificent fact of the great Russian social revolution which had destroyed the foundations of the capitalist society, and the possibilities now available for the workers to start building a new and free society based on justice and equality.

We also warned them that they could not expect anyone to do this for them - they had to remember from their own experiences that all the promises of political parties had never brought about any concrete results for the workers, and if they seriously wanted a change in their social system, they would have to make the change themselves and become thoroughly and completely the masters of their own destiny.

We told them that our small group would work with them and were willing to be of help by way of advice, but only advice. All these large assemblies, factory meetings, group consultations and individual talks during this two month period prepared the way for the events of October, 1917. By this time the workers were theoretically ready to take over the shops and factories of the city.

On the first of October, all the factories and shops elected their committees and the enthusiasm was so great that everyone wanted to serve on the committees, not because of any hope of extra privilege, but because they all felt they could serve best. We saw as our job the problem of convincing the workers that good intentions alone would not solve the problems we could expect and spoke out to convince them to elect those with knowledge, skills and experience that would be most useful in the management of their sections. The workers took to this idea readily and the committees were elected in a very short time and began planning for the time when they could take over their sections.

I was delegated to the larger cement factory, with over a thousand workers, to help them set up elections for section delegates to their internal shop committee. I found immediately that the workers had taken our talks to heart and had serious intentions of fulfilling their aims to become the true masters of their own lives.

The first election was for the section delegate from the large group - several hundred workers - who mined stone from which the cement was produced. To supervise this section, a good knowledge of geology was necessary and formerly a geologist had done this job. Now the workers had to elect one of their own to take over. I was afraid at first that some kind of competition would arise, but to my surprise this wasn’t the case. When the nominations for section delegates were opened, one of the older workers stood up and said, ”We have among us quite a few comrades who have worked for many years here and all of us know quite well how to carry on the practical work, but we are not looking to compete with each other, because we are all equal now. We feel between us that Comrade Karpov is the person to be the section delegate in the Internal Shop Committee, as we think he knows much more than citizen Lavrov, the managing engineer.”

The workers replied unanimously for Karpov and he stood up - a man with a long beard who looked like a typical peasant and had a broad smile on his face. He said, ”If you comrades think I am fit for this important position, I will accept and will try my best to do a good job. I thank you all for your trust in me.”

They went through the same sort of election in the other groups: carpenters, electricians, plumbers, transportation, etc. In one section, a competition developed with a young worker involved who had no real experience. Gently and without animosity, a few workers from the section took the floor and, in a friendly way, explained to the young man that this was not a

matter of personal desire or ambition. Experience was needed to manage the section work and when they were through the young worker excused himself for taking up this valuable time and admitted that he had been wrong.

The last section to hold elections was perhaps the most important, since it contained those who ran the very complicated machinery, the chemical laboratory and the main offices and was comprised mostly of highly trained people. We were all wondering how they would react to this takeover. The machinery department nominated a young mechanic who was deeply involved with his work and who was also of a liberal turn of mind. He was happy to accept the nomination. The same sort of thing happened in the chemical laboratory only there it was an older worker who was elected, one who had worked there a long time and was quite familiar with all the routine work of the lab.

This left only the administration, a large set of offices with a big staff, which was, as the workers put it, the "nest" of the counter-revolution. We were again surprised to find, when we arrived for their meeting, that the entire staff was assembled, except for one girl who was planning to leave to go back to her parents. Even the chief engineer and administrator was present. Before we opened the meeting, he asked permission to address the gathering and said, "I don't know if I can take part in the general work of the factory according to your rules and regulations. I know that as administrator, I had to fulfill some unpleasant functions on behalf of the owners of the factory on occasion, but I think that in general I was on good terms with most of the workers. I have no place to go and am willing to be of any help that I can. I don't expect any privileges and will work for the same wage that everyone else gets. I think I could be of some help as general advisor to the committee. At any rate, I would like to ask you to please not rush my family too quickly, but give them some time to get adjusted to life under the new conditions."

And so this election also went very smoothly and the Internal Shop Committee turned out to be a very promising group of people and I could see that there would be no trouble in that factory. Even so I was quite nervous the next day at the first meeting of the Internal Shop Committee. I was still not sure how yesterday's plain workers would act in their new positions. Without any final authority, everything would have to be approached from the viewpoint of mutual aid philosophy.

The first question to be considered was the election of a chairman and next, of course, was the coordination of the work of this large factory. It was almost as though they had rehearsed the whole thing, it went so smoothly. When it came to the election of a chairman and delegates, one of the workers would stand up, express his opinion and recommend the person he thought most qualified by knowledge, character and experience and, without any commotion, this person would usually accept and be elected.

The newly-elected chairman opened the meeting and suggested that each section delegate make a report on his section as to how work was progressing and bring up any changes he felt should be made. It certainly did not sound like a meeting of plain workers, but like a conference of specialists as these former industrial slaves proceeded in an efficient fashion to delve straight into the technical problems of their jobs.

I went each day to that factory. Within about two weeks everyone in the factory had adjusted themselves to the new situation and work of the factory was proceeding as before with no interruption visible. It was amusing when viewed from the outside. In the offices the old administration still technically managed the operation but they were now only a meaningless facade as inside the factory or shop the sharp eyes of the committees and the workers themselves ran

everything. The administrators could see and feel what was coming but they were powerless to do anything about it since the workers officially obeyed all administrative orders.

There were a few complaints from Kerensky's followers but Kerensky's chief commissar could do nothing since no one was breaking any laws, so we were able to continue our planning and training. We knew that the workers would sacrifice anything to make a success of this new enterprise but we also knew that operating large industries, such as the cement factories and the large oil refinery, required more than good will and good intentions. Many of the operations were controlled by engineers and technicians who were in key positions and could easily stop everything. In order to test out the feelings of these technicians, a special committee of three went to one of the cement factories and had a "heart-to-heart" talk with the chief engineer who was managing the place.

He was a liberal person and knew what was coming soon so we were able to talk openly with him. We told him that, according to the information we had, the Kerensky government would be overthrown shortly and this could result in a blood bath and possibly even civil war. We told him bluntly that it was our intention to organize an economic soviet which would be a nerve center for all the industries in the area and that the industries themselves, including his own factory, would be taken over by the workers. We asked him straight-out what his own reactions would be to this take over and also asked him to transmit our message to the rest of the administration and to assure them that those who chose to remain on the job and accept the conditions of equality that would be set would be most welcome to join with us in this new life and that further, none of them would be molested for the "sin" of having been part of the administration. They would undoubtedly lose some of their special privileges but they would be in a position of complete equality with the other workers in the plant. We asked him to call a meeting of the white-collar workers and discuss this situation with them, in order to give anyone who wished to leave plenty of time to do so.

We received a call from him the next day and he informed us that they had had their meeting and, with the exception of one girl who wished to return to her home in another province, everyone had fully accepted the offer and would remain on their jobs. This was a great relief to us and in a few weeks' time we had similar replies from the administrations at the other factories.

Our estimates of the coming storm had been quite good and our period of tense waiting was quickly coming to an end. Stormy October was upon us and with it the storm of revolution was again beginning to roll over Russia. Every day we received more and more news of wilder and wilder meetings all over Russia and we could feel the storm bearing down upon us. In Novorossiysk the political soviet met almost every day. The Kerensky forces were fighting off attacks but were becoming daily weaker and it was obvious to all that the days of their power were coming to an end.

Finally the historic day arrived and the radio brought us the news of the uprising in Moscow and the fall of the Kerensky government.

The whole political situation was very tense. Both fronts were looking for an opportunity to attack. The Kerensky forces were very much on the defensive but the Bolsheviks, Left Social Revolutionaries and Maximalists, while attacking, were not quite ready to take over the local government so for a short time it was only a verbal fight, finally culminating in a motion at the political soviet for new elections. This motion was accepted with a small majority and signaled the end of the Kerensky regime in Novorossiysk.

In the meantime the committee of fifteen had contacted every Internal Shop Committee and asked them to call a special meeting for the purpose of electing two delegates to the economic soviet's first meeting where the question of taking over the industries of our province would be considered.

While the political parties were still busy with the elections to the political soviet, the newly elected delegates to the economic soviet opened their historic first meeting. After the formal procedures were over, our comrade Katya Garbova took the floor and spoke as follows:

"We are not interested in politics so I hope we can leave the political speeches to next week when the new political soviet has its first meeting. I think that everyone here knows the main purpose of this meeting and I have no intention of repeating what we have spoken of for the past few months. I should like to note that this is a very important day for the working people - that is if you are ready and willing to take over the factories and shops and become at last the masters of your own destiny. If you are ready to accept this you will walk out of this meeting as builders of a new society."

Comrade Katya was not able to finish her speech for, like a roaring wave, the answer came back to her from hundreds of human voices all over the hall: "We are ready!" Every one of the delegates wanted to assure her they were ready to fight to the death to win their aims and it took some time to quiet the assembly down.

Katya then said:

"I can see that the conference of the economic soviet is ready and willing to act for the aims for which we have assembled here today. I would like to propose the following resolution: 'We, the peoples of Novorossiysk region, accepting the aims of the great Russian social revolution, hereby abolish every form of exploitation of human being over human being and start now to build a free society based on full equality for everyone. Since we are abolishing exploitation, we are taking over every means of production; to the workers the factories and the shops and to the peasants the land. Everyone who wishes to participate is invited to become an equal member. Everyone who is able to work and wants to live in our community will have to take part in constructive work to help themselves and others, including those who cannot help themselves.'

"To accomplish this, I recommend to the conference that we accept the prospectus that was circulated in the factories and shops and that we now have in ballot form before us, as a foundation for our ideas. We recommend also that the economic soviet take no part in politics. The economic soviet has no power, political or otherwise; it functions only to advise and recommend with the aim of coordination of necessary economic life. Only the workers in their places of work have the full moral and physical right to decide what to do in the realms of their work and life.

"We recommend that a committee of five be elected, with the duty of helping to coordinate organizational work and that the offices for all the activities of the economic soviet be located in the building where the political soviet has its offices.

"To conclude, I would like to say that, since the political soviet at their last meeting, did not see fit to officially proclaim the beginning of the October revolution, we have the opportunity to do so today at our conference and I would like to ask everyone to stand and sing the funeral march in memory of those who fell in battle. We have the opportunity today to proclaim the sunrise of a new society."

There were over 200 workers at the conference and as they stood to sing the funeral march, you could see the determination in their eyes and the knowledge of a way of life the rest of the world had not yet comprehended.

So the conference of the economic soviet accomplished its aim and with a new spirit the delegates walked from the hall.

The news that the economic soviet had decided to take over all the factories and shops spread like wildfire through the city and of course reached the administration of the factories and shops.

It was a stormy night for the members of our group and we were all worried about what the next day might bring. We spread ourselves out as completely as possible throughout the various shops and factories to see what would happen and how the workers would act.

I personally went to the larger cement factory. When I arrived, I found no excitement; the whole place was functioning as if nothing had happened. When I went into the office of the Internal Shop Committee, the chairman and secretary greeted me with bright smiles and told me that everything had gone smoothly and the engineer-manager of the factory had come to them and told them that things were in good order all over the factory. He had requested a meeting with the Committee, so as to report to them on the condition of the factory and acquaint them with what would be necessary to keep up production.

It was the same all over the city. When the Internal Shop Committees called special meetings and invited the management to attend, these administrators had already accepted the idea and as a gesture to the new order, they solemnly declared their cooperation. And now we would see what the future held in store for us.

"We, the peoples of Novorossiysk region, accepting the aims of the great Russian social revolution, hereby abolish every form of exploitation of human being over human being and start now to build a free society based on full equality for everyone."

"We also warned them that they could not expect anyone to do this for them - they had to remember from their own experiences that all the promises of political parties had never brought about any concrete results for the workers, and if they seriously wanted a change in their social system, they would have to make the change themselves and become thoroughly and completely the masters of their own destiny."

"Comrade Katya was not able to finish her speech for, like a roaring wave, the answer came back to her from hundreds of human voices all over the hall: "We are ready!" Every one of the delegates wanted to assure her they were ready to fight to the death to win their aims and it took some time to quiet the assembly down."

I should like to remark at this point that attempts were made at two other places to organize the working masses in the same fashion as was done in Novorossiysk. An endeavor was attempted in the Donetz area among the coal miners, but before it got underway the Don Cossacks attacked the group and murdered the principal organizer, Comrade Konev. This act undermined the organization of economic soviets from the beginning.

The same situation was duplicated in Siberia, again among the coal miners. In this instance, a rebellion broke out among the Czechoslovak armed forces that happened to be located there. The outcome was that both experiments were liquidated at the very start through the murder of the leaders and organizers. And now let us return to the events in Novorossiysk.

Shortly after our plan was adopted, elections were held at which each group elected two delegates to the economic soviet. Immediately afterwards the delegates held a conference and a group of delegates was selected whose task was to organize the practical work of the soviet. Two or three days later, we conducted a meeting at which committees were selected for the purpose of coordinating certain projects.

We then proceeded to invite spokesmen from the cooperative movement and arrived at an understanding with them that the cooperatives would take over the task of providing and distributing the essential consumer goods to the entire population of the city. They were also to assume responsibility for distributing the products that would be made in the factories and shops of the city.

In spite of the fact that there were a number of old Bolsheviks among the active leaders of the cooperative movement, the former were quite eager to collaborate with us and the entire idea of an economic soviet seemed to meet with their favor.

It was not long before the political soviet became little more than a hollow rubber stamp. Not only the workers, but also the entire population of the city in general began to direct their interests toward our economic soviet. It goes without saying that this turn of events was not entirely to the liking of some of the activists in the political soviet.

One episode in particular will help to illustrate this development. As soon as the representatives of the Kerensky regime were deposed, a Red Guard was organized, whose function was the defense of the city. It consisted of workers who were expected to devote a certain number of hours daily to the security of the community.

Shortly after the political soviet had taken over the authority in the city, it had closed down and sealed off the banks in the city. At the same time, however, they had forgotten to withdraw funds for the daily needs of the community and for essential activities that required financial outlays.

The security of these banks was of course placed in the hands of the Red Guards and, shortly after the second revolution, when a delegation from the political soviet came to the bank with an official authorization to remove a certain sum of money, the Red Guards refused to admit the delegation unless they were accompanied by a representative of the economic soviet. The delegation was greatly offended by this requirement, but there was no way around it and finally they had to appeal to the economic soviet. Only when a spokesman for the economic soviet arrived at the bank did the Red Guards allow the vaults to be opened and the required sum of money withdrawn.

This incident produced deep resentment among some of the Bolsheviks, but the majority of the active leaders among them understood the matter and realized that the small anarchist group possessed more influence than they did. Furthermore, they realized that this prestige was not achieved through political speeches and promises, but through a healthy sense of realism, which almost overnight had transformed the worker into a builder and shaper of his own life and the lives of his fellow human beings. Indeed, a certain segment of the old-time Bolsheviks came to realize that the economic soviet was engaged in a useful and constructive activity and was developing the class-consciousness of the working masses.

Even the engineers, technicians, bookkeepers, managers and other administrative personnel who remained at their posts cooperated with the internal affairs committee. But the fact that the economic soviet resolved to introduce equal pay for all made the deepest impression on the laboring masses. It heightened their courage and they began to feel like real human beings for the first time. "Equality" was transformed from an ephemeral abstraction without much real meaning to them into a reality. All, from common laborer to engineer, received equal compensation and, in addition, all special privileges were abolished except for children and the sick.

I can safely affirm that at that particular moment the utopia of a free society began to achieve fulfillment in real life. As one of the initiators and as an active participant in this effort, I enjoyed

the opportunity, day after day, of observing the entire field of action. I could scarcely believe my eyes at times; how the plain workers of yesterday were constructing their new tomorrow today.

There were two large cement factories in Novorossiysk, employing thousands of workers, both quite modern and equipped with complex machinery. On one occasion I happened to speak to one of the highly paid engineers who had remained at his post even though we knew that he was descended from the old aristocracy and was highly conservative in his thinking. It must have been quite difficult for him to adjust to the new order of things. In former days, for instance, he had an automobile and chauffeur to himself. Now, when he wished to travel somewhere, he was obliged to turn to the internal affairs committee to justify his use of an automobile.

When I spoke to him (several months after the workers had taken over the industry) he said to me: "Comrade Yelensky, I have been an engineer for a long time and I have worked with ordinary laborers all that time, but I never knew or suspected that they possessed such creative power. These plain workingmen are able to manage competently the entire, complex mechanism of the shops and factories, and even if they make minor mistakes, it does not matter too much. We, the engineers, have become mere co-workers among the great mass of workers. What sort of magic have you implanted in the heads and hearts of this great mass of workers to have brought forth from them their creative power? I observe, and my eyes cannot believe what I see. To me, this constitutes a great social and technological miracle."

Indeed it was a kind of moral and spiritual miracle. With the exception of a very small minority, the entire population of Novorossiysk seemed highly pleased. The few who had previously enjoyed special privileges and lived in luxury were naturally unhappy over such a radical transformation in their way of life, though of course they had the same right as everyone to obtain an equal share of everything. In general however, the townspeople reacted well to the new situation. It is interesting to note that drunkenness almost totally disappeared, and if occasionally one did see a drunken person on the streets, his fellow townsmen would attempt to talk to him and persuade him that in times like these it was a disgrace for anyone to become intoxicated. The expression "in times like these" acquired a new and profound significance for the majority of the population. A sense of collective responsibility prevailed and the new social situation created new relationships between individuals and the larger community.

Thefts and robberies also nearly completely disappeared from the city. We were beginning to believe that we could proceed peacefully with our task of constructing a new and freer world. Unfortunately our dreams collided with reality, and black clouds began to appear on the horizon.

I do not recall precisely whether it was in December of 1917 or January of 1918 when news reached us that General Kornilov, with a large contingent of officers and cadets, was descending upon Krasnodar and was mobilizing the Kuban Cossacks.

At any rate, shortly thereafter Kornilov opened up the first front of the Civil War. He made an attempt to break through to Novorossiysk in order to gain an outlet to the Black Sea.

When this depressing information reached us, the Economic Soviet called a mass meeting which was attended by a workers' delegation from Krasnodar, who presented a report concerning Kornilov's movements.

As soon as the report was heard, a stormy demonstration took place, after which a motion was presented that all workers of the two soviets should be armed and advance to the front to smash Kornilov and his group of officers. This proposal, made at the height of enthusiasm, was readily adopted. Before long however, we reflected that, if everyone were to move to the front there would be no one left to protect the city itself. With this in mind, the proposal was modified to the

effect that only those with previous military service would go. There were a total of about 200 men in that category, among them a former army officer who was elected Commander of the Red Guard. We had an ample supply of weapons and ammunition for the time being and within two or three days were able to muster a small army. At about the same time we were reinforced by a contingent of sailors who had come down from central Russia. When the learned that Kornilov had cut railroad communications they decided to join our forces.

A few days later our military unit fought its first skirmish at the front and succeeded in routing Kornilov's bands. However, to our sorrow, we lost our young commanding officer and the soldiers had to fight without leadership. The body of the young officer, the first victim in this segment of the war, was brought to Novorossiysk where an imposing funeral was held, attended by several thousand persons. Following a number of inspiring speeches, the gathering took an oath not to rest until the murderers of this young man were wiped out.

It had now become quite clear to our group that we were facing a bitter and trying struggle. We also realized that we could expect no substantial assistance from central Russia, as the Civil War was now spreading throughout the land.

We invited several Bolsheviks and Left Social Revolutionaries who had maintained friendly relations with us to one of our meetings and discussed strategy with them for the developing military situation. It was agreed that we must undertake the organization of a powerful Red Guard, since otherwise there was no way of preventing Kornilov and his men from reaching our city and shattering everything we had built up. This led to the question of how we could procure additional weapons and other war material. We were informed that in nearby Trebizond, in Turkey (now known as Trabzond), which had been occupied by the Russian army during the war, there were sufficient army supplies for a substantial force.

Consequently, a general assembly of both Soviets was called, at which the need for building a strong Red Guard was discussed. Its principal objective would be to offer resistance to Kornilov's troops, who were operating along the railroad line, thus cutting us off from central Russia. After a lengthy debate, our group proposed a motion that compulsory mobilization should not be proclaimed, but that instead we should organize mass gatherings and enlighten the workers concerning the situation. The proposal was accepted and the very next day several large meetings were held at which a large number of workers joined the Red Guard and prepared to confront the enemy.

At the same time, the two Soviets decided to dispatch a two-man committee to Trebizond to secure arms. For this purpose, one delegate from each soviet was chosen. The Political Soviet selected a dockworker and I was delegated to represent the Economic Soviet.

There was an ample supply of ships in the port of Novorossiysk, as well as a small war vessel. We selected three ships, with the war vessel as escort. There was no shortage of dockworkers, but a crew of workers was needed to haul the material to the wharf, where longshoremen would load it aboard the ships. We finally came up with the idea of informing surrounding Cossack villages that anyone traveling with us to Trebizond and helping with the labor until the ships were loaded would be permitted to bring back a wagon and two horses. We were able to make this promise because we knew that at our destination there were thousands of horses that had been abandoned when the Russian army left Turkey. It was only a few days before we had a larger contingency of laborers than we needed, so, early in February, 1918, the three ships with their escorting naval vessel set sail.

We arrived in Trebizond the following day. There was no actual harbor there, so the ships had to remain anchored some distance from shore, while we reached the town by launch.

A tragic scene awaited us. Gathered at the water's edge were several thousand Armenian refugees, who were fleeing in terror from the Turks and were in danger of being slaughtered. We also found that we had little time to spare, as the Soviet Government, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, was required to evacuate the city of Trebizond, with a deadline ending three days following our arrival. By this time, the Turkish army was already not far from the city.

Immediately after our arrival, we went to the local Soviet, which had been apprised of our visit. We procured the necessary information there, obtained a team of horses and went off to inspect the arsenals at the military base. We were fortunately able to obtain all the material we needed and promptly returned to the ships where the workers awaited us. We made arrangements to load the ships the following day and the other delegate and myself returned to the local Soviet where we spent the night.

Early the following morning we rode out to the military base where we were to meet the workers. We encountered some of them on the way, in their new wagons and, as we approached the base, found that some of the supplies hauled in these wagons had already been loaded aboard the ships.

At the base itself, we found that an agitated group was forming. It turned out that they had located several crates containing revolvers and some outsiders already had axes in their hands and were breaking open the crates. We finally had to resort to our automatic pistols to force this gang to leave the arsenal. In the meantime the task of loading ammunition and other essential supplies went ahead.

Moving about from one munitions dump to another, we suddenly heard a shattering explosion. Instinctively, we looked up and found that not far away from our position, one of the ammunition dumps had been blown sky-high. A series of similar explosions followed in rapid succession. A total of about twenty of these dumps went up in smoke and all around us the air was an inferno, filled with cannonballs and shrapnel flying in all directions.

My horse was apparently a battle veteran because as soon as he sensed the danger about him, he sped away like a bullet. To this day, I'm not sure how I managed to hang on during that wild gallop. He dashed at a dead run through rough country and streams, with shot falling all around us. To our great good fortune, my companion and myself, as well as both the horses, came through intact.

About ten miles from the center of it all, finally out of range of the bursts, we came to a halt. Shortly afterwards some of our people began arriving, a few of them suffering from wounds. Presently doctors and medics from the Turkish army arrived and, in addition, a military kitchen was set up nearby.

The explosions and tumult lasted throughout the night, finally quieting down early the following morning. At dawn we began moving back toward the ship. There was not a trace left of the military base, but to our great relief, all our companions survived. Unfortunately, the Armenian refugees paid dearly for this episode - hundreds of them were slaughtered and many more wounded. It was difficult to determine who was responsible for this misfortune. A considerable suspicion was cast upon the Turkish army itself, which seemingly disliked the idea of sacrificing its munitions for the sake of combating Kornilov's bands.

That day we managed to load aboard the ships everything we could salvage that remained intact. In addition, we took along as many of the Armenian refugees as we could carry and sailed back to Novorossiysk, where our comrades were convinced we must have perished in the terrific explosions.

It is no exaggeration to state that the civil war broke out on the doorstep of Novorossiysk. We were the very first to offer effective resistance to the attempts to restore Czarism and all the terrors connected with it. Naturally this situation created numerous difficulties and brought with it complications in the new social order which we had brought about. To make matters worse, we were virtually cut off from contact with central Russia, because Kornilov's roving gangs frequently severed the railroad lines and confiscated products and equipment of all kinds which were being shipped to Novorossiysk. Despite this trying situation, the courage of the working masses at large did not falter. On the contrary, the more threatening the situation became, the more courage and tenacity they displayed.

I will describe three incidents which illustrate the manner in which the workers, with only their own resources, contrived to meet and solve their pressing problems.

With a population of 70,000, the city required huge quantities of vital commodities. The Black Sea provided a sufficient supply of fish. Outside of this we had on hand several million buckets of wine and thousands of tons of cement, neither of which, in themselves, were suitable for feeding a large population.

In the lives of individuals, as in nations, unforeseen events often provide an answer to drastic situations. Something of that nature happened with us. We were a very small group and everyone was so submerged in immediate needs and actions that there was little time for thought and reflection. However, on one occasion, as our group was seated around a table discussing the food situation, a sudden thought occurred to us. We recalled that Novorossiysk was a major military base for the Turkish front and located in the large harbor area of the city was a huge elevator. In addition, there were about a hundred large warehouses scattered about the port, capable of storing hundreds of railroad car loads of supplies. Our group immediately decided to call a special meeting of the Economic Soviet to propose organization of a committee for the purpose of inspecting the elevator and warehouses. This task was accomplished within a week and the results were quite favorably surprising. We managed to locate large stocks of wheat, sugar, canned goods and agricultural implements, as well as a considerable stock of ammunition. In a word, we had discovered a veritable treasure.

We spread the word among the surrounding villages that we had certain products on hand to exchange for fresh farm products. At first the Cossacks viewed our offer with a certain suspicion and brought in only modest quantities of foodstuffs. However, when they realized that we had no intention of deceiving them, they began bringing in much larger supplies of fresh fruits and vegetables. If any item was in short supply, we would delegate committees to go out to the villages and barter our manufactured goods for the needed foodstuffs.

This spirit of initiative manifested itself most strikingly in the cement factories. Production was in full swing and several of the smaller Turkish vessels approached our harbor to obtain some badly-needed foreign currency and the Turks also promised to provide merchandise urgently needed by our workers.

The most pressing need was for lumber to manufacture barrels, because at that time it was customary in Russian to pack cement in special containers. Things finally reached such a state that, the entire operation in the plants would have to stop. To be sure, we knew where such

lumber could be obtained, but the question was how to get there. Railroad transportation was out of the question because of the civil war raging over so many areas of the country, and, to purchase such lumber, ready cash was necessary.

At a special meeting conducted by the two cement plants, an enlarged committee was selected, which was to take charge of this entire project. It was resolved that this committee should take with it ready cash and load one ship with cement, so that, in the event the currency was not acceptable, they could barter the cement for lumber. The ship was supposed to pass through the Black Sea and enter the Sea of Azov at a suitable port, where it would be possible to transfer the cement to wagons and haul it by freight to an appropriate spot so that the barter transaction could be affected.

The ordeal which the members of this committee had to endure before they arrived at their destination is a story in itself. Six long weeks passed by and we had almost abandoned hope of seeing our comrades again. We were nearly certain that they had perished in the tempest of the civil war. You can imagine our great joy when one day the ship returned to port, loaded with timber. The faces of the workers glowed with pride; they were exultant at the thought that free people could achieve such wonders under the most grueling conditions. To my mind came the famous saying by Bakunin: "The spirit of destruction is the spirit of construction." We had smashed the chains which had for so long spiritually bound the creative worker; for, as soon as the laborer sensed his freedom, he became a builder of his social life, no matter how brief the duration. Yet it is an undeniable fact that when a human being becomes an autonomous builder, a molder of his own existence, then there is engendered in him an attitude of enlightened concern for himself and his fellow man. He becomes, in the fullest sense, a self-conscious humanitarian human being.

In spite of all these obstacles - and there was never any dearth of them - there was no feeling of disappointment in the air. One could sense in the atmosphere that there was no turning back, that we must march forward. Apart from our local problems, we began to feel the effects of the "peace treaty" which the Bolsheviks had concluded with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk. The Germans were beginning to occupy the Ukraine and the city of Odessa was taken over by the Austrians. As a result the revolutionary elements were obliged to evacuate those territories and a considerable number of them made their way to Novorossiysk.

We had one temporary stroke of good fortune when the organization of the White army came under the leadership of General Denikin and that was that Kornilov and his bands gave up the Kuban area. As a consequence, we recovered the railroad routes and a majority of the active workers who had come in as refugees from Odessa left Novorossiysk.

Before the withdrawal of Kornilov's gang, our Red Guard had captured a whole trainload of older officers and cadets. Some of the latter were mere boys who were frightened to death when they were brought to Novorossiysk. They were our first prisoners and of course the question arose as to what we should do with them. We finally decided it would be prudent not to lodge them in prison cells but instead to house them temporarily in a big hall where the Economic Soviet had its sessions. This building was the former residence of the Governor of the Province. We placed them there and gave them a good meal and, inasmuch as we had no genuine tribunal, the two Soviets designated committees which were to jointly determine the fate of these captives.

The following day these committees met and it was here that we had our first clash with the Bolsheviks. They wanted to exploit the prisoners as a means of winning the confidence of the

workers and gaining more control over them. Kornilov had executed several captured Red Guards and the Bolsheviks wanted to retaliate and, at the same time, seize more power.

Our group had no illusions about the aims of the Bolsheviks and we immediately issued a statement of principles, affirming that we would not stoop to the tactics of Kornilov. We declared further that, since these captives no longer possessed any weapons and we could not know of a certainty whether they actively participated in Kornilov's campaign, the death penalty was out of the question - particularly since some of the captives were mere children.

We proposed that the young cadets should be returned to their parents and the older officers retained as prisoners of war. Our proposal created considerable ill-will and bitterness in the heated debates but, after a lengthy session, the workers, and even a portion of the Bolsheviks, supported our proposal.

We sent the young cadets back to their parents but the officers suffered a dire fate. When the Black Sea fleet returned some months later to Novorossiysk, a group of sailors from one of the war vessels kidnapped them late at night, placed them all on a barge and drowned them. We had a suspicion that this was done with the help of the local Bolsheviks.

Following this event, we began to feel, in more ways than one, the pressure being exerted by the more fanatical Bolsheviks, and realized that we must be constantly alert, regardless of the fact that the great mass of workers were on our side and that the economic life of the community was proceeding at a normal and orderly pace as a consequence of the revolution itself. It became evident, following the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, that the Bolsheviks were seeing a chance to seize total power as they had done in the rest of the country. Yet at the same time, even the most extreme Bolsheviks had become aware of the fact that our small Anarchist group had created a situation where the workers felt that they were the molders of theirsocial-economic life and these workers would not easily yield the opportunity given them for a new and freer existence.

We began to feel more and more the tension in the air. In addition to the Brest-Litovsk treaty, the Ukraine and the Crimea were occupied by German and Austrian military forces, and, with the help and instigation of the Germans, men such as Skoropadsky and Petlura and others formed national regimes in the Ukraine. As a result, a large part of the population was forced to evacuate these areas, and a good proportion of them made their way to Novorossiysk and this was scarcely a source of comfort to us.

These evacuees were a very special element. They had acquired nomadic habits and very few of them were inclined to engage in any constructive work. They were the product of the destructive forces which a revolutionary situation often loosens. They were, to be sure, inspired at heart by revolutionary sentiments, and a great many of them were doubtless prepared to sacrifice their lives for the revolution; but when it came to the difficult, day-to-day job of fashioning a new life, they were totally lacking in the capacity such an effort required. This phenomenon could be observed among various segments of the population even before the great Russian revolution.

Although Novorossiysk received more than its share of these displaced persons, we managed to exert our strength and maneuver things in such a way that this new element could not undermine our constructive labors, nor did we permit the Bolsheviks to exploit this difficult situation. The only thing the Bolsheviks were able to do was to dispatch a delegation to Moscow which was to bring them back proper instructions, as well as assistance.

As if we did not have enough trouble, a still more pressing problem came down upon us. Following the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans, the Bolsheviks were required, according to the terms of the pact, to surrender the Black Sea fleet to Germany. The base for this fleet was

in Sebastopol in the Crimea. Reports began reaching us from there to the effect that the crew members had adopted resolutions against turning over the ships to the Germans. Instead, they intended to make for the port of Novorossiysk. This development posed a very difficult problem for us.

In the course of the first World War, there was an official ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages, and this prohibition remained in effect during the revolution. However, as is usually the case, those really intent on obtaining alcohol usually found a way to do so. In Novorossiysk and the surrounding area particularly, there was a considerable production of wine, and for miles around the city one could find vineyards, both large and small; so that revolution or no revolution, the grapes grew and wine was produced.

The larger and more responsible vintners kept literally millions of buckets of wine in their cellars, but there were some who were anxious to do a little business and they of course turned to what amounted to bootlegging. The result was that, after the arrival of the evacuees, one found more and more drunken persons on the streets. In some instances it was necessary to resort to rather drastic means to control the situation, since along with the evacuees had arrived agents to engage in provocation and espionage - men from Denikin's army.

At one of its sessions, our group discussed what steps to take about this alarming increase in drunkenness, and also what to do in the event we were able to seize some of Denikin's agents. But the most pressing problem was the Black Sea fleet; that is, what to do when it reached our harbor, where there was such an abundance of alcohol available. It was feared that the fleet, with its tens of thousands of sailors, could wreak havoc with our entire constructive labor.

After a lengthy discussion, we decided to call a gathering of the two Soviets and there introduce a motion that a special commission should be organized to stage a search for the wine and whiskey know to be on hand, and to destroy all stocks thus located.

Two or three days later, the combined meeting of the Soviets was held and even the Bolsheviks supported our motion. One improvement was made in our plan. In place of one large committee, it was decided that all members of the Soviets should organize into groups according to their locality, and that, on a set night, this important project of confiscation and destruction of the stocks of alcohol should be carried out. However it was thought best to wait a couple of more days in order to determine precisely how to handle the situation and also to verify whether much wine was cached away in the vineyards.

Several days later the delegates of the two Soviets assembled and divided into groups with each group assigned to a specific section of the city. In the middle of the night they descended on the sleeping community and, in a matter of two or three hours, huge supplies of wine and vodka had been destroyed.

This fait accompli created a tremendous stir in the city the following morning, and one result was that a great many owners of alcohol stocks who had been missed during the night raid voluntarily appeared before the Economic Soviet to declare their possessions.

A similar "search and destroy" project was executed among the vineyards surrounding the city. Both Soviets then issued a public proclamation notifying the population that the destruction of alcoholic beverages had been effected in order to avoid drunkenness and possible provocation when the fleet reached Novorossiysk. This explanation helped calm the city, as the population, in the main, understood the necessity for such action. Meanwhile, the task of searching out more caches proceeded in and around the city.

A few days later, a session of the Economic Soviet was attended by a delegation of three workers (where they came from and by whom they were sent is quite a story in itself), who brought up a matter of considerable importance.

High up in the mountains, about 25 miles from Novorossiysk, was a large estate which had belonged to the Czar's family. On this estate was located a vineyard some thousands of acres in size, where wine, champagne and cognac were produced for the use of the royal family, as well as for sale to the public. The estate was called Abrav-Durso.

The three delegates were from Abrav-Durso and they appeared before the Soviet with the request that their place of business should not be destroyed, since this would result in depriving some 300 workers of employment. The Economic Soviet declined to make a decision on the spot but instead advised the delegation that they would have a decision in the course of a few days. We again called a special session of the two Soviets and submitted the petition of the three delegates. This engendered a lively debate. Arguments were made that no compromise must be permitted or special privileges granted. Finally a motion was unanimously adopted to send a special committee to Abrav-Durso, with instructions to destroy all alcoholic beverages found there. The committee included one railway worker, one cement factory employee and myself.

The following day we managed to obtain three horses, suitable weapons and ammunition, including a quantity of dynamite, and we set out on the route for Abrav-Durso to execute out mission. Before we left however, the people of Abrav-Durso were informed by telephone of our mission.

The path to the estate wound through valleys and hills and presents a truly enchanting mountainous landscape. As we approached our destination, our view was arrested by the huge vineyards, which stretched for miles. After the vineyards we came to a rather steep ascent leading to the huge plateau, on which are located all the winecellars as well as the administrative buildings and tenants' residences. Alongside the buildings flowed a huge, limpid river.

About two miles from our destination we were met and conducted to a building somewhat more imposing than the others. We stepped inside and found ourselves in a veritable palace. It was explained to us that this building had been reserved exclusively for the Czar's family. The house had a number of servants and a kitchen all to itself. We found that a sumptuous dinner awaited us, accompanied by tempting beverages produced on the grounds.

Notwithstanding the fact that more than five months had passed since the October revolution, the spirit of the Czarist regime still pervaded the atmosphere. The delegation which met us, and the servants, informed me that the privileged nature of this small palace was being abolished as of that day, and that different work would be assigned to the palace servants, or they could leave the area if they wished. In the palace itself a few rooms would be reserved as a sort of inn or hotel with one person in charge and the remaining rooms would be converted into lodgings for workers in need of a place to live.

Following dinner, we began to make inquiries of the delegation that had met us as to how much wine and whiskey might be found in Abrav-Durso. They replied that they could not convey an idea of the quantity in mere worlds - we would have to see with our own eyes. We agreed that the following morning we would tour the cellars and find out for ourselves. Further inquiries revealed that the departments for wine and cognac were being directed by a specialist named Widell, who had been brought in from Germany, while the section devoted to the production of champagne was supervised by a French expert. It was these two men, together with the head bookkeeper, who managed the entire business of the estate.

We inquired as to how matters were proceeding since the October revolution and found that a few representatives of the Kerensky regime were still on hand, but that the entire political and economic regime on the estate had otherwise remained pretty much the same as before the Revolution. The Kerensky people consisted of Social Democrats, Mensheviks and a few members of the right wing Social Revolutionary Party. The delegation further informed us that a general assembly of the entire population would take place that night, and this would give us a chance to become acquainted with the leaders, as well as the rank and file of Abrav-Durso.

While we were engaged in discussing the decision of the two Soviets to destroy all alcoholic beverages with the delegation, I became aware of the entrance into the room of a tall, well-built man with a rather dignified demeanor, softened by a winning smile on his face. When the members of the delegation noticed him, they began to act rather reticent and finally fell silent. At that moment he was introduced to us as the wine specialist, Widell.

He told us he had not come out of curiosity as to what we had to say, nor to listen to grievances presented by the workers against the administration. His primary objective was to be of service to the estate; and of course he had learned of our mission to do away with the treasured stock at Abrav-Durso.

He assured us that he was personally not concerned with politics, but was merely a wine specialist who figured prominently in the reconstruction of the area, which was widely known as a cultural center. He was well aware that we had the power to demolish this entire enterprise; however he expressed his confidence that, once the delegation had inspected the vast accumulated treasure, they would reflect soberly before taking any drastic action. For his own part, he was quite willing to show us around the estate.

Widell spoke with some emotion and the utmost earnestness and I felt assured that there was no pretense or trickery about the man. From the first, I could not help having a feeling of sympathy for him. It was evident that his primary concern was not politics and as a result I could not refrain from reminding myself that I had best reflect seriously before executing the mission that had been assigned to me.

Several workers presently came over to announce that the crowd had gathered and that they were ready to open the meeting. When we reached the square where the assembly was to take place, we found virtually the entire population of the community assembled. On the platform was seated a small group of apparently select individuals - members of the Soviet organized in Kerensky's time.

The chairman opened by announcing to the meeting that a delegation from the city had arrived for the purpose of destroying the liquor stores. He spoke with some bitterness and in an obvious attempt to create a mood of hostility against us. He spoke incessantly and it appeared that he wished to drag out the meeting to the point where we would become confused about the purpose of our trip. However the militant workers came to our rescue and induced the chairman to halt his harangue. They called the attention of the meeting to the fact that both the workers and townspeople had come to hear the delegates from the two Soviets. They then made a motion that the floor be yielded to us. The motion was promptly adopted and it was decided that I should address the meeting on behalf of the three of us.

I explained briefly how the workers in Novorossiysk had taken charge of all the administrative work in the factories and that in these factories equal pay for all workers had been introduced and all special privileges abolished; that the wage earners themselves were molding their own

social system. I recounted the difficulties which the civil war had created, but emphasized that, despite all obstacles, the task of social reconstruction was proceeding at an accelerated pace.

I posed the question to them of why they, as workers, had thus far not taken over complete management at Abrav-Durso as had been done by the workers of Novorossiysk, and suggested that it was high time for the proletariat to abolish all person privileges and organize a committee representing all elements, so that it could begin to function as a creative force.

I directed their attention to General Kornilov's units, which had launched the civil war, and reminded them that the city of Novorossiysk was awaiting the arrival of the Black Sea fleet with its contingent of several thousand sailors and that, among the evacuees, who were beginning to arrive in large numbers, there were many cases of drunkenness - a condition bound to be aggravated by the arrival of large numbers of seamen. I explained to them that, to avoid unpleasant incidents, the Soviets had decided to destroy all stocks of spirits in and near the city, and that all such stores which had been found had already been disposed of. We had been delegated by the two Soviets to enforce this order. "I hope you will understand," I reassured them, "that personally we have nothing against you, and are fully cognizant of the fact that, with the destruction of the alcoholic beverages a difficult material situation will arise for you; however, we cannot tolerate allowing sinister elements to be in a position to wipe out the gains of the October revolution."

I concluded by commenting that neither we of the committee nor the Soviets in the city were aware of what Abrav-Durso really represented, and had no idea of the situation as summarized for us by Widell. I expressed my belief that my two comrades would be in accord with the plan whereby the following day the three of us, together with a committee to be chosen by the people, would conduct a thorough inspection of the cellars. Following that, we would engage in deliberations with a committee of their choosing, to see what could be done so that the vast treasure of beverages might not have to be destroyed. I warned them that the final decision would have to be made by the Soviets, on whose behalf we were acting.

The other two delegates were in accord with what I had said, and one of them proposed that the current session be terminated and that the following day , after a thorough inspection by the delegation, another mass meeting be called, at which time we would give them our decision. The motion was carried, but before adjourning they selected a committee of three charged with the task of showing us the huge stores of diverse wines located on the estate. The following morning, we set out to make our inspection.

We had wondered, when we first arrived at the estate, precisely where the wine cellars were located, since along the way, as far as the eye could see, one saw vast vineyards. We were somewhat surprised when we arrived at a door the size of a gate and found that this door led to a smaller door, through which we entered a medium-sized room with several doors and a single window. We were met here by the technician Widell, who invited us to come into his office and laboratory. He first acquainted us with the history of Abrav-Durso. When the administrator of the Czar's properties had first planned the production of wine and champagne for the royal family, he had selected this location. Since the storage of wine requires exacting temperature and humidity conditions, a three-story cellar had been excavated which was free from outside variations in temperature. These three cellars were divided into two sections; one for the production of wine, the other for champagne. At the time, it was customary to bring in specialists from Germany and France, as well as a number of skilled workers in the field, who were to develop the production of the two beverages.

Widell then estimated that at the moment the underground stores contained more than a million buckets of wine and over a half-million buckets of champagne, in addition to several thousand pails of wine spirits for making cognac. He remarked that if the entire stock of liquor found in the cellars was to be destroyed, we would create a veritable river of wine and champagne.

When Widell had concluded, we commenced our inspection. We descended to the lowest cellar and found before us thousands of huge vats filled with wine. It was obvious that the combined cellars contained hundreds of thousands of bottles of champagne, in addition to casks of wine from which champagne was made. Everywhere we encountered workers engaged in their everyday tasks. This, among other things, impressed upon us the realization that wine is a delicate product which requires the collaboration of specialists.

It seemed our travels through the mammoth cellars would never end and when, nearly exhausted, we returned to Widell's office, we had arrived at the sober conclusion that it was not rational to destroy such a treasure house, but that means must be found to insure that it remain safe, especially from possible raids by the thousands of sailors expected at Novorossiysk. Without any exchange of opinions, our delegation was unanimously of the opinion that it was out of the question to destroy what we had just seen. We agreed that in our report we would recommend that the huge stores at Abrav-Durso be left intact.

The same evening another assembly of the population of the community was held. At the outset, the Mencheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who had originally been engaged by the Kerensky regime, voiced the opinion that Abrav-Durso belonged to the central government and that therefore the Soviets of Novorossiysk had no right to interfere there. It became immediately apparent that these "big shots" were mainly concerned about a possible threat to their own authority. This led to vehement arguments, in the course of which these "leaders" went so far that, in spite of their professed Socialist philosophy, they repeatedly made mention of the "outsider," referring to me, since I was a political emigre and also of Jewish descent. As such, I was the first to enter this "restricted area," where Jews had no right to be. The discussion engendered considerable bad blood, but it was obvious that ninety-five percent of the workers sided with us.

We were careful to avoid giving these "spokesmen" grounds for claiming they had been denied the opportunity to express their views; but after one of them had taken the floor several times I made a statement in the name of our delegation. I stated that, after acquainting ourselves with the full scope of what Abrav-Durso represented, we had decided to return to Novorossiysk and recommend to the Soviets there that the liquor stocks not be destroyed, but that appropriate measures be taken to prevent anyone entering the area without a special permit. To effect this, we would recommend that the workers themselves organize a unit of the Red Guard, which would be entrusted with guarding the access routes day and night. We would obtain the required weapons for them. At the end I presented the practical proposal that the gathering should immediately elect a temporary committee to conduct elections in every unit or cell and that they should establish the same system we had introduced in the city. I further recommended that the committee abolish all special privileges and introduce equal remuneration, such as existed in the city, and that the entire effort be coordinated with that of the Economic Soviet in Novorossiysk.

Our declaration that we would advise against the destruction of the Abrav-Durso stores brought general rejoicing; however our recommendations regarding the election of a committee, equal pay and the elimination of privileged "cadres" provoked an acrimonious debate. In the midst of this discussion, Widell asked for the floor and made a brief statement to the effect that, since a social revolution had taken place in the country and a new social order had come

into being, it would be more prudent for them to accept the results like free citizens and avoid having the new order of things imposed on them by force. For this reason, he would support my proposals so that the delegation might exert its influence in Novorossiysk to prevent the smashing of the stores of liquor. He then called upon the chairman to call a vote. The latter vacillated, but a clamor arose from the audience for action. Their mood was such that even the dissidents voted in the affirmative and the suggestions were adopted unanimously. A committee of seven workers was immediately chosen.

The following morning we met with this committee and in the afternoon we set out on our return trip to Novorossiysk.

A few days following our return, a session of the Economic Soviet was called, at which we presented a full report on our mission and on the importance of the Abrav-Durso supplies. We recommended that the estate be left intact as a productive enterprise; that we extend to its people all necessary assistance; that, in cooperation with the political Soviet, they be provided with needed weapons to guard the approaches to the community; and that no one be permitted access to the area without permission from the Soviets.

The delegates to the Economic Soviet were taken by surprise by our report, just as we had been astonished by the revelation of such a fluid treasure.

It was my impression at that time that my own mission, along with that of my fellow delegates, was fully accomplished. However it appears that, as the saying goes, "man proposes, but God disposes." Two weeks after our return from Abrav-Durso, two delegates from that community approached the Economic Soviet with the request that we help them effect their organizational work. The temporary committee previously elected was not capable of putting the recommendations into practice since not all of the inhabitants were fully reconciled to the thought that a social upheaval had occurred in the country. Also the committee did not possess the courage to offer resistance to those who so recently had been sitting in the seat of authority. The two visitors therefore requested that our Soviet delegate at least one comrade to come and make his home in Abrav-Durso and help them organize properly and that, if possible, the one chosen for the task should be myself.

This new development caught me by surprise. While I had been quite active in the Economic Soviet and was furthermore aware that Comrade Vanya Budnik and myself held what diplomatic circles would call the "balance of power" in our group, I felt I had to talk the matter over with Vanya. He counselled me to accept the assignment. I then brought the matter before our comrades and they, seeing that the work of the Economic Soviet was developing smoothly, advised me to move with my family to Abrav-Durso to carry out this necessary task.

The longer I reflected on the subject, the more uneasy I became. It occurred to me that in the city there was an aggregation of friends to perform the essential work, but in Abrav-Durso I would be alone and would find arrayed against me a number of opponents who would do everything possible to undermine my efforts. Besides, my wife Bessie and my son, as well as myself, would find ourselves more or less isolated in an alien atmosphere. In spite of this, I knew that, with my energy and initiative I had helped organize an entire city on new foundations of social cooperation so there was no need to deliberate too long. I felt I had to go to Abrav-Durso and execute the task; a job which Czar Nicholas surely never dreamt of for his huge estate. Thus, I resolved to accept the new mission.

At a subsequent session of the Economic Soviet, the question of sending someone to help organize an "Internal Affairs Committee" and to coordinate its efforts with the Economic Soviet

was discussed. The delegation from Abrav-Durso again emphasized that I was their first choice and as a result I was selected by the Soviet as its delegate. This placed a burden upon my shoulders to which I scarcely felt equal under the conditions then existing at the estate. However, a few days later we arrived at the estate and I promptly applied myself to the preliminary organizational work. As soon as we had settled ourselves into our new apartment, I called a meeting of the temporary committee where it was decided to summon a general assembly to act on the following matters:

1) To organize an Internal Affairs Committee comprised of delegates representing all the trades in Abrav-Durso.
2) All trades were to call a meeting at which two delegates would be chosen.
3) All special privileges were to be abolished, and equal pay be introduced as already existed in Novorossiysk.
4) A Red Guard was to be formed to watch the approaches to Abrav-Durso.
5) To authorize the Internal Affairs Committee to take over all administrative and constructive endeavors and supervise the social and economic activities of the workers on the estate.

The meeting was held several days later, attended by the entire population of Abrav-Durso. Before I set out for the meeting, I had a presentiment that trouble was brewing. Indeed, I had already received information that the former managers and bureaucratic chiefs were conducting a subtle propaganda campaign among the workers to the effect that they did not need any outsiders to come among them issuing orders. In brief, these men did their utmost to persuade the workers that things should be left as they had been. Obviously, this numerically small group of privileged persons resented the loss of their amenities.

Their hostility went to great lengths. On the day preceding the assembly, we found, near the entrance of our house, a large bouquet of roses and wild flowers, which grew in abundance all around Abrav-Durso. A few moments later, a member of the committee chanced to arrive. When he saw the flowers he immediately inquired whether any one of us had tried to smell the floral offering. It was fortunate that we had not for, as our companion pointed out to us, there was among the flowers one lovely bloom which, if touched to the skin, creates an infection which sometimes takes years to cure.

At the assembly, I related the incident of the flowers which probably created a certain feeling of sympathy for me. At any rate, when a member of the special committee opened the meeting and called for the selection of a chairman, my name was placed in nomination first, followed by that of one of the former executives. The small “elite” group had decided to stage a determined battle and as soon as the names of the two candidates were mentioned, a furious debate began, with one of the privileged group contending that I was an outsider and therefore not familiar with life in Abrav-Durso. On the other hand, a number of workers took the floor to remind the audience that, during Kerensky’s regime, a large group of strangers had been sent in and no one had objected; but that when the elite were in danger of losing their privileges, they began clamoring that Yelensky was an outsider.

When the vote was finally cast, all except a handful who abstained, voted in my favor. The other candidate received no votes. I expressed my thanks to those who had manifested their confidence in me and pledged to make myself worthy of their trust. I then mentioned the incident of the flowers and emphasized that those who hoped to get rid of me through such devices were seriously mistaken. Should any further attempts be made, the Internal Affairs Committee in Abrav-Durso and the Economic Soviet in Novorossiysk would adopt such stringent measures

that the saboteurs would rue the day. I suggested that, instead of resorting to such contemptible tricks, they would be wiser to cooperate in the normal functioning of the estate. I assured them that my mission there was not to persecute anyone nor to take revenge; that throughout Russia a mighty revolution had taken place and that in Novorossiysk we had, as far as lay within our power, erected a new social structure where every resident possessed full freedom to develop his initiative and to become a builder of a free life for himself as well as for his fellow man.

I then stressed that I had not come there to act as any kind of "Chief Commissar" or to boss them around. My mission was merely to assist them in their organizational activity - they themselves would have to fashion for themselves a new life, based on justice and equality, both for the individual and for the community. I further reminded them that I had come there at the invitation of their own special committee. I said I realized that it would be difficult for those who had enjoyed varying degrees of privilege to reconcile themselves to losing those privileges, but that as soon as they recognized the emergence of a new social order they would adjust to the situation. However, should any of them venture to hinder the course of social reconstruction in Russia, he must expect that the revolutionary masses would not tolerate it and would take the necessary steps to deal with him. I concluded by extending my hand in friendship to all and by expressing the hope that we would all strive in harmony, so that the productive work of Abrav-Durso might go on without interruption.

My talk was followed by remarks from several rank and file workers, who manifested their enthusiastic approval of my remarks and recommendations. Spokesman for the privileged elite was the technician Widell, who asserted that he personally would cooperate with the Internal Affairs Committee and was prepared to help in any way that he could. He realized that his income would be reduced, but that did not frighten him, as he would not die of starvation. He addressed himself to the other members of his group and urged them to face reality and to make the most of it.

When the speeches concluded, all proposals were adopted. In addition, a motion was made that I should serve as chairman of the Internal Affairs Committee and this too was accepted without opposition.

The following morning the temporary committee met and the first motion adopted was that two or three rooms were needed as a headquarters for the Internal Affairs Committee. The solution was simple since there was an abundance of rooms in the small palace; so we immediately summoned the overseer of the building and directed him to prepare a suitable suite for our purpose. We then set up a schedule of meeting hours for each section so they could meet and each select two delegates to the Internal Affairs Committee.

It took several days to complete this schedule and for the election of twelve workers to the Internal Affairs Committee. We invited the wine specialist Widell to serve as an associate member with right of consultation and he eagerly accepted. The French champagne expert chose to remain in his apartment and avoided all contacts.

It was proposed that the Internal Affairs Committee prepare a financial report, as well as a list of the purchasers of the Abrav-Durso products. The bookkeeper also informed us that a substantial amount remained in the treasury, adequate to cover the payroll for a period of several months. We called upon the security officer to help select a small picked group to serve as the Red Guard, and to advise us of the most suitable places to mount several machine guns so as to deter uninvited guests from approaching Abrav-Durso.

The majority of the workers had tracts of land near their homes where they planted gardens, raised cattle in the summertime, or ran chickens. The management also maintained a store which we reorganized into a cooperative enterprise and linked with its counterpart in Novorossiysk.

Thus the main networks of activity became systematized. However, after many years of living under a state of semi-serfdom, it was difficult for the delegates to the Internal Affairs Committee to adjust themselves to the thought that they must handle administrative duties. On the other hand, it was difficult for the bureaucrats of former times who were accustomed to lording it over the workers, to make peace with the idea that they must now frequently depend on these workers. In my capacity as chairman of the Internal Affairs Committee, along with the other members, I sought to convince them that they were now equal members of our modest community. I endeavored to inculcate this spirit of freedom both with words and by example of my own attitude toward them. I can safely affirm that, with the exception of a few obstinate monarchists, the majority of the specialists sincerely accepted the new order of things and performed their daily tasks with devotion. Several of them even became interested in anarchist literature.

During the first two months one could sense a certain tension, not only among the bureaucrats, but also among certain of the workers. Gradually however, this tension began to disappear - not so much as a result of talking and agitation but rather by virtue of the practical achievements on the part of the Internal Affairs Committee.

In order to bring products from the city, it had formerly been customary to use a wagon drawn by two horses. However, I managed to procure two trucks through the Soviet in Novorossiysk, which made it possible to haul three times as much produce as by wagon, besides being able to make two trips daily, and these trucks created quite a stir among the local populace.

From time to time medium-tonnage ships docked in Novorossiysk to buy cement and we managed to interest the owners in also purchasing wines and champagne. In addition we dispatched a large number of barrels of these beverages to Moscow, though we received no money for them. The fact that all these transactions were being carried out by plain workers gave the bureaucrats food for thought.

At the end of March, Widell again appeared before a session of the Internal Affairs Committee and informed us that during the month of April when the grapes began to bloom, they are afflicted by a type of insect which cannot be killed by any chemical substance. The only effective remedy against this insect pest was to avail oneself of the pre-dawn frost when these bugs lodge under the trees to wait for the dew to dry. At this time it becomes a simple matter to catch them by hand; but for this purpose some 2,000 persons were needed, preferably youths and children. If this was not done, the insects would destroy the grape vines.

The Internal Affairs Committee decided to call a meeting of the entire population, where I explained the reason for our gathering. Widell followed, explaining further that this year a greater swarm of these pests was expected than usual. Hence, since we ourselves were now the proprietors, it would be necessary for the entire population to get out into the vineyards for several mornings in order to combat the insects. We had also transmitted a request to our own group in the city to call on the young people to come out on Saturday and Sunday to help. At Widell's signal, I passed the word along immediately to the city and before long two truckloads of young people arrived. In addition to these, a number of farmers from the vicinity, with their wives and children, as well as the entire population of Abrav-Durso, including the one-time bureaucrats, turned out. In two days' time, the vineyards had been entirely freed of the pests.

This large-scale, successful cooperative effort produced a profound moral impact on everyone in the community. One could sense it in the air - the feeling that it was not any one individual, but all of us, acting together, who had become the architects and builders of this microcosmic society. I also felt the emergence of a more kindly attitude toward me and my colleagues. One episode particularly will illustrate this transformation.

A revolution, particularly a social revolution, can create all kinds of special circumstances. For example, the peasants would make exorbitant charges for their produce, and then suddenly would begin demanding payment only in coins, with the result that coins virtually disappeared from circulation. Wages were paid out once a month at Abrav-Durso and we were not too surprised when the chief accountant appeared before the Internal Affairs Committee to explain that, while there were sufficient funds on hand to meet the payroll, he had nothing but paper rubles. We knew that the Cossack peasants of the vicinity had an ample supply of small metal coins, but how were we to get them to part with them?

Fortunately we had at our disposal a technician who was a Cossack and who had numerous acquaintances in the surrounding villages. At the outset, he had kept himself aloof and appeared to be at odds with everybody and everything. However, after two months or so, he began to realize that our new order was founded on principles of justice and in the course of time he began to discharge his duties with zest and devotion. On one occasion we engaged in a conversation. He was eager to learn about America, about its technical advancements in particular, and, in general, about everyday life there, so during our leisure moments we discussed these various topics. When the difficulties over metal currency arose, he came to the office of the Committee to inform us that he could obtain such coins from the surrounding villages and was prepared to accompany me on such an errand. I was very pleased and surprised by his offer, grateful that our striving to build a new life was beginning to yield such fruitful results.

At a special meeting of the Internal Affairs Committee to which the chief accountant was invited, it was decided to exchange a substantial amount of paper money for small coins. There was one drawback however, in that I would have to travel around to the Cossack villages. The villagers had maintained a neutral attitude but I was certain that they knew about my social philosophy and that I was of Jewish descent. Before undertaking the mission, I directly asked the technician whether such a visit might not entail personal danger for me. He assured me that as long as he accompanied me there would be no danger. Indeed he had already talked with several Cossacks who had agreed to help. Besides, he felt that if I went among the Cossacks and explained to them what goals we were striving for at Abrav-Durso, the results could be very productive.

We departed the following afternoon, taking along a considerable sum of money. We came first to the home of a relative of our guide, who proved to be a personage of some importance in the village. In one room of the house stood a long table on which various foods were spread out. We ourselves had brought along a couple of buckets of wine. Before long a group of Cossacks appeared and we all sat down to enjoy the refreshments - a regular banquet. After the repast, we all sat down in an open space where the entire village had assembled. The “starosta” or headman of the village opened the meeting and reported that there were two guests from Abrav-Durso who had come for a special purpose. He introduced me as the “starosta” of Abrav-Durso.

In a brief talk, I explained to them that Abrav-Durso had been taken over by those who worked there; that no one could claim any special privileges, that all employees received equal pay and that a committee of workers was administering the affairs of the estate on principles of equality. I added that we wanted to become better acquainted with them and were always ready to help

them in any way we could. Then my companion spoke and communicated to them the main purpose of our visit and requested their aid.

The following morning they began bringing in numerous bags of small metal coins and within a couple of hours we were on our way back to Abrav-Durso with sufficient small change to meet our needs.

When we had first located in Abrav-Durso, we had feared that it would be a long and arduous task to organize the social relationships among the workers. Besides, we were aware of the fact that in this community a generation had been reared which had a horror of Xchinovnikes, or government officials. However, much to our gratification, we were wrong in our fears and in our appraisal. In the course of three months community life had undergone a transformation. Only an insignificant number of dissidents were left and in general life proceeded normally. The workers, though still not class-conscious, had, after only brief participation in the work of the Internal Affairs Committee, carried through and completed projects which made even the experts marvel at how men with virtually no schooling could accomplish so much.

My personal experiences, both in Novorossiysk and in Abrav-Durso, convinced me that whenever human beings are permitted to exercise initiative and begin to feel that they are the architects of their own destiny, they become changed - they become human beings possessed of an eagerness to help their fellow men. All the idle rhetoric of politicians then proves meaningless. I believe that my own experiences simply prove once more how right Bakunin was when he affirmed that "Socialism with freedom is a pigsty."

Our small anarchist group had created a situation under which socialism made sense and had meaning; it was the sense of freedom which did not make promises to the workers, but rather demonstrated to them that they alone could build their own futures. The experiment I record here is the only successful test of this theory in the course of the entire stupendous social revolution.

Shortly after our arrival in Abrav-Durso, at the first session of the Internal Affairs Committee, we discussed how to protect the vast wine treasure there against a possible raid. All agreed that this was a very serious matter. We had sentries and machine gun emplacements that guarded the approaches to the estate day and night, but this would present no serious opposition to the expected Black Sea fleet. We therefore set up a special sub-committee consisting of Widell, an engineer and two technicians, whose mail goal was to protect the two underground cellars where the most precious wines and champagne were stored. The sub-committee recommended that the one window should be disguised with empty casks, that all doors should be walled in and that one disguised entrance be left open for the men who worked there. These proposals were accepted and carried out so carefully that even some of the workers did not know where the secret entrance to the subterranean cellars was located.

Fortunately our fears proved unfounded and we escaped with only one minor incident. When the fleet first reached Novorossiysk there were enough political controversies to keep the sailors busy. However the incident in question occurred some time prior to that.

One day around noon the guards reported that three autos carrying sailors were approaching. The entire Internal Affairs Committee hastened to the machine-gun emplacements. We could see the approaching cars but the riders could not see us. I suggested that the cars be permitted to approach to within half a mile and that then several warning shots should be fired. The cars halted at the shots and several of us approached them and inquired whether they had permits from the Soviets to come to Abrav-Durso. They had no permits, but one who identified himself as Utkin proceeded to show us credentials as long as the tale of human misery. In addition he

produced a card identifying himself as an old-time Bolshevik. He said he was coming to procure wine for his unit which was located in the city. He proved a trouble-maker and attempted to overawe us with his party card.

We made clear to him that without a permit from the Soviets he could not enter Abrav-Durso and told him firmly that we were not dispensing wine to anyone. Utkin apparently fancied that his tough manner would frighten us and ordered his motorcade to move forward. Our sentries, acting on our previous instructions, fired a second warning shot while we withdrew to where the guards were located. Utkin now realized that we were in earnest and approached us in a more friendly manner, informing us that he and his ment were hungry but had no food with them. I told him that if they would leave their weapons with the guards and promise to conduct themselves like true revolutionaries, we would allow them to enter Abrav-Durso. When they had agreed to our terms we conducted them to the former palace where they had their meal. We treated them as guests, served them wine and showed them the surrounding sights, explaining our method of operation. Utkin had only one idea in mind however–to obtain a few casks of wine. But it was to no avail and he and his men had to depart without their booty.

As time passed, the public, including the former privileged classes, gradually adjusted to the new order of things. What influenced them the most was the example set by the Internal Affairs Committee, who renounced all special privileges for themselves.

It might be helpful to recount another minor episode, which made a deep impression on the minds of the residents. The "elite" had formerly received special offerings of wine and champagne for all major holidays. The workers, on the other hand, received nothing, in spite of the fact that they were in the midst of a veritable ocean of wine which they themselves had produced.

Several weeks before Easter (and Passover), our committee had discussed the problem of what to do about the wine for the holidays. Some argued that the former elite should receive no allowance of wine, but we finally agreed that everyone employed in Abrav-Durso should receive one-fourth of a bucket of wine and one bottle of champagne and that everyone could purchase an equal amount additional if they wished. We made this proposal to the general meeting and it was adopted without opposition. This minor incident of an equal allotment for everyone provided food for thought even among the more backward workers. They were finally becoming used to the idea that they were equal partners in the property which they had helped to produce, and thus moulders of their own destiny. With this sense of partnership, they came to realize that they no longer needed foremen or overseers to see that they were doing an honest day's work. A sense of libertarian individual responsibility was created.

I admit that frequently even I could not keep up with the progress made in the social process of social reconstruction, now only a few months old.

May 1st, the great international holiday, brought the entire population of Abrav-Durso into the streets. We had no professional orators among us so , for the first time in my life, I delivered a speech on the significance of May Day. Several plain workers, and even Widell himself, made speeches and commented that a new life based on justice, was looming throughout Russia. The faith among these people was so firm and deep that it seemed unbelievable that it could be shattered. The seed planted in fertile soil was sprouting and developing vigorously.

Katya Garbova informed me by telephone that the Black Sea fleet was expected any day in the harbor and requested that I return to the city so that we might be together when that event occurred. I transmitted her request to the Internal Affairs Committee and they agreed that I should go.

I arrived in Novorossiysk the same day and at once noticed the atmosphere of uneasiness. The townspeople seemed frightened. When I reached Katya Garbova's home, where our group met, I found several of the comrades already there, greatly perturbed. Several warships had already arrived and, as I related previously, the sailors had drowned the captured officers of Kornilov's army. The rest of the fleet was expected the following day.

From certain Bolsheviks our comrades had learned that the Moscow Soviet of Commissars had officially notified the Black Sea fleet to surrender the ships to the Germans at Constantinople; at the same time, a courier was dispatched from Moscow to Sebastopol to see to it that the fleet rebelled and fled to Novorossiysk. In Sebastopol, tempestuous debates took place and the major portion of the fleet took off for Novorossiysk, where animated discussions again took place. There was even a crucial moment when there was danger that the two factions would begin firing at one another, but fortunately for the city, it did not come to that. The upshot of it all was that the war vessels with "proper" leadership moved on to Turkey, while the others decided to scuttle their ships.

It was about noon on a glorious spring day when one of the huge warships began to move out of the port, followed by several smaller vessels. When they had reached the open sea, the remaining ships began to lift anchor, sail out for several miles and come to a stop. The crew disembarked and began to blow up the ships. In two or three hours the entire fleet had disappeared beneath the waves.

Most of the population of Novorossiysk stood on the shore and watched, until the entire episode began to take on the proportions of a mammoth funeral. Only a few hours before these ships had constituted a powerful, frightening force; now they were completely harmless at the bottom of the sea. Novorossiysk was far from Moscow and the full picture of Bolshevik politics had not yet become clear to its people. The inhabitants could not quite swallow the duplicity: the two-faced game of officially surrendering the ships in Turkey while actually sinking them at sea. People kept asking the same plaintive question: "What is going on? Is this the new morality of the Revolution?" Neither the workers nor the population at large were able to grasp the true picture of the Bolsheviks. They were strangers to the Jesuit motto that "the end justifies the means."

A number of pro-Bolshevik sailors had remained in Novorossiysk, which gave encouragement to the few Bolsheviks already there. These latter had been unhappy from the outset that the Economic Soviet and not they themselves exercised authority over the Novorossiysk population. A behind-the-scenes intrigue began. Several attempts were made to dominate the Internal Affairs Committee, but our influence had, in the course of several months, won such deep trust among the residents for our group that the workers spurned these clandestine maneuvers.

The anarchist group discussed these new developments at their meetings, especially the rather obvious scheme of the Bolsheviks to create a situation which would enable them to seize complete power. A number of the more enlightened Bolsheviks appreciated what our group had accomplished and the revolutionary ethical relationship that had been established among the workers and from them we understood quite well what to expect in time from the extremists. We were becoming aware that a decisive struggle awaited us in the near future.

In the meantime the civil war began to spread to all corners of Russia. Kornilov was ousted as chief commander of the "White Russians" and General Denikin emerged upon the political scene. He had organized an army of Cossacks from the Don and Kuban areas, along with a number of Czarist officers. Even a portion of the right-wing socialists joined his forces. There was a distinct smell of gunpowder in the air.

Operations in Abrav-Durso were proceeding smoothly and I had an assistant there upon whom I could depend, so I found it possible to spend more time in the city and to lend a hand where most needed.

The time of tranquil and less hectic constructive labor there was giving way to a more agitated era. Denikin was still several hundred miles away from us, but those fighting him were turning increasingly to Novorossiysk for help. A number of the more dynamic individuals organized a military unit and left for the front. This process was repeated several times, with the result that we lost most of the more militant, class-conscious workers to the front lines. To climax matters, a rumor spread (we had long suspected the Bolsheviks of this) that the Germans were preparing to occupy Novorossiysk.

On one occasion, while I was still in Abrav-Durso, I was informed that when the Germans occupied Novorossiysk, the White Russians might stage an attack on the city. In that event, the anarchists would of course be the prime candidates for liquidation. I was advised personally to leave Abrav-Durso. I immediately summoned the Internal Affairs Committee and explained the situation. A temporary chairman was chosen at once and I was solemnly assured that in case of any danger they would protect Bessie and our son.

When I reached Novorossiysk I could not find anyone from our group. Some had left the city; several going to nearby Krasnodar. Since I was curious to know what was going on there I went directly to Krasnodar. I learned that the Soviet there was more of a formality than a real transformation. A few days later we received intelligence from Novorossiysk that sev
eral German submarines had arrived; that a delegation had called on the the political soviet and that the German ships had then departed. On my return I was re-united with my family who had moved into town from Abrav-Durso.

From what had happened during our absence from the city, it was quite obvious to us that the Bolsheviks had deliberately launched the rumor about the impending German invasion, with the intent of perpetrating a counter-revolution against the new system installed there in the course of the past eight months by our anarchist group.

On the day following our return, a special session of the Economic Soviet was called. Before the meeting was called to order, a number of delegates came in greatly annoyed and agitated because several of them had been denied admission by a Red Guard stationed at the door. This incident created deep resentment. We made our way toward the chairman, pushed the Red Guard aside and went inside. In response to our inquiry as to why there was an armed guard at the entrance, the chairman told us he had received a communication from Moscow to the effect that the political soviet should assume full power over the city, including complete control over industry. When we asked him what he would do if the workers, together with the Economic Soviet, should defy the Moscow order, he admitted that this could produce a serious situation among the revolution-oriented working masses, and he assured us that it was possible to arrive at a compromise so that both soviets could continue to operate. Despite these assurances, it was easy to see that a conflict with the Bolsheviks could easily come about and that a crisis would arise before long.

When the meeting of the Economic Soviet opened, all the delegates, with the exception of a few of the Bolsheviks, were in a depressed mood. Only the most urgent matters were taken up, after which it was decided to call a special general assembly of the Economic Soviet with, in addition to the delegates, all activist workers from the factories and shops invited, as well as the executive committee of the Political Soviet. Our own group met in special session to discuss

the developing situation. It was the consensus, by the way, that under the present conditions my presence was more important in the city than in Abrav-Durso.

A few days later I left for Abrav-Durso to close out my post as chairman of the Internal Affairs Committee and to help select a successor for the post. On the day of my arrival, a special meeting was called, attended by the entire population of the community. I had expected that the one-time "elite" would be pleased with my departure from Abrav-Durso; but to my surprise it was precisely that element which most regretted my leaving. Indeed, the entire assembly was a source of surprise and gratification. I had not expected anything of this kind from people who were becoming acquainted with the philosophy of anarchism for the first time in their lives and who had lived so far only under a regimented Czarist regime. The expressions of regret over our departure and the words of praise addressed to me were cordial and sincere and they gave me a keen sense of satisfaction at having been able to accomplish something of value during the time I had spent there. I recalled that during the first days of our stay there a few workers had manifested anti-Semitic sentiments, while others had even instructed their children not to play with our son, at that time three years old. These same workers now asked for the floor and acknowledged their "sins" against us and expressed the wish that we might come to live with them in Abrav-Durso.

The assembly chose a new Internal Affairs Committee and called for it to meet the following day so that I could turn over all administrative matters to the new chairman. The gathering lasted until quite late, as the audience simply hesitated to leave. I could sense that these people were reluctant to renounce the new order of things which had made them independent and equal members of a libertarian society. Apparently I symbolized for them all the gains they had made and this was their way of expressing their regret over my leaving.

The following morning, the newly-elected Internal Affairs Committee met and I turned over all business matters to the new chairman, and at the same time went over some of the functions of the committee and gave them some words of encouragement. Above all, I urged them not to allow themselves to become intimidated in the event that the once-privileged element should try to regain the upper hand; this must not be tolerated. I assured them they would receive assistance from the city whenever they needed it.

The mood at this session was the same as at the previous day's meeting. When it came to a close, the new chairman announced that he was inviting the entire membership of the committee to his home for lunch. When we arrived there, we found a banquet spread out and, in addition to the members of the committee, a number of the active workers and even the wine expert, Widell, were gathered. (After the Second World War, I learned from a son of Widell's that he had been liquidated as a "counter-revolutionary" when Stalin perpetrated his mass murders.)

I must admit that I had no idea where so much food and drink came from. The guests grew more and more animated from the wine; there was no dearth of speeches and several uninhibited confessions about their feelings regarding my Jewish origin. Even though I had become a little groggy myself from a generous intake of wine, my head was clear enough to remember that the very same evening a special meeting would take place at which the new committee was to submit a report about my instructions to them and where I would bid them farewell. I therefore proposed that we break off the banquet and, if any liquor remained, it should be consumed after the meeting. My proposal was accepted and, since a few hours remained prior to the meeting, the crowd took a siesta on the freshly-cut hay.

The mass meeting was carried out in the same mood as that of the previous day, and the leave-taking was most cordial. In such a small community there are few secrets and it was common knowledge that we had had a banquet at the home of the new chairman and that, after the meeting, the remaining food and drink would be consumed. When I returned to the home of the chairman I found a considerable crowd. Outside stood several tables laden with food and drink. A number of workmen with their wives arrived, everyone bringing something to eat and a couple of bottles of wine. It soon appeared that the entire population of Abrav-Durso was present.

I don't know to this day how late the crowd remained - nor how I managed to get to my own bedroom that night. I only recall that at seven the next morning the automobile which was to take me back to the city arrived and that when the chauffeur came to awaken me I had a powerful hangover. When I was able to clear my head somewhat I found that, near by my bed were standing three large bottles of wine and a case containing bottles of wine and champagne and another case of foodstuffs. As I prepared for the journey the chauffeur poured two large glasses of wine and assured me that this would alleviate the hangover somewhat.

Since I was uncertain if I would ever have another opportunity to visit Abrav-Durso, I asked the chauffeur to drive up to the highest point around, from where I would gain a panoramic view for the magnificent surroundings. The entire area was surrounded by towering mountains and deep valleys, a landscape of exquisite, breathtaking beauty.

The road leading away from Abrav-Durso had become known as "the road of the drunkards," partially of course because of the main industry of the area but also because nature herself was intoxicating in her splendor in the area. The air was filled with the fragrance of the wild flowers which grew in profusion all around the road, which wound and curved in serpentine fashion. Nevertheless, our car sped onward at breakneck pace, and only the firm hands of the young driver kept us from the abyss below.

Still in a semi-somnolent state, I began to draw up a mental balance sheet of what had been accomplished during my brief stay in Abrav-Durso. The basic question to which I sought an answer was whether or not the average person of that day, brought up under a feudal-capitalistic system, could transform himself, as well as his environment, overnight as it were, and become a pioneer of a new society built on a foundation of freedom and equality. We had been told repeatedly that we were utopians; so I searched for an answer as to whether or not Utopia can be attained here and now with persons who only yesterday had no conception of what "Socialism" meant (to say nothing of "Anarchism").

Through my mind raced images of what Abrav-Durso had been like when I first arrived there; when it was one of the numerous estates which the Czar's family owned throughout Russia, and on which bureaucratic officials kept the workers in a state of semi-serfdom. With the exception of a handful of the residents who may have had some connection with the clandestine revolutionary movement, the mass of the people had no notion of that movement; yet these self-same workmen, innocent of what was going on around them, had succeeded in a brief period of time in setting an example for the world - that under suitable conditions of freedom, a human being can become a free designer of his own life and that of his fellow man, and also assume full moral responsibility. In other words, when "anarchist utopia" is given a chance to assume reality, political blackmail loses its influence on the masses at large.

When we reached Novorossiysk, I felt assured in my own mind that my labors at Abrav-Durso had not been in vain. I was convinced that the noble experiments in Abrav-Durso and

in Novorossiysk provided proof to the world that, fortified with good will, one can construct a new social order founded on freedom.

As soon as we arrived in Novorossiysk, I received news which called for a prompt decision as to whether or not we should engage in a civil war with the Bolsheviks in the city. An engineer and a skilled worker, both employed in the cement factories and harboring strong sympathies for the anarchist movement, had reported to Katya Garbova that they had received a letter signed by the secretary of the Bolshevik party and by the chairman of the political soviet. The letter invited them to a meeting where the issue would be discussed of whether the former management of the factories and shops should be restored and the present administrative committees should be abolished. This was tantamount to a declaration of war by the Bolsheviks against the anarchists.

In addition to the two mentioned above, several others of the former elite came to us to ask what could be done. The majority of them had already become adjusted to the new order. To be sure, they had been shorn of their privileges, but at least they felt they were on an equal footing with all of their co-workers. There was no retaliation or revenge practiced against them, as was being done where the Bolsheviks had control. For this reason they had developed great confidence in our group. We urged them to wait for a day or two, during which time our group would take a position and duly inform them.

On the second day after my arrival in the city, our group held a secret meeting – not even friends and sympathizers knew when and where the meeting was taking place. All those present pondered earnestly the question of what was to be done. We were fully aware that if we gave the go ahead signal to the workers, who incidentally were all well-armed, the Bolsheviks would be subjected to such a blood bath that the survivors would never again dare to attempt to seize control. However, with the exception of one member, we were all opposed to a blood bath. Furthermore, because so many of the militant workmen had gone to the fighting front of the Civil War, the fight would be a difficult one. At the same time the Bolsheviks had gained a number of new adherents from those who had been evacuated from other cities, plus a substantial number who had remained in the city after the battle fleet docked in Novorossiysk. Cognizant as we were of the plans of the Bolsheviks and of the general situation of the civil war then in progress, the majority of our group did not want to assume the moral responsibility for opening a new front in that struggle. Even now, a half-century later, I am still not certain whether our decision to give up the great experiment was a wise and proper one. I leave it to history to pass judgment on this matter. Of one thing we were certain; in the course of nine months we had demonstrated convincingly that it was possible to put into practice the "Utopia" of free anarchist cooperation and to do so successfully in everyday life.

The success in Novorossiysk cannot properly be attributed (as was done by our late Comrade Maximov) to anarcho-syndicalist activity, because our group did not contain more than one or two members with that orientation. The activity of our group, in Novorossyisk as well as in Abrav-Durso, cannot be compressed within the narrow framework of any one sector of anarchist ideology. The truth of the matter is that we succeeded in carrying through to success this great undertaking with a small group which harbored divergent views. This fact, however, did influence our decision not to follow a path leading toward civil war.

There was still another reason which impelled us to take the more pacifist tack. several members of our group had begun to yearn for the more "romantic" anarchism. The practical, everyday work among the masses had ceased to interest them. The pre-revolution slogans about conspiracies, expropriation, etc., still buzzed in their heads. It became increasingly clear that several of

our comrades were prepared to abandon our group at any moment, thus imperiling our entire constructive effort. With all these factors in mind, we finally agreed to summon a special session of all delegates to the economic soviet to avoid having the Bolsheviks exploit our decision. At the same time, we wanted to inform the workers about the letter dispatched by the Bolsheviks to all officials in the shops and factories.

A few days later, this special meeting was held, attended by all activist and interested workers, in addition to the regular delegates. Our little plot to keep the purpose of the meeting secret from the Bolsheviks succeeded completely. Only after our group had presented its report was one of the Bolsheviks present able to communicate it to the top leadership of that faction, which happened to be conducting a meeting in the very same building.

Our report was brief and to the point: that we had learned that the Bolsheviks were resorting to all possible means to liquidate the economic soviet and the Internal Affairs Committee, as well as all the other changes which we had brought about since the very first days of the October revolution. We acknowledged that we had studied the situation from all angles and felt that it could only lead to a bloody fight and therefore had decided to renounce our efforts in order to avoid such a tragedy.

The Bolshevik leaders present were not aware that we knew about the secret circular they had sent out. So the secretary, Rubin (later slain by the Whites), asked for the floor. Playing the innocent role, he expressed his surprise that the anarchists were giving up their useful activity, and pretended that the Bolsheviks had no intention of hindering the productive efforts of the economic soviet. He spoke in this tenor for nearly half an hour, unaware that he was about to touch off a bombshell. We had previously agreed that, in the event the Bolsheviks attended the meeting and a reply was called for, our spokesman would be Katya Garbova and myself.

When Katya took the floor to reply to Rubin, she began with a plea to the audience to keep calm and not to indulge in any aggressive outbursts, regardless of what either of us said. She then presented a brief survey of what the city had accomplished in the course of the past nine months thanks to its labor elements. She affirmed that the results could stand as an example for all of Russia, because we had surpassed the fondest expectations of the October revolution. We had succeeded in preserving the entire industry of the city; we had educated the masses of workers and instilled in them a sense of class consciousness. They had taken over the industries and were maintaining production by means of the Internal Affairs Committee and, despite the obstacles resulting from the Civil War, were going forward with their productive effort.

The urban population, including those citizens who were not in accord with the new order, were displaying no opposition, she continued. In general, it could safely be asserted that the city was cooperating fully. In addition, a large number of workers had volunteered for the battle front to fight against the White army. Consequently, she wanted to put a question directly to the Bolsheviks: “You were here before the October revolution; you promised the workers that they and they alone would take over industry. You proclaimed that the worker is the builder of a new society. Therefore, how does it happen that, despite the fact that the workers have gone far beyond the slogans of the October revolution, you have not deemed it necessary to consult the workers, and – maneuvering behind their backs – you have circulated a secret letter among the former supervisors of the shops and factories, and have asked for a secret meeting with them with the objective of having the former bureaucrats take over control of the Internal Affairs Committees? This means that you are prepared to destroy everything the workers have built up

in the past nine months! I ask you then, where did you receive or who gave you the moral right to do that?"

When Katya Garbova concluded, silence reigned in the hall for a moment. Then the bombshell exploded. The secretary of the Bolshevik party declared that his party had received a communication from Moscow with a demand that it should approach all engineers, technicians and administrative officials and persuade them to take over the management of industry. He admitted to having arranged a secret meeting with these former officials, and promised that the political Soviet would officially discuss the matter at its forthcoming session. At the same time he sought to reassure us that it would be possible to work out a compromise under which the two Soviets could cooperate, such as in maintaining control over the former administrators. He was completely silent on the role of the Internal Affairs Committee.

It was evident that the Bolsheviks did not possess quite enough audacity to attempt the destruction of everything our small group had accomplished all at once. They knew quite well that if the anarchists should issue an appeal to the workers to smash the Bolshevik plans, they would destroy everyone and everything that stood in their path.

The meeting dragged out until dawn and still no decision was reached. We finally decided to arrange for a special meeting to examine the situation from all angles. We also announced that two days after the gathering of the political Soviet, a special session of the economic Soviet would be summoned to deal with the emerging situation.

The following day our anarchist group met to deal with the delicate problem of what position to take regarding the situation created by the Bolsheviks. A lively and passionate debate ensued. Under the abnormal stimulus of a revolutionary period, conditions create all kinds of moods and ideas and the anarchist movement was no exception in this regard. One could see how individuals react to serious problems emotionally, without taking into consideration facts, conditions or even logic.

At the very beginning of the meeting, several of our comrades advocated launching another civil war and taking over complete control of the area. All the arguments presented against this notion and all the facts relating to the question were of no concern to them. They were interested only in action. The ancient romanticism of the anarchist movement had surfaced again. Two of our members had already left Novorossiysk. The immigrant chauffeur and his family had left for Pyatigorsk, where a number of old-time anarchists were gathered with the well-known Alexanderge. All of these later were slain in the course of an assault by the White army.

The situation around us was extremely complicated. General Denikin had taken over the military leadership of the White armies and had undertaken to organize the Don and Kuban Cossacks, thus opening up a second front on the borders of the Ukraine against the Bolsheviks and Nestor Makhno's partisans.

At this point, Leon Trotsky designed a strategic stroke which he hoped would kill off two birds with one stone. The Red Army was taking a beating at the hands of Denikin; and Trotsky, who had little faith in the ability of Makhno's partisans, conceived the idea of opening up another front, so that Denikin could be enabled to destroy the partisans and also gain some respite for the Red Army. Trotsky seriously underestimated the libertarian spirit of Makhno's men and while they were in peril of being surrounded for some time, they succeeded in scoring a breakthrough and in destroying large portions of Denikin's army.

As if this were not enough, the Brest-Litovsk "peace treaty" with Germany created a situation in which the Ukraine was completely occupied by the German and Austrian armies and became

an autonomous country under Petlura and Skoropadsky. All these facts impelled our group not to indulge in romantic adventures and to accept reality. After four days of deliberations, we concluded that we did not have the power to open up an additional civil war front. We decided to inform the workers of what had happened and to let them understand that they were absolved from all moral responsibility. We further decided that whatever action the workers might decide upon, our anarchist group would back them up.

The following special meeting of the Economic Soviet was quite tempestuous. Many of the workers came fully armed, prepared to do battle with the Bolsheviks. Several members of our group spoke up to clarify the local and national situation. All issues were duly debated, our objective being to clarify the fact that it did not make sense for working people to kill each other. We emphasized that we sought to avoid bloodshed and did not crave revenge.

It was decided that mass meetings should be called at every factory and shop to acquaint the workers with the facts and with the decisions of the Economic Soviet. The delegates from the Internal Affairs Committees who took the floor were unanimously of the opinion that if the Bolsheviks were bent on destroying the Internal Affairs Committees then they must also do the work concerned by themselves. Spontaneously, there arose a spirit of passive boycott.

In the course of a week's time, the mass gatherings took place in factories and shops. The workers were embittered and depressed and prepared to resort to violent measures. For the members of our group who participated in these gatherings, it proved a difficult task to restrain them. One element remained constant however: everywhere a mood of passive sabotage prevailed.

The Economic Soviet survived another month and the Internal Affairs Committees continued to function, but the spontaneous initiative of the workers seemed to vanish overnight. To the workers it was apparent that the Bolsheviks and the former bureaucracy should do the work and should procure the requisite materials, while the mass of workers became passive onlookers. The entire arduous effort to organize the workers and begin the functioning of the Internal Affairs Committees and, above all, to encourage the workers to accept a new life based on social cooperation and individual freedom – all this had come to naught. The effort had never been easy. Workers who, for centuries had been exploited and enslaved lacked trust; they realized that our small group doubtless meant well, but they did not believe we could put our ideals into practice. We should also acknowledge that some members of our own group, immersed in the romanticism of the anarchist movement, themselves doubted the capacity of the workers to take over and administer the entire industrial and social activity of such a large city.

Our experiment in Novorossiysk entailed a tremendous expenditure of effort in its early days, but it demonstrated in everyday life that when propitious circumstances are created and no partisan political interests exist, the moral-ethical factor of reciprocal aid begins to play a larger role than the economic factor, producing a favorable climate for workers to begin building a free society, and this is precisely what took place in Novorossiysk.

But this newly-created society, built on a foundation of mutual help, was out of favour with the Bolshevik leaders from the very outset. However, since they did not play an important role in that free society they had to more or less go along with developments and assent to decisions made by the workers themselves.

Even now, they feared to carry out their scheme to shatter and eradicate the anarchist influence on the mass of workers; they knew full well that at a signal from the anarchist group the workers would annihilate them. It was for this reason that they condescended to allow the Economic Soviet to remain in existence, but of course all actual power would reside in the Political Soviet,

or more exactly, in the hands of the Bolsheviks. We, on the other hand, had not the slightest intention of becoming mere puppets in the hands of the Bolsheviks and at the same time bearing the moral responsibility for their policies. Meanwhile, events throughout the country followed their own course and, as I have frequently indicated, circumstances and events contributed to the Bolsheviks being able to seize and fortify their power throughout the country.

The Socialist movement was more interested in playing internal politics than in appeasing the peasant who had been waiting three centuries for an equitable distribution of the land and they failed to see that the muzhik's patience had run out. The Socialists asked the peasant to wait until a suitable law could be passed; the Bolsheviks exploited this policy of vacillation and bluntly told the peasant: "The land is yours - you don't have to wait for anyone's permission - take it!" Of course it was an entirely different matter and quite a contrast between what the Bolsheviks proclaimed and the way things actually worked out.

There is another indisputable fact involved here. As much as the peasants opposed the Bolsheviks, none of them for a moment wanted Czarism to return. The result was that when the Allied powers began to extend help to Kornilov, Denikin, Wrangel and other counter-revolutionary forces which were occupying portions of Russia, the Russian people rallied to rout these occupying armies, and the Bolsheviks took advantage of this by appropriating most of the weapons left behind by the occupying troops.

There were a number of other historical episodes which served to entrench Bolshevism throughout Russia and Novorossiysk was surely no exception. For instance, Denikin had concentrated his main army units in Rostov-on-Don and had begun to mobilize the Don and Kuban Cossacks, who had already been affected by the Bolshevik dictatorship. This encouraged Denikin to begin his march toward Novorossiysk, since he needed a port through which he could funnel help from abroad. This was the status of the Civil War precisely at the moment when we faced the issue of whether we should offer resistance against the Bolsheviks. Had we done so - and we were in a favourable position to do so - it would have been a service to the White Army which was sweeping on toward Novorossiysk. This is why our group decided that we would not side with the Bolsheviks, but certainly not with the Whites either.

We summoned the dedicated workers in the Economic Soviet to a meeting and, after a lengthy discussion it was decided to abolish this Soviet. A strange phenomenon occurred at this point: it was the Bolsheviks who opposed the abolition of the Economic Soviet! The Bolsheviks had come to realize that they needed the moral support of our group, which wielded great influence over the workers and they also knew that, with the liquidation of the Economic Soviet, the spontaneous initiative of the workers and their enthusiastic interest in combating the White Army would be undermined. However, despite the appeal of the Bolsheviks to the contrary, the motion to liquidate the Economic Soviet was adopted.

This marked the close of the great "Utopian" experiment that had created the proper climate for the productive worker to assume control of all creative functions as an autonomous human being who was fashioning his new life on the principles of mutual assistance.

Luck was apparently favoring the Bolsheviks from all sides. It would seem at times that they were on the verge of annihilation and suddenly, as if by magic, the wheel of fortune would turn and they would be able to extricate themselves. One advantage which they enjoyed was their policy of stopping at nothing and persisting despite all obstacles. In addition, they possessed a powerful organization in which every single member was expected to carry out the mandates

of the Party. By contrast, among anarchists of all the various shadings a vast chaos existed; the historical reasons for this are not difficult to define.

The principal hindrance to more effective and unified action by the anarchists was the romanticism which dominated all the anarchist groups, even the anarcho-syndicalists. Though the latter did believe in labor organizations, they accomplished little on the practical plane. Only a few groups sought to engage in constructive undertakings. Outstanding among them was Nestor Makhno's army of Partisans. There were also actions by smaller bands of partisans such as those of Max Cherniak (a barber from Chicago), Marusia Nikoforova and others. However, these groups were essentially military in nature and, even with the best of good intentions, they could not, under the conditions existing then, always remain in the same locality, with the result that their constructive efforts were often wasted when they were obliged to shift to new positions.

This romantic spirit of the anarchist movement produced in this period a class of comrades I would designate as "gastraliaren" (peripatetics, rovers), people who could not seem to remain in one place but who roamed from one city to another. In addition, we acquired numbers of "naliotchikes", (leeches, parasites) who attached themselves to the movement and whose "anarchism" consisted exclusively in expropriating property for their own use and sometimes worse crimes.

Novorossiysk was no exception in having its quota of "gastraliaren". However, until the end of our experiment, they had no outlet for their activity. They were bluntly told that they would be kept under surveillance and then they would move on to greener pastures. However, when we liquidated the Economic Soviet and our group was no longer engaged in a positive project, a few of our associates, having nothing else to do, reverted back to their romantic ideology. This signalled the breakup of our group, despite all we had accomplished in the way of a new social order through cooperation.

At first we would gather daily to analyze the events of the day but these meetings came suddenly to an end. They had been held in the home of Katya Garbova, but when we arrived there one day we found the door locked. We were puzzled by this and Vanya Budnik and I went to the residence of Olga Laich where, to our surprise, we found Katya Garbova and several other members of our group enjoying themselves around a table laden with food and drink. Two of the participants were strangers to us and their appearance made us suspicious. It was evident that our unexpected arrival tended to disrupt the cheerful atmosphere which had existed there. Not being particularly timid by nature, I bluntly asked why the daily get-togethers had stopped and why they had not deemed it necessary to inform us; and also who were these two interlopers ("gastraliaren").

Olga Laich, a new and somewhat shy comrade, first of all introduced these two characters to us. One was Safein (the name was know to me as one of the Odessa "naliotchikes") and the other one, if I am not mistaken, was called "Sergei the sailor". Olga Laich apologized for not duly informing us about the meetings - she thought that Katya kept us informed. I then asked my second question; was it permissible to know for what purpose these two "comrades" had come to join the Novorossiysk group? Since Katya sat there, abashed over her uncomradely behavior, Olga took it upon herself to explain as follows: "They have an important mission to perform and are carrying a large amount of money with them. Inasmuch as a Civil War is raging everywhere, they want Katya Garbova and myself to accompany them. In addition, they want the other comrades to organize a partisan army in the Caucasus Mountains and are prepared to contribute considerable funds for this purpose."

When I asked where the money came from I was told that it belonged to the Moscow Soviet regime. Inquiring further, I pursued the question of why we should risk the lives of four comrades when the simplest procedure would be to turn the funds over to the Bolshevik Party here in the city, obtain a receipt and thereby their mission would be accomplished. "If you want to organize a partisan force, we are prepared to help you," I stated, "but you would have to initiate it and remain right here."

Both Safein and Sergei began to argue that they alone were responsible to the Soviet Government for the money and therefore could not accept my proposal to turn over the funds to the Bolsheviks in Novorossiysk, nor could they remain here to mobilize a partisan force. I soon realized that Sergei was casting covetous eyes on the naive and goodhearted Olga, and that she had become infatuated with the belief that this adventure constituted an important anarchist undertaking. She allowed herself to be seduced and later to become Sergei's wife. I have no idea what eventually became of the money or what its real source was. I do know that, in those days, anyone who had the impulse printed money. I rather suspect that Safein and Sergei owned a printing press and made counterfeit currency and that their wondrous tale was only an invention for the benefit of the unsuspecting Olga and the more practical minded Katya to persuade the two girls to accompany them.

Without previous consultation, Vanya Budnik and I emphasized that we would not take part in their adventure to organize a partisan army, nor would we have anything to do with their money. We also told them we assumed no responsibility for Olga and Katya. If they wanted to go along as two women, they might do so, but not in the capacity of members of our group. We added that we thus terminated our participation in the great experiment effected by our group in the course of the past nine months. We left Olga's house without even saying goodbye.

That same evening I ran into Olga on the street and she tried to convince me that in two weeks' time she would return and we would work together again. She argued that it was her duty to help the two comrades and that Katya felt the same way about it. I had a high regard for Olga, both as a comrade and as a person, and it pained me to see her fall into such a hideous trap. I vented my opinion about their venture but my words fell on deaf ears. Two or three days later, the four of them left Novorossiysk and that was the beginning of the end of our group. Shortly afterwards, Vanya Budnik and Katya Izviekova also left, leaving only a couple of members behind. This signalled the final end of our experiment.

Difficult as it was to reconcile myself to the thought that this model example of human cooperation had been shattered, matters became even worse when conspicuous symptoms began to appear of the destruction of the promising beginnings of the great Russian Revolution. To this day the Bolsheviks are being accused of derailing the great social revolution. That is indeed a fact, but at the same time one needs to pose the question: Was there any moral or physical force that was capable of checking the Bolshevik Party?

The only available moral power that could have done so was the anarchist ideal, which was capable of inspiring the Revolution to strike deeper roots throughout Russia. Anarchism possessed the requisite moral strength to do so; but regretfully, the old-time anarchist romanticism which came to the fore during the Revolution prevented the creation of the large cadres of constructive co-workers in the anarchist movement. Adherents of the philosophy dreamed a beautiful dream, but developed nothing of a constructive nature to make it a reality. The experiment in Novorossiysk and those in a few other places were not adequate enough nor great enough in scope in themselves to arrest the false course followed by the Bolsheviks. Still, these experiments

in miniature did prove historically that Utopia can be transformed from a dream into a great and splendid reality.

The few comrades who did remain in Novorossiysk would come together from time to time, and the former chief figures in the Economic Soviet would also attend. We would discuss the general; condition of the country and, in particular, of the situation around Novorossiysk. We learned that General Denikin's White Army was on the march toward our city. Since we has severed our relations with the Bolsheviks, we could extract no information from them about the general situation, or whether they had any plans for evacuation in the event Denikin reached the city. To all our enquiries they replied with the "line" that all was going well at the front and that Denikin would never succeed in reaching Novorossiysk. Despite their assurances, we felt that things were not nearly as rosy as they would like us to believe.

Actually of course, they were not telling us the truth. The situation around Novorossiysk was becoming more and more critical. The only escape from the city was by way of the Black Sea; but there were no means of transportation at hand for this purpose. The few small craft available were under the control of the Bolsheviks and furthermore there was no place to go! The Crimean Peninsula was controlled by the Crimean Democratic Regime who looked askance at anyone coming from Novorossiysk. This situation was duplicated in the independent Georgian Republic. All this resulted in a trap for anyone who would have to flee from the city in the event of a White Army assault.

If I remember correctly, it was about mid-August or September when I approached the Soviet and attempted to sound them out on conditions at the front. I had a close friend in the military commissariat who held the post of military commissar. Normally he would give me a friendly smile, but this time I could see he was deeply worried. When I asked him point-blank how things stood, he made a gesture which indicated that all was not well. I also noticed that he was putting portions of his documents into an attache case, and destroying large sections of the rest. This was a clear indication of how matters stood.

We began to ponder the thought of how to break away from the city. We decided that Bessie and our son should remain in Novorossiysk for the time being, since we were fairly confident that the invaders would not molest women and children. We were waling along the street one day, absorbed in thought, when cannon shells began to burst around us. Before long a panic broke out in the city and the remnants of the Red Army began to evacuate in the direction of the Caucasus Mountains.

It is said that history repeats itself and this was the case with me. I was now in the same spot I had been in in 1905 when, following the memorable six-week Soviet revolution, the Czarist military units assaulted Novorossiysk. It was scarcely feasible to make a dash for home, since as soon as the firing on the city began, suspicious looking elements made their appearance. I went into the shop of a cap maker who was a friend of the family. He immediately closed up his shop and I had a place to spend the first night. Our friend also informed my wife of my whereabouts.

Towards nightfall, General Denikin's army marched in and began a wave of searches and arrests. I could not remain safely in the shop so the next day I went to the home of another friend. He managed a laundry but I was known here to the workers and the shop had an open door with soldiers and officers of the White Army moving in and out all day. It was necessary to locate a shelter where I could hide out until things quieted down. I finally located a spot in the center of the city with a family who were close friends and who operated a tailor shop. When they learned that I needed a hiding place they invited me to come over that evening and

they would provide a room for me. Moving from one place to another in the city entailed some risks. Residents who had suffered financially from the new order lent aid to the White Army and spies circulated in the center of the city. Anyone at whom the finger of suspicion was pointed was arrested immediately. Luck was on my side however and I arrived safely at my destination, where the door was kept open for me.

I was treated to a pleasant evening meal and a bed in which to sleep but I found it impossible to fall asleep. During dinner I heard a commotion outside and when I stole a glance through the window I was horrified to find that in the large courtyard a unit of the Kuban Cossacks had been dispersed and some of them were coming into the house. Throughout the night there was much tumult among these Cossacks, who were conducting searches and helping themselves to anything in sight.

I remained confined in my room for a week, surrounded on the outside by the Cossacks. I will only relate one incident of the many that occurred that could drive one to a heart attack. One day as I was sitting by the window, I suddenly observed the proprietor of my mother's apartment entering the shop, accompanied by two officers. I was certain that he was conducting the officers to arrest me, since he was quite capable of such a trick. Besides, he was angry with me because some time before I had destroyed several hundred pails of his wine. I reached for my automatic pistol and prepared to receive my "guests", who were now only two rooms away from me. I could hear the murmur of their voices but couldn't make out what they were saying. An hour later they left and my friend came in to explain. It seems the man had only brought along the officers to order new uniforms from my friend.

What tricks destiny plays on us! The rogue had looked for me all over the city and here he had been only a few steps from me and didn't know it. Bessie, my mother and my elder sister began to plan how to get me out of the city. It wa dangerous to go by train and the only rational route was by sea. As soon as the White Army units had penetrated the city, a fleet of small craft had gone into action, sailing as far as Kerch. But to go there required a permit from the occupying authorities, no easy thing to obtain. My mother, who for several decades had maintained a home restaurant, frequently had to hand out graft to the higher police officials, since not all Jews coming into the city had the right to remain there longer than 24 hours. It turned out that one of these officials, who had resigned his post after the October revolution and had not taken part in any political activity, had been appointed by the Whites as police superintendent. By chance, this official had learned of my attitude regarding the captured officers which I related previously and had a kindly feeling toward me. When my mother sought his help, he immediately affixed his seal to my passport and I obtained permission to leave the city.

There was still no certainty if my departure would go unhindered, and my sister decided to accompany me as far as Kerch. She made preparations through an acquaintance to leave on Saturday evening, leaving me only one remaining problem - how to reach the boat in safety, a bit of a challenge since I was known throughout the city and any enemy could spot me and betray me to the police.

Again luck intervened. In the house where we lived was another couple and the wife's younger sister. The sister had taken no active part in our movement but she spontaneously offered to drive me to the boat. This was a very courageous and magnanimous gesture on her part and we debated a bit with ourselves about placing her in jeopardy. However she persisted in her offer and we had no choice but to accept. I suggested she go in and out of the house where I was staying several times a day so that the neighbors and the Cossacks posted in the courtyard would become

accustomed to seeing her. I also told her I would engage a friendly coachman, Pyotr, who I trusted. He even declined to accept any pay for the job and arrived right on the dot with his carriage and two frisky horses.

All dressed up like a "dude", I ran at top speed from the house to the carriage and in a matter of a few seconds we were riding off down a side street. This was done so quickly that none of the people around the house had any chance of seeing who came out or who the young woman in the carriage was.

As we approached the boat, Pyotr slowed down so as not to appear conspicuous, since at the pier there were ment on the alert to see who was departing. Alongside the boat the young lady embraced me and gave me a hearty goodbye kiss, so as to make my leaving appear normal. I grasped my suitcase and in a moment or two was on board. In the distance I could see the police superintendent standing on the wharf and, as we shoved off, he waved goodbye to me with his handkerchief. A half hour later we were on the open sea and I was a free man again. After nearly two weeks of insecurity and fear I felt a great sense of relief. Before long I fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

About ten the next morning my sister woke me to tell me we were approaching Kerch. Thus ended the first chapter of my participation in the Russian Revolution.

t that time Kerch was a part of the Crimean Democratic Republic, governed by right-wing socialists and liberals. General Denikin was moving to capture the Crimean Peninsula, but at the time I arrived there it was still possible to assemble freely and to conduct discussions. To be sure, supreme power was in the hands of the Germans who were occupying the peninsula, but they did not interfere in internal or local affairs.

There was no anarchist group in Kerch, but several comrades did make their homes there and in addition, there were a number of Bolshevik activists from Novorossiysk. Small craft brought new arrivals from that city every day, mostly those who had taken part in the revolution. Before long Kerch was harboring a large number of people, mostly young, from Novorossiysk, belonging to a variety of political factions. Since public political activity was largely excluded, the newcomers would get together often, engage in discussions and seek to learn something from the errors which the Bolsheviks had made in demolishing the superb social reconstruction work which the anarchists had achieved.

But while pleasant hours were spent in these discussions, there was no possibility of any organizational activity. In the first place our status was only semi-legal in the city. Secondly, the city was virtually devoid of any industry. Furthermore, fresh rumors circulated daily that Denikin was about to seize the Crimean Peninsula and we were all thinking earnestly about leaving Kerch. This led of course to the question of where to? Travel in general was quite perilous because as soon as one left the peninsula, one ran into the various occupying armies, which might change every 50 miles or so. In addition to Skoropadsky and Petlura, various other factions were operating. For instance, when travelling from Perekop, on the extremity of the Crimea, up to Kharkov, one would encounter any number of "governments," each of which would halt the train, stage a search and examine passports. In fact, one spent more time stopping at stations than moving.

I knew that there must be a large number of our comrades in Kharkov but I had no idea where to find them. I nevertheless decided to go to that city; but deciding to go and getting there were two different matters. Since I was so to speak a "citizen of Kerch" and had acquaintances among the wholesale fish dealers, I managed to obtain credentials identifying me as an employee of these

dealers, travelling from city to city to see that their merchandise was not held up at railroad stations.

With these credentials I managed to arrive in Kharkov without undue difficulties, but after a two week search I was still unable to locate any of our comrades. Meanwhile I had received a letter from my wife telling me that she and our son had found a means to get to Kerch, so I returned to that city. I found pretty much the same situation there as before, except that several of our people had left for central Russia. Soon Bessie and our son arrived in Kerch and we spent about two months together. Then a news story appeared in the local press to the effect that the Crimean government had arrived at some kind of an understanding with General Denikin, who would soon assume military control of the area. At about the same time, some rather sinister individuals began to appear in the city, spying on the refugees from Novorossiysk and it was obvious that the situation was worsening from one day to the next.

By December of 1918, it became manifest to us that black reaction was gaining the upper hand. Bessie had suffered a fall and was confined to her bed, and since we were living with our relatives - splendid people - at the time, I decided toward the middle of December to leave Kerch and go again to Kharkov, while Bessie and our son would, for the time being, remain in Kerch.

I travelled again on the same documents, but this time an incident occurred that nearly cost me my life. To get from Kerch to Kharkov it was necessary to change trains at Perekop. Since the whole transportation system was in a state of total confusion, one could never be sure when the train would arrive or leave. It was only on my arrival at Perekop that I found out I would have a four to five hour wait.

Since Perekop was at that time occupied by Denikin's Kuban Cossacks I thought it unwise to roam around the depot where soldiers were posted and instead took a walk around the city. On my way, I encountered a band of Cossacks, among whom were several of those who had accompanied me to Trebizond to procure weapons and ammunition for the civil war. I pretended not to notice them and turned into a side street. Before long however, I noticed that a group of armed Cossacks was marching toward me. They directed me to follow them to the command post. They led me back to the depot and took me to a room where three Cossack officers sat around a table. These three examined my passport, which appeared to be in order and interrogated me as to my business in Perekop. I answered that I was employed by a fish trading concern to keep tab on barrels of fish being shipped to Kharkov. At this point they called in four of the Cossacks and inquired of them the purpose of our trip to Trebizond and whether or not they thought I was a Bolshevik. They replied that they didn't know whether or not I was a Bolshevik but that I had treated them well on the trip. One of the three officers then proposed that they send me to Novorossiysk, where they could verify who I really was.

I had noticed that the head officer had treated me with some consideration and was not in favor of returning me to Novorossiysk. I also knew that Perekop was still under the jurisdiction of the Crimean government. I therefore demanded, on the grounds that I was a Crimean citizen, permission to telegraph the Crimean authorities about my arrest without any evidence of guilt. The commanding officer replied that I was not under arrest, but that they wanted to know why I had gone to Trebizond to perform a mission. I answered that I had been out of work at the time and had taken the job just as the Cossacks had done. The three officers went out of the room and left me to myself. They returned half an hour later, assured me that the entire incident was a misunderstanding and that I could proceed on my way. They even offered to help me if I should have any difficulty with my fish.

I walked out of the station scarcely daring to believe I was a free man. Still I was not at all certain I had finished with the Cossacks. However when the train arrived, the four Cossacks who had placed me under arrest helped me find a good seat in the coach and wished me a safe journey. In spite of this I knew I was not completely safe until I had crossed the border of Denikin's area of control. It was about midnight when the train arrived at the border and here a number of persons were arrested. When the Cossacks entered my coach to inspect passports, I thought my end had surely come. I was greatly surprised when the officer glanced at my passport and remarked that I was holding a permanent passport and was a good citizen. I could hardly believe my ears.

Shortly afterwards the train was on its way and after that nerve-wracking experience I slept like a log. I don't know how long I slept but I was awakened at a station when a military inspector from the Skoropadsky regime demanded that I show my passport and declare where I was bound for and why. I told the same story - that I was accompanying a shipment of fish to Kharkov. Without further trouble he handed me my passport with still another rubber stamp imprint. Before reaching Kharkov we were stopped three more times and each time more people were detained. The same story was repeated when we were detained by a group of Makhno's partisans. They also arrested a group of officers and some speculators on whom merchandise or large sums of money were found. When we were detained by this band, I went into the station and met there some of my comrades; they told me that a number of our associates were in Kharkov but they didn't know their clandestine address.

Upon my arrival in Kharkov I went to the home of one of my sisters who lived there. I could sense in the atmosphere the nervous tension of the officials of the Skoropadsky government as well as of the merchants. There was a feeling that this regime would not remain in power long.

Days passed and I was still unable to locate any of my comrades. It is never an easy matter to locate a secret rendezvous in such a large city. But again luck intervened. My sister asked me to accompany her one day to the market to make some purchases. It was shortly before the winter holidays and swarms of peasants were arriving with wagonloads of foodstuffs which the populace was buying for the holidays. Suddenly I heard the familiar hoarse voice of Katya Izviekova, who was standing only a few yards away. Even though I approached her quietly and cautioned her not to make a commotion, she was so taken by surprise that she gave a cry of joy, threw her arms around me and began to kiss me, creating such a commotion that people passing by stopped to see what was going on. She introduced me to two young comrades who had accompanied her shopping, and informed me that there wee a number of comrades in Kharkov. She arranged to meet me in the afternoon and to conduct me then to the secret meeting place. I noticed that she was carrying around quite a stack of Kerensky currency and asked her whether she had become rich. She answered that there need be no worry about money; the peasants were anxious to acquire large amounts of this currency. I might mention parenthetically here that anyone with access to a printing press in those days was quite likely printing their own Kerensky currency.

Despite the hectic preparations for the holidays, the situation in Kharkov was tense. It was known that the Red Army was on the march to seize the Ukraine and, in addition, there was a bitter battle being waged throughout the Ukraine by the partisan units, the strongest of which was the band of Nestor Makhno. Significant groups of partisans were also being led by Max Cherniak, an emigre from Chicago where he had worked as a barber; and by the sailor, Anatoli Zhelenzniakov, who had, incidentally, dispersed the Constituent Assembly. Still another unit was under the leadership of Marusia Nikoforova. In general, throughout Russia, there were scores of

"anarchist partisan bands" who fought against both the Reds and the Whites. All these partisan bands played considerable roles in destroying the White Armies and helping the Red Army to occupy large areas in which the Bolsheviks entrenched their authority.

Had there been any kind of coordination or constructive strategy among these anarchist partisans, the revolution might have taken an entirely different turn. Certainly there was no dearth of resolute fighters among the anarchists. concerning this, the historian of the future will find abundant reference material in the three-volume story of the Mahkno movement and also in the newspapers and magazines which were smuggled out of the country and can now be found in principal libraries and universities throughout the world.

At the appointed time that afternoon I arrived at the rendezvous and found Katya Izviekova and several other comrades waiting for me. We made our way to a clandestine residence where I met a number of comrades who had come over with me from the United States, as well as many others whom I met for the first time.

At that time, Kharkov harbored a large number of anarchists of all shadings. A large portion of them had arrived only recently from Moscow, fleeing from the dreaded Cheka which was carrying out numerous arrests among the anarchists. It seems that a large scale expropriation had been effected and a considerable sum of money had been seized. Actually the Bolsheviks did not know who the guilty parties were, but simply launched a wave of mass arrests among the anarchists and other leftist groups. Still another reason for this exodus was that it was generally felt that Skoropadsky's days were numbered and most felt safer being close to all the anarchist partisan bands.

At the meeting place that evening, we had a hearty meal and this was followed by a meeting attended by people of many diverse shadings of ideology. I gathered that the majority were members of the newly-created "Ukrainian Confederation" or "Nabat", directed largely by comrade V. Voline, though its principal activist and driving force in Kharkov was Joseph Goodman, a veritable dynamo of energy. Several of the comrades who had returned that day from Makhno's army submitted a report on the army's activities and on events at Gulyay-Pole, headquarters of the Makhno forces. Another comrade presented a report direct from Max Cherniak's unit, which was marching toward Kharkov and confidently expected to occupy the city in a few days. I also learned that the Nabat faction owned a bookstore where its members met daily.

The meeting lasted until late at night, and those who had no police permits spent the night at the house. Among this group were Joseph Goodman and myself and we spent the entire night talking. He had to hear about all that had happened at Novorossiysk from beginning to end and all that we had been through. From his frequent sighs of sympathy, I could tell that he was experiencing in his mind all that I was recounting to him.

The sun was casting its first rays through the windows when we finally decided to catch a few winks; but before he fell asleep, Goodman insisted that I promise to remain and collaborate with the Nabat faction. I replied that he must at least give me a few days to acquaint myself with the members and their activities. When I awoke toward noon, Comrade Goodman was no longer in the house, but he had given instructions to let me sleep in peace. Katya Izviekova prepared a respectable meal for the comrades who had stayed over. After the meal I asked her to take me to the bookstore, since I had been told that a number of the American emigres who had come over with us frequented the shop.

The bookstore had the appearance of a continuous mass meeting. Despite the fact that power in the city still lay in the hands of Skoropadsky, the flame of revolution burned brightly in this shop,

and the philosophy of anarchism in all its facets was being debated continuously, and sometimes rather stridently. I met several comrades whom I had known from the United States. I wanted to inquire after several others specifically but in the tumult it was impossible to speak softly and I therefore simply asked where I might be able to find them all. The answer was that I could meet them at "Chana's". I asked who Chana was and was told that she was Becky Lerner's stepsister and that her apartment was frequented by many American comrades.

We were greeted at Chana's home by a woman with a pleasant smile who asked, "Are you an American? Don't be bashful; come in and make yourself at home." This was Chana herself and it is worthwhile to pause and write a few lines about this gracious woman. She was a religiously inclined woman, not at all a revolutionary orientation, but since her sister's friends were in need of help, particularly in the days of the reactionary Skoropadsky regime, her home had become the rendezvous and address for the many Americans who made their way to Kharkov. Her generosity overcame her fear of a possible raid by the police and her home was full of people who would find it "unhealthy" to be found there by the authorities.

I met many emigres in her home from America who were already preparing to leave Russia and travel toward the Grodno area. The guests remained there until late that night, and by then Chana would not hear of our leaving and contrived to find a place to sleep for everyone. Her home took on the aspects of an inn, but who was in a mood to sleep that night? Conversation again went on until sunrise.

In the course of the several weeks I spent in Kharkov, I paid frequent visits to Chana's house. After leaving I lost all trace of her and this woman, so closely resembling Gorki's "Mother", faded from my memory. In 1952 or 1953, in Miami, Florida, when I chanced to enter the guest house conducted by her sister Becky and her brother-in-law, Mr. Grinshner, I came across an elderly lady with a winning smile who somehow looked familiar. Only when she began to talk to me did the tone of her voice bring me back to the distant days of Kharkov in the year 1918.

During the winter days we would often meet her in Miami and chat about those stormy days of long ago. She passed away in August of 1962. Here was an unforgettable person, whose innate kindness and generosity was stronger than the fear of danger; and which transcended the bounds of diverse convictions. People were in need of friendship and she gave it to them in generous measure, even though they did not share her religious principles.

The Nabat group was staging a meeting and I was invited to present a report on our activities in Novorossiysk. It created a deep impression and many questions were asked. The entire matter was new to this gathering, for although they had engaged in propaganda activities, they could see no constructive results. When I told them how small a number of comrades had actually participated in the immense constructive undertaking, I could see disbelief in their faces. Had it not been for Katya Izviekova's confirming testimony, many of them would surely have thought I was exaggerating.

Among the matters discussed at the meeting was the founding of a weekly publication titled U.N. Nabat (under this title, newspapers were appearing in several Ukrainian cities), as soon as Skoropadsky's authority disappeared. An editorial committee for this venture was selected and there was also an exchange of views about procuring anarchist literature. The only place it could be obtained was from Moscow and that was out of the question at present since the Bolsheviks had seized full control of the railways.

I became acquainted with a number of new comrades at this meeting. Many of the names have faded from my memory but among those with whom I collaborated at the time I was active in

Nabat were Yasha and Leo Gotman (emigres from Detroit I believe), Vanya Tarasuk Kobas, Mark Mrochny, Aaron and Fanny Baron (from Chicago), Katya and Yashke Meyer (from Philadelphia), Abraham Christos and Ivan-Apolon (from France).

In addition to those of the Nabat, there were a number of other comrades representing all nuances of ideology. Every day new comrades would arrive and new groupings began to crystallize. The largest and most active group was the Nabat. There was also a somewhat less numerous anarcho-syndicalist group which boasted little influence and accomplished little more than conducting meetings and engaging in debates. In addition there was a Jewish group of comrades who were seeking a means of reaching Grodno, at that time belonging to Poland, and a faction of anarcho-individualists, of whom I shall speak later.

A day or two before the Russian holidays, the population of Kharkov woke to find itself abandoned by the Heidamakes of Skoropad- sky's army and the city was left without a ruling authority. Toward noon several horsemen appeared, rode through some of the streets and departed again. Before long many partisans began to arrive, by wagon and on foot. Several cannon were set up at strategic points and machine guns were mounted atop many of the larger houses. Shortly afterwards the general staff and commander of the partisan unit entered the city. I happened to be at the Nabat bookstore that day when Joseph Goodman called on me to follow him as he wished to take me to a countryman of mine.

We made our way to the general headquarters, located in one of the larger hotels. Goodman exhibited a pass which had been issued to him by Nestor Makhno and we were admitted promptly. Inside, I noticed one man who was draped with weapons from head to foot and who hurled commands to the partisans. He looked so familiar that I was certain I had met him previously. When this one-man arsenal noticed Goodman and myself, he approached us, called out my name and threw his arms around me. I had to peer through his long beard for a moment before I recognized him as Max Cherniak, the barber from Chicago.

I could scarcely believe my eyes. In Chicago he had not been particularly active in the movement. he was the father of two children and frequently attended our affairs together with his family. None of us could have dreamed that he possessed the capacity to lead a partisan band and wage battles against well-organized units of the White Army. I asked him how all this had come about and he replied simply that, in revolutionary times all kinds of miracles occur. Cherniak and his unit remained in Kharkov for only a few days and I did not have many opportunities to spend time with him. I encountered his wife and children later in Moscow. In the 1920's he left Russia for the Argentine or Uruguay. Our Russian-language journal, Golos Truda, heard from him several times but I have no knowledge as to what ultimately became of him or his family.

As soon as Kharkov was liberated from the Whites, the Nabat group became militantly active again and specifically began to issue the journal Nabat, which was widely circulated in Kharkov and the surrounding area. There was one comrade, of a very retiring nature, whose name I do not recall, who, immediately upon publication of an issue of the journal would pack two sacks of copies and set out through the towns and countryside to distribute the paper. He would repeat this itinerary several times a week until a new issue came out.

Those were the "honeymoon" months, when the Bolsheviks were not yet certain they could retain the whole of the Ukraine. Partisan units, mostly anarchist, were operating throughout the region, as well as Makhno's army. The Nabat group was thus able to operate without hindrance and there were no obstacles to the publication of the journal. Several publications under the name Nabat were being issued at the time, from the following cities: Odessa, Gulyay-Pole, Eka-

terinoslav, Kursk and Yelisavetgrad. In a few other places, journals would appear off the press from time to time under the same name, but would vanish after a few issues.

I should like to pause here to comment on the allegations often made in certain Jewish circles – charges not supported by any documentation – that Nestor Makhno's partisan army staged pograms against the Jews. I should like to cite a few facts which contradict these unfounded charges.

Nestor Makhno was once approached by a delegation from a partisan unit led by a certain Grigoriev, said to be a former officer, who was waging a bitter struggle against both the Reds and the Whites. He proposed to Makhno that they fuse their forces. Makhno had little confidence in Grigoriev, but he wanted to put him to the test and suggested that the two groups combine to execute a certain military mission before a decision was made to unify the two groups. Grigoriev's troops were required to pass through the city of Yelisavetgrad and on reaching that city, he and his bandit followers began to loot and stage a bloody pogram. Fortunately we had in that city an energetic Nabat group composed chiefly of young ment, who put up a furious resistance to Grigoriev's pogram-makers. In this battle three comrades were slain: Vishnievsky, a political returnee from the United States; a younger brother of Zinoviev and a younger brother of Steklov, editor-in-chief of the Moscow Izvestia. Several of the surviving comrades succeeded in escaping from Yelisavetgrad and reached Makhno's headquarters. When Makhno learned of this tragic event he ordered his subordinates to organize a special unit which he himself would lead to Yelisavetgrad.

They reached the city before dawn and Makhno ordered his men to surround it while he, with a select group, penetrated the city proper. They found Grigoriev there with his men, in a drunken stupor. Early in the morning, Makhno directed that the cloister bells be rung as a summons for the terrified population of the city. He then began a people's court-martial of the pogramists. After he had heard both the Jewish and the non-Jewish population tell their stories about the atrocities committed by Grigoriev and his gang, Makhno declared that, since Grigoriev had perpetrated his outrages while he was on a mission from Makhno's general staff, a military tribunal would pass judgment. It did not take the tribunal long to announce its verdict: the death penalty for Grigoriev and his staff. His unit was stripped of weapons and the bandit-soldiers dispersed among the places from whence they had come. The verdict was approved by the population, after which Makhno shot Grigoriev to death on the spot, while his subordinates were disposed of by a firing squad behind the city. Makhno dealt with those who falsely pretended to be affiliated with army in the same manner.

At this point I should like to record another important historical fact. An anarchist named J. Teper, whose alias was Gordyev, was for a considerable time a close collaborator of Makhno's in the partisan army. Toward the end of Makhno's campaign, Teper fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks, who knew of his work with Makhno. His arrest meant almost certain death and it appears that, in order to save his life, he proposed to the Bolsheviks that, since he repented his affiliation with Makhno, he would prove himself a loyal adherent of Bolshevism by writing a 120 page pamphlet, seeking to "prove" the fallacies of Makhno's ideology. This pamphlet was published by the Bolsheviks in 1924, at the publishing house of the "Young Worker." In that brochure one can find whatever one is looking for to "prove" that Makhno and his anarchist philosophy were in error; but nowhere is there the slightest intimation that Makhno's partisans staged pograms against the Jews. At that time the Bolsheviks were searching assiduously for the most trivial incidents in order to discredit Makhno, but even Teper, who frantically tried to save

his life by cooperating with the Bolsheviks in this sordid business, did not have the audacity to accuse Makhno of waging programs against the Jews.

The Nabat confederation appealed to me strongly, largely because Comrade Voline had begun to formulate a theory of "unitary anarchist." He made a practical approach to the question of constructive anarchism, realizing that fragmentation in our ranks made the attainment of constructive results, such as we had achieved in Novorossiysk, almost impossible. Voline's approach was basically sound and feasible, but the traditional romanticism of the anarchist movement hindered many of our associates from giving serious thought to the concept of "unitary" or unified anarchism. Instead, many of them even voiced sharp criticisms of Voline's new concept. Despite these voices of dissension in the ranks of the Ukrainian Nabat Confederation, the novel outlook and formulation attracted a number of comrades in the Ukraine and even in central Russia.

The city of Kharkov became the center of the Nabat movement and its members labored earnestly in the bookstore, the club and in the more important parks. The guiding spirit of this movement was Joseph Goodman, its main initiator, organizer and coordinator. Though of very modest appearance physically, Goodman crackled with energy and seemed to possess that mysterious talent for inducing voluntary effort even on the part of those who were not in accord with the ideas of the Nabat movement. He urged me frequently to affiliate myself with the Nabat Confederation. I did what I could to help, but I had not made up my mind whether or not to remain in Kharkov. I had to think about Bessie and our son, who had remained in Kerch and I was also dreaming about Moscow, to which the journal Golos Truda ("Voice of Labor") had been transferred from America. Besides, I had to do something about earning a living and there were no opportunities in Kharkov. It was against my principles to earn my livelihood from our movement.

This dilemma was finally resolved by a comrade named Kantorovich, who had lived for some time in Chicago. He informed me that he held a post in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs where he was well paid and had the opportunity to travel. This interested me and he advised me to contact an emigre from American named Boris Reinstein at the Foreign Affairs Commissariat. Since I had some knowledge of English I felt I would surely be able to obtain a position there.

I consulted with Joseph Goodman and told him that, while I intended to affiliate with the Nabat Confederation, I desired first to travel to Moscow to see whether I could find a position there which would afford me the possibility of traveling, as this would further our movement, particularly since the Bolsheviks controlled the entire railway system. Comrade Goodman heartily approved of my plan.

Shortly after the Nabat group had welcomed in the year 1919, I left for Moscow. I was riding in the company of a group of Bolsheviks who were delegates to the Second All-Russian Congress of Professional Persons. Several of them were of the far-left orientation and favored the proposition that the labor movement should be autonomous and free of party control. I told them of our experiment in Novorossiysk and during the two day journey this became the major topic of conversation. In fact, it almost led to a clash between the right and left wing Bolsheviks. The former invited me to the Congress, where I had my first opportunity to hear Lenin speak, to sense the mood of the dictatorship, and to take stock of what direction the Russian revolution might take. My first impressions of Lenin's speech reinforced my presentiment – but more of this later.

The fulfillment of a dream often turns out quite differently from the dream itself. Such was the case with me when I arrived in Moscow. While I was in Novorossiysk, I had little time to ponder

what was going on in the realm of reality in the general anarchist movement, particularly in such a great center as Moscow. To be sure, we had received the journals Golos Truda, Anarchia and others, but these journals gave us the impression that our groups were engaged in constructive endeavors. It is true that the news of the Bolshevik's military pogrom against the "House of Anarchism" had reached us, as well as news of the liquidation of the "Anarchia" group's functions; however Golos Truda reached us regularly and so did other journals and literature. On the other hand, I had received no news or information about how the anarchist movement in Moscow was faring during the two months or so since I had been obliged to leave Novorossiysk.

Since I had been active in the United States with the groups who published Golos Truda, and in Russia I was closely connected with the group that issued the same journal here (first in Petrograd and later in Moscow), I naturally had the address of the Golos Truda organization. On arriving in Moscow, I promptly hired a sleigh and drove to that address, where I was sure I could find comrades who could provide me with lodging in Moscow. I suffered a deep disappointment.

When I reached the address, I paid the coachman and walked over to the gate of the large building and began looking for the quarters of Golos Truda. A bitter frost was cutting at my face and I saw no sign of the office I was seeking. Fortunately a fifteen year old boy came out at that moment, with a bunch of keys in his hand and I asked him whether he knew where the editorial offices were located. He told me the journal had moved some two months ago and I acquired the new address from a neighbor who wrote it down for me.

So there I was, stuck in the street in the biting frost with no sleigh in sight. Too tired to drag along my personal effects, I offered the same boy six buns, or bagels, if he would haul my belongings on his sled, giving him one as a "deposit." The lad accepted my offer with enthusiasm and hauled my belongings along for me on his sled, then carried them up to the second floor residence of G.F. Maximov. When I handed him the rest of the five bagels in payment, he immediately fled from the scene as if he feared they might be taken back. In those days in Moscow, five bagels constituted a fortune.

I entered a large room and tapped on one of the seven or eight doors I found there. A woman emerged and told me that Maximov and his wife would return home that evening. She introduced herself as Anna Pavlova and told me that her husband Nicolai would be home soon and would be pleasantly surprised to meet me. I recalled that Pavlova was one of those to whom we used to send financial assistance through the Chicago Red Cross and that I had corresponded with him.

I learned from the Pavlovas that Yarchuk and his wife, as well as the Orgeany couple were living there. In addition, various comrades arriving in Moscow would come to stay there, and a mattress would be spread out on the floor as a bed for them. That house-keeping chore fell on Anna Pavlova as the Pavlova's section of the house was a sort of large hallway and, since I had no other accommodations, I became a guest at the Pavlova "hotel."

When Pavlova arrived home he was accompanied by two or three other comrades, and since I had brought along some edibles, we prepared tea and refreshments – a veritable banquet for these half-starved comrades. We spent the night thus, affording me the opportunity to get myself oriented about our movement in Moscow. The news was far from encouraging. Unexpectedly, Maximov arrived and invited me to visit him the following afternoon. He was eager to speak to me and I accepted the invitation.

It was very late when we retired – it would be an exaggeration to say we went to sleep. The room was unheated and our conversation provided ample food for sober reflection. I finally fell asleep just before dawn and Anna Pavlova awakened me about ten in the morning, fearing I

might have frozen to death. After being treated to a glass of hot tea and refreshments, I left to visit Boris Reinstein.

The Commissariat for Foreign Affairs was then housed in the Metropole Hotel, not too far away. The procedure in the various Commissariats was at that time still democratic, so when I inquired for Reinstein, a young woman simply led me to his office. When he learned I was an emigre from the United States he dropped his official tone and before long we were chatting away like old-time acquaintances. he inquired what faction I belonged to and when I replied that I was an anarchist he asked me if I knew any of the American anarchists, and I told him it seemed to me I knew all of them. Did I know Shatov? –Of course, I knew him well.

Saying nothing, he picked up the phone and rang Shatov. I heard him say that he had with him a young man named Boris Yelensky and I could hear another voice replying. It was Shatov's wife, who wanted to speak to me. She invited me to visit them when I had time and said that Shatov would be home the following evening. She wanted to know what I was doing at Reinstein's office and when she learned I was looking for a job, she asked to talk to him. I heard her tell him that he must offer me the post I was seeking and she urged him also to come to their home the following evening.

Reinstein telephoned the Deputy Commissar, Karochan, and told him that one of Shatov's comrades was looking for a position and that the Shatovs would vouch for him. He thought I could be useful as a diplomatic courier, since I knew English. Karochan agreed, and gave instructions that I be provided with whatever I needed. I was given half a month's salary, a voucher to the store to procure new clothing and underwear, necessary coupons for meals in a special restaurant and more coupons for a room in which to live.

Reinstein directed me to appear for work at nine o'clock the next morning so I could become acquainted with everything. A Comrade Moisey would help me. He thought that in about two weeks time I would be required to go to Kharkov. It is now the place to relate a few minor incidents, because they help to present a picture of live in Moscow in those days.

The restaurant for which I had received coupons was intended for the "elite," and I therefore anticipated receiving passable meals. As soon as I had received my orders and coupons – without coupons one could not exist then – I went straight to that restaurant which was located on the famous Tverskaya Street, not far from the Commissariat. When I arrived on the second floor where the restaurant was located, I found a very large room furnished with long tables and benches. There were very few persons dining there but, against the walls stood long benches, filled with people who seemed to be waiting for something. Some of them had worried looks on their faces.

I took a seat near the window and was immediately approached by a waitress. I ordered two meals and handed her two coupons. The menu consisted of lentil soup, lentils and tea. She brought me two plates of lentils, two bowls of lentil soup, four slices of black bread and two glasses of tea. However, after the appetizing meals in the Crimea and Kharkov, I had no stomach for these dishes, so I drank the two glasses of tea with my own sugar, ate the four slices of bread and arose to go. Immediately, there appeared some of the hungry-looking people who had been seated against the walls, begging for permission to eat what I had left. I did not comprehend at once what they wanted, but I sensed instinctively that they were suffering from extreme hunger. I ran from the dining room, too deeply saddened to look back at them.

It was difficult for me to grasp the immensity of the tragedy that was unfolding before me. It seemed almost incomprehensible that such a situation could have been created by the great

Russian revolution. Only as I emerged into the cold winter air did the full starkness of all this dawn on me.

From the restaurant I went to register at the hotel. An attendant conducted me into a room furnished with two beds. From the upholstery of the furniture it appeared that the hotel must have been rather luxurious at one time. I asked the man why it was so cold in the room and he assured me that the next day they would procure some wood so as to provide more heat. In the meantime I would be given two blankets. He also warned me to return before one in the morning because the doors were locked from one to seven and it was impossible to enter or leave.

Walking back to the hotel that night warmed me up a bit; I undressed quickly and climbed into my bed. Even with two blankets I did not feel too comfortable, but after running around all day absorbing new impressions I was worn out and soon fell asleep. I don't know how long I slept but even in my sleep I felt as if I were freezing. I got out of bed shivering from the cold, removed the blanket and mattress from the other bed and piled them on top of my two blankets, but still I did not feel warm. I put on all my clothes and shoes and again got into bed, but I was still unable to fall asleep – I felt I was turning into an icicle. I climbed out of bed again to look for the cause of this fearful cold. I did not have to search long. One of the windows, over which was hung a heavy piece of cloth, had no panes. The cloth had become like a slab of ice.

I went out of the room and tried to open the main door but it was locked. it was somewhat less cold in the corridor, so I ran back and forth up and down the length of the hallway until the attendant opened the door. I promptly fled my "privileged" hotel and found a place where I could get a glass of hot tea and warm up a bit. Then I went out to procure winter garments.

I found the store, which had apparently at one time been a shop for affluent clients and observed there was a Red Army soldier standing by the door. I showed him my pass and the order and, after examining them he rapped on the door and when it was opened turned over my papers. It took a good half hour before I was admitted into the store, where it was warm and pleasant. Since the windows of the shop were sealed with paper, you could not see from the outside what it was like inside. Only when I entered did I see the exceptionally elegant clothes for both men and women. When I asked for a fur cap with ear flaps, I was told that such merchandise was intended only for persons of higher rank than myself. It was only after lengthy bargaining and threats to telephone the Commissariat that I succeeded in emerging from the shop all decked out in warm clothing and with extra bundles under both arms.

These incidents indicate how the era of class distinction was already beginning. This was the commencement of the privileged bureaucracy in Russia.

After disposing of my official duties, I went off to see Comrade Maximov, who as already waiting for me. Maximov had a long beard and moustache at the time and insisted that I relate to him the whole story of our group's activities, from the very first day of my arrival in Novorossiysk, without omitting a single detail or incident. Throughout my narrative, a warm, comradely smile showed through his heavily bearded countenance, but at the same time he paid serious attention to all that I had to relate. We paid not heed to time and how late it was getting. Only when Maximov's wife, Olga (in the movement she was know as Olga Yaponka) entered the room, did we realize how late it was. Olga was Jewish, descended from a highly respectable family in Smolensk. I don't know just how she found her way into our movement. I knew only that she had been deported to Siberia and remained there until she was liberated by the revolution. Shortly afterwards she met Maximov. When one looked at Olga for the first time, one could imagine that the entire frigid climate of Moscow was emanating from her.

Maximov invited me to have something to eat with them, so I went over to the Pavlova's where I kept my personal effects, removed some of the foodstuffs and brought them to the Maximovs. Then, for a fleeting moment I detected a smile on Olga's face. After a modest supper, they called in the Orgeanys and Yarchuks. The white bread and buns I had brought were things they had not seen in a long time, and they had almost forgotten how they tasted. After partaking of tea and refreshments, Maximov related to them what I had told him.

Comrade Orgeany meditated deeply on the Novorossiysk experiment and commented that this was a practical approach toward the construction of a new libertarian society. Also, on the basis of the information available to him, ours was the only example of an anarchist group bringing into being an anarchist society. Since it was growing late, I had no opportunity to learn what our comrades in Moscow were accomplishing. I decided it would be better to become acquainted with the activities of all the factions before airing my impressions of the anarchist groups in Moscow.

Since I was now an employee of the government, I was obliged to report early every morning to my section of the Commissariat, where each morning tea and bread, and sometimes other refreshments were served. After all, we belonged to the "privileged class." When I arrived, I was promptly informed that after I had left the day before, Shatov's wife had called to inquire about me. I telephoned her at once and apologized for not having visited them yet and explained that I was somewhat preoccupied with personal problems. She invited me to visit them that evening as Mr. Shatov was returning from his journey. She asked that I dine with them and, since they had a spare room, I could spend the night there. They happened to be living in the Metropole Hotel, where the Commissariat itself was located. When I saw my "boss," Reinstein, he inquired how I had arranged my affairs. I told him of my experience in the ice-cold room and he told me that the Shatovs would probably see to it that I obtained a warmer one.

After a day spent in doing nothing, I made my way to the Shatov's and there met Mrs. Shatov's sister and her husband, old-time acquaintances from the American repatriate group. I at once noticed that the entire atmosphere between Mrs. Shatov and her brother-in-law was quite different from what it had been in the United States, but I pretended to see and hear nothing out of the ordinary.

After a hearty meal, I told them of my experience the previous night when I nearly froze to death. Shortly the effect of the substantial mean and the warmth in the room was such that I fell asleep at the table. Mrs. Shatov woke me and suggested I take a nap until her husband arrived. It was past midnight when a great commotion coming from the dining room woke me and amidst the tumult I could hear Bill Shatov's voice. I washed my face and went in. Shatov made a great fuss over me and introduced me to everyone, assuring them that I was his closest comrade and friend. One of the guests, who had a particularly distinguished appearance and a "Caucasian" countenance, turned out to be Karochan, Chicherin's deputy-assistant, and actually my supervising chief. Shatov and Karochan were on very familiar terms and Shatov jestingly warned Karochan that if I were mistreated, Shatov would get even with him. After all these introductions I glanced at the table and I could scarcely believe my eyes. Here in starving Moscow was a table crammed with bottles of costly beverages and food fit more for princes than for proletarians.

The participants wined and dined heartily. The bottles of liquor were consumed in short order and the food vanished just as quickly. Shatov then gave an account of his trip and explained how he had been able to assemble such a feast. In the ancient Russian city of Smolensk there was a large German military base which the Germans were now required to evacuate, and Shatov

had been delegated to negotiate with the German army staff for the sale of all military supplies. The Germans at first turned a deaf ear to the proposal but Bill Shatov sold them a bill of goods about the partisans swarming over all the roads leading back to Germany and convinced them that they would never succeed in transporting all of their material back to Germany. The result was that the loaded freight cars moved toward Moscow instead of toward Germany; and to top off the bargain, Shatov had finagled all this food and liquor from the Germans, while the Soviet regime gained possession of a huge stock of modern weapons and military supplies. The guests began to depart only toward dawn.

Apparently Mrs. Shatov had told her husband about the intolerable cold in my sleeping room, because Bill urged Karochan to find me a warm room. Karochan picked up the telephone, called the National Hotel (the first residence of the Soviets), and told them he needed a bedroom for several months. A quarter hour later word came back that a room would be available by noon. Karochan wrote a note to the manager and the following day I became a guest at the National Hotel.

As was the case with my two superiors, I slept in and came in late for work. Comrade Moisey had some bad news: a letter had been received from Kharkov (at that time the headquarters of the Ukrainian Soviet Regime, headed by Rakovsky) that they needed several English-speaking people. English and American warships were expected to arrive in the Black Sea soon and both personnel and literature were needed there.

This news wasn't at all to my liking, since I was near exhaustion from the terrific strain of Novorossiysk and the months of roaming from place to place on my way to Moscow. Besides, Denikin and his Cossacks were still holding most of the Crimea and it would be risky to travel there. I decided to go as far as Kharkov and evaluate the situation from there.

Fortune again intervened. When I came into the office the following day, I found a good friend of mine, Vladimir Tolmachov, an old-time Bolshevik. He was the military commissar of Novorssiyisk and his wife, Varvara Afanasyevno, and their two children had remained in that city. She had befriended my wife, Bessie, and they, together with several other women, had organized a Red Cross chapter and were extending help to arrested comrades and deportees who passed through. Tolmachov was an officer in the army, had been a collaborator of ours and later, during the Stalin purges, was liquidated.

I invited him to my hotel room and told him that if he could not find a room he could stay with me. I inquired about the purpose of his visit to the Commissariat and he told me it was no military secret that he was to travel to Kharkov. He had also been informed that the Foreign Affairs office frequently dispatched couriers in a special compartment or coach, and that he needed such a place for himself. I advised him not to worry, since he could ride with me.

A few days later, Boris Rienstein summoned me to his office to tell me that I would leave the following night for Kharkov to transport internationalist literature. From there I would be taken across the border to the White Army zone, where I would be given an assignment. Once more my decision was: let me get as far as Kharkov and then we shall see. An official pass was issued, identifying me as a diplomatic courier, and I was given an order to the railway officials to reserve a compartment for me. At the same time, the Cheka member for railways was directed to provide a permanent bodyguard for me, because I was carrying diplomatic documents. I was also given the requisite documents so that all civil and military railroad officials would facilitate my journey to Kharkov.

I immediately notified Tolmachov to be ready to leave for Kharkov the next day, and then went out in search of anarchist literature. At that time there were two bookstores in Moscow where basic anarchist literature could be obtained. One was the store which was the remnant of the Golas Truda; the other was in the hands of the Gordin brothers, who had succeeded in "confiscating" from the large publishing house, Izdatelstvo Sitina, a considerable stock of important anarchist books issued by that house between March and October. Between the two places, I managed to negotiate a fair amount of literature to take along to Kharkov.

I left a portion of my personal effects in my warm and comfortable room to make sure it would be held for me on my return. I distributed some of the food items I had brought with me among the employees, and naturally did not overlook the supervisor, and promised to bring back more of the same. The rest of the edibles, with the exception of what I took along for my journey, I divided among the comrades.

When I arrived the following evening at the Kursky station, I went to the station master and demanded the special permit for a compartment. He communicated with the railway Cheka and told them that the diplomatic courier had arrived, and that they should immediately provide a bodyguard. A few minutes later three Red Army men appeared, took my baggage and conducted me through a separate side door to the coach where a compartment had been prepared for me. An armed Red Army soldier stood guard by the door. The soldiers handed him a note from the commanding officer, whereupon he opened the door and admitted us. I took out one of my passes to show the Red Army man who I was and to let him know that he would be at my command until we came to Kharkov. My compartment was large enough for eight persons and there was certainly no lack of space for my packages. I arranged them on the shelves and racks and went out to look for my Bolshevik friend, Tolmachov. It was quite a trick to locate him among the several thousand passengers clamoring to get aboard, but I finally found him and, when we had obtained two full kettles of hot water, we proceeded toward the side door, since the doors for the regular passengers had not yet been opened.

When the station doors were finally opened, it took less than half an hour for the coaches and all the aisles to fill up, so that the passengers were packed like herring in a barrel. Hundreds of persons were rushing about like beavers in a frantic attempt to find a spot for themselves, even if it meant standing up.

As I looked out on this scene from the large window of the coach, I spied a small group of comrades. With some difficulty, I squirmed out of the coach and asked which ones among them wanted to go along with us. Two young women called out that they would like to ride as far as Kharkov. It required an immense effort to push our way back through the densely packed mass. When we entered our compartment, my friend Tolmachov prepared hot tea and some refreshments. We invited our bodyguard in to join us in the snack. He at first declined, but since Tolmachov was wearing an officer's uniform, he did not need too much coaxing, and finally joined our party.

After we had finished our refreshments and the train, after what seemed like an interminable delay, finally began to roll on its long journey in the darkness, I bade the two young ladies to take the upper berth while my friend and I occupied the lower. I directed the guard, who was responsible for our safety, to take a side seat and then opened the door and spoke to those who were standing in the passageway of the coach, inviting five of them to come into our compartment for an hour or so, to rest their weary limbs. The crowd sensed at once that we had no desire to

act as privileged persons, so that when we arrived in Kharkov the following day, those who had been in our coach bade us a cordial goodbye as if we had been longtime friends.

When I arrived in Kharkov, I discharged my official duties by turning over all my papers to the various Commissariats to which they were addressed. My last stop was at the place where I was to receive my instructions about when and how to report for the work assigned to me in connection with the White Army. When I entered the office, I found my friend Tolmachov already there. The chief commissar noted my cordial relations with Tolmachov, who told him that we had worked together for some time in Novorossiysk and asked about the nature of my assignment. The chief replied that I was to be dispatched to the area occupied by the White Army. Tolmachov leaped from his chair in surprise. "You don't know what you are doing," he shouted, "sending Comrade Boris to a sector of the White Army where he was so active and popular! I must confer with Comrade Rakovsky today to point out the absurdity of this action; he could be arrested by the Whites in very short order and they would surely liquidate him." The chief commissar was taken somewhat aback by this reaction, and it was quite obvious he did not want the problem referred to Comrade Rakovsky, who was at that time chief of the Ukrainian Soviet government.

The commissar walked over to Tolmachov and said in a gentle voice: "You do not need to become agitated; the question of Comrade Yelensky's work need not be taken up with Rakovsky – it can be settled right here. You know Comrade Yelensky well. What undertaking, in your opinion, should be entrusted to him?" Tolmachov replied: "Comrade Yelensky now holds the rank of diplomatic courier and is quite capable of performing his task. Let him retain that post, and when I have organized my mission, I will engage his services. To resolve the problem, I want you to promptly prepare a report containing the data I have given you, and recommend that, for the time being, he remain as a diplomatic courier. Later on, when we talk to Rakovsky, we shall request that he also sign the document." The chief commissar assented and requested me to see him the next day in order to procure all the required papers to enable me to travel back to Moscow.

I had not planned to leave Kharkov immediately as I still had a mission to carry out for our Nabat movement. I assured the commissar that I would report to him the next day, but resorted to the ruse of telling him that I suspected I had caught a severe cold en route and should have a physician examine me while I rested for a couple of days. "Of course, of course, Comrade Yelensky," replied the commissar, "you can travel when you are perfectly well."

He summoned his secretary and directed him to obtain a room for me at the Dom Sovietov (House of the Soviets), and to provide me with the requisite papers to enable me to obtain what I needed. Then he added that if I needed anything else I should come to him and he would take care of me. I tool leave of Tolmachov and the commissar, walked into the office of the secretary and obtained all the necessary documentation and my room number. I went to the house immediately and was gratified to find an elegant room with a bath, and a fairly respectable restaurant. I availed myself of these luxuries and took a nap, since I had been unable to sleep during our nights in the railway coach. I now felt that the first step to further our movement had been taken, and I enjoyed peace of mind as I fell asleep.

It was already past noon when I awoke. The two young comrades who had accompanied me on the train had already passed the word of my arrival to the bookstore and several of the comrades could not understand what had happened to me. When I arrived with the two packs of books I had brought from Moscow, they welcomed this supply as a great treasure, because such books

could not be obtained in Kharkov. My comrades were happy to see me and to hear my account of what had happened in Moscow. The two young women had already told them that I travelled on the train like a V.I.P. Above all, they were eager to know where I had procured the literature and whether more such books could be obtained in Moscow.

I reported briefly that I had obtained a post with the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs as a diplomatic courier; that they wanted to send me to a sector controlled by the White Army and that a good friend who had accompanied me from Moscow had decided such a mission would be unsafe and impractical and had prevailed on the Bolsheviks to retain me instead as a courier between Moscow and Kharkov. I also told them of the incident with Shatov and about our comrades in Moscow. I kept silent about the books; but later on Comrade Goodman questioned me privately about them and I told him that the fewer persons who knew about the literature matter, the better.

The Gordin brothers had quite a supply of Peter Kropotkin's books but they had imposed the condition that, along with the Kropotkin literature, we must also take their volumes on "socio-technology." Material of this nature could be obtained almost everywhere. I told Comrade Goodman that I could probably not remain there longer than two weeks and only that long because I had told my superiors that I was not feeling well. In the meantime, Goodman should prepare the needed funds and locate a comrade who could be entrusted to accompany me to Moscow. On our arrival in Moscow, I would find ways and means of transferring the literature to Kharkov.

While I was talking with Goodman, he told me it was well that I had come to Kharkov at this particular time, since the following Saturday and Sunday the Nabat Confederation would be holding its illegal conference. The conference had been summoned especially because Comrade Aron Baron had come from Nestor Makhno's front highly dissatisfied and with grievances and was demanding that the confederation take a stand on his complaints. This was naturally communicated to the staff of Makhno's forces, which was requested to send several spokesmen to participate in the general Ukrainian Nabat Confederation.

It was no easy task to organize a general Nabat conference at a time when the Bolsheviks were beginning to show their teeth. To begin with, the conference had to be clandestine, since many of our comrades were not on the friendliest of terms with the Bolsheviks. In the second place, it was necessary to guard the delegation from Nestor Makhno's army staff. There was also the question of finding a place big enough to accommodate a large number of our co-workers without attracting the attention of the Cheka or of the Bolshevik militants. Joseph Goodman contrived to find such a place.

There was a man in Kharkov at that time who had been active in our movement in the United States. After the October revolution, he withdrew from active participation and obtained a post which brought him into contact with the highest cadres of the Bolshevik hierarchy. In the vicinity of Kharkov, behind the city, there were groves of oak trees near which summer homes were located. This American emigre, as an official of some prestige, was given on of these summer homes for his family, located off the highway in the depths of the woods. Joseph Goodman persuaded the man to yield his summer home for the conference for two days, since the conference was to take place on Saturday and Sunday and the Kharkov residents would be having picnics in the woods so that extra persons in the area would not be noticed. Good-man guaranteed that our people would come and go from the other side of the home so that none of the neighbors would suspect anything unusual.

The man finally yielded to Goodman's importunities and, in addition, undertook to furnish meals for the two days. Since five days remained until the conference, I interested myself in becoming acquainted a bit more with some of the comrades who were previously unknown to me. As might be expected among a large group of people, I intuitively became more closely attached to some than others. I shall endeavor therefore, to sketch some of my closest companions, with whom I maintained a more cordial relationship:

Joseph Goodman, I believe, but am not positive, was an emigre from America (probably from Detroit). I have already spoken of him but I must reiterate that he was the heart and soul of the Kharkov group. I sometimes fancied that he could quite possibly get work out of a corpse. He would never take no for an answer. We became close friends and he held our accomplishments in Novorossiysk in high esteem. At times he expressed a regret that he had not been able to take part in our efforts there.

I styled them the "Holy Troika" (Three); Katya, a returnee from Philadelphia, a deeply devoted and likeable comrade; her husband Abraham Christos, who, with his beard and long hair bore a remarkable resemblance to the Christ as he is pictured. The third was an emigre from Paris by the name of Ivan Apolon, a giant of a man, but ever with a ready smile and, in general, very genial. These three had always remained together, having fled from Yekaterinoslav when the White Army entered.

Lea and Yasha Gotman were from Detroit and were quite active in the Kharkov group of Nabat. Mark Mrochne, a student who had only recently joined our movement, was a member of the editorial staff of the Nabat journal. Vanya Tarasyuk-Kobos was another dedicated and congenial comrade who was active in this group.

Voline was the intellectual creator of the concept of unitary anarchism. He contributed to the Kharkov Nabat and for some time had been active with Nestor Makhno's partisan army. He served as editor of the periodical and as intellectual guide for the army.

There were, of course, other comrades affiliated with the Kharkov group, but unhappily I no longer recall their names. Aside from the permanent members of the Nabat group, comrades would visit us for a short time and then leave for other cities. At times, it seemed that most of our comrades spent most of their time on the road – they appeared to be missing something or in search of something.

We knew that the bookstore and the Nabat club were under the constant surveillance of Cheka agents. It was therefore decided that a portion of the comrades should not appear at the bookshop on Friday, the day preceding the conference. Those who were to come from other cities and from Makhno's command were to be met and taken directly to the conference.

The Kharkov comrades set off in groups of two or three as if for a stroll on the other side of the city. When they were sure they were not being followed, they detoured toward the summer home. It was near midnight when all the comrades had finally assembled, nearly 40 in number. Most took a brief nap wherever they could find a spot to stretch their legs. It was felt that, regardless of the lateness of the hour, the conference would be a heated one and this presentiment proved correct.

When I awoke from my short sleep, a few of the comrades had already had breakfast. Within less than an hour, the rest had awakened, had breakfast and were ready when the conference was called to order. The agenda was extensive but I shall list only the four main items: (1) Nestor Makhno's partisans; (2) our position toward the Soviet regime; (3) literature, and (4) seeking means for establishing contact with our comrades abroad so that they might know what was

taking place in Russia in general and, in particular, the attitudes of the Soviet government toward the anarchist movement.

With regard to the issue of Makhno's partisans, debate was opened by Aron Baron, who had arrived only a short time ago from Makhno's camp. I do not know to this day precisely what took place there. I am sure of one thing: Comrade Baron launched a sharp attack on the entire activity of the great partisan army. It appeared that this realistic activist, as I had known him from the United States, had, on his return to Russia, been captivated by the anarchist romanticism of olden days.

Baron sought to conduct a civil war with white gloves, and without soiling the gloves – "heaven forbid" – with human blood. He could not approve of the partisan army resorting to cannon, machine guns, bombs and rifles in a retaliatory action, the objective of which was to prevent the enemy from learning what went on in the inner circles of the army. It boiled down to a question: Either you wage an all-out and bloody struggle against your enemy who is bent on destroying all that the Revolution has created, or else you are painstakingly "ethical" toward this enemy, in which case the cause for which you are fighting is lost. Comrade Baron held, for instance, that when a retaliatory unit captured officer spies, the unit should try to win them over through moral persuasion and not resort to the death penalty – this at a time when every man in the Makhno ranks was being killed on the spot when captured.

These accusations on the part of Comrade Baron and his companions placed the conference in a precarious dilemma. He was followed by delegates from the partisans army who portrayed the events that were taking place in the army of Makhno realistically and described their life and death struggles against both the Red and White armies.

One of the delegates who took the floor acknowledged that he was aware that deplorable mistakes were made from time to time, but that these were involuntary. At the close, he made a common-sense remark to this effect: "If you want to save us from committing serious errors, then why don't you cooperate with us in our common task instead of just sitting still or running about from city to city?"

The debate on this issue lasted throughout the day and late into the night. It was a hot and acrimonious debate. In retrospect, the entire proceeding strikes me as odd and devoid of fundamental logic. I could understand it better if such an issue was being thrashed out by obstinate individualist anarchists who claimed to oppose any form of organization. But what aroused my wonder most of all was the fact that Aron Baron, in principle of the communist-syndicalist orientation, as were his associates (all of whom wanted to transform the old order of things into something new), failed to tackle the basic problem, but were ready to sacrifice their lives. This they were prepared to do, but the practical, day-to-day job of bringing about this new social system – this, apparently, would have to be accomplished by some new "messiah."

I must reiterate, as I shall have occasion to do many times, that the Russian anarchist movement at the time of the great Russian revolution was, for the most part, unable to free itself from the former romantic environment that had been created during the nihilist phase of the Russian anarchist movement.

After a lengthy and exhausting debate, it became evident, though no vote was taken, that the majority was of the opinion that we must support all of our partisan movements who were waging the struggle against both the Reds and the Whites. This help must be moral, physical and intellectual, as well as material. The entire confederation was in accord with this decision.

The second question involved our position toward the Soviet authority. Again the discussion dragged out for a long time, but eventually one view dominated: that the Soviet regime was showing signs of undertaking an aggressive policy toward the Russian anarchist movement. There were ominous portents of this developing trend, sufficient to convince us that as soon as the Bolsheviks became entrenched they would not stop at any means or measures to wipe out all other revolutionary forces operating in Russia. It was at this point that opinions were voiced that the anarchist movement should revert to its former tactics of direct action and terror.

However the majority of the delegates were of the opinion that the anarchist groups should take advantage of existing conditions for a vigorous propaganda offensive, so as to disseminate our principles through newspapers and books. In this manner we could counter the false propaganda of the Bolsheviks to the effect that the anarchists were counter-revolutionists.

We were to leave the terrorist and military activities to the partisan armies and bands, which were making life miserable for the Bolsheviks.

The third question related to the distribution of literature. I reported that in Moscow there was available a large stock of basic literary works and this evoked great satisfaction, for basic anarchist literature was sorely needed everywhere. A recommendation was made and adopted that the group, along with the bookstore, should adopt all necessary measures to have these books brought from Moscow.

The fourth topic was little more than a "pious hope" and essentially academic: how to find a way to establish relations with our movement abroad. The blockade imposed by the capitalist countries as well as that of the Bolsheviks had cut us off from contacts with all other countries. A few knew that the Bolsheviks were sending out propaganda agents to foreign countries. However, after the treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, there was some possibility of travelling to Germany and Sweden, though only with great difficulty. In addition, the Bolsheviks were setting about to build a secret military apparatus to conduct espionage activities in the White Army sector and, later on, also abroad.

There was no need for extensive debate on this question. Every one of the delegates realized concretely and most "felt it in their bones" that some attempt must be made to let the rest of the world know what was happening in Russia; that the Bolsheviks were perverting the Russian social revolution into a great counter-revolution, and that the country was being subjected to a ferocious political dictatorship. It was therefore agreed that whoever possessed information, or the means of transmitting this information, should immediately report it to the Nabat Ukrainian Confederation.

After taking up a few more matters, they concluded the conference and the comrades began to leave, cautiously, and in small groups.

It is not too far-fetched to assert that this illegal conference was held under the very noses of the Cheka and the high-ranking members of the Bolshevik bureaucracy.

On the morning following the conference, I had a chat with Joseph Goodman about the matter of literature. I told him I would need both money and a trustworthy comrade to assist me. Goodman assured me that he had everything arranged; the money was ready and he had secured the services of a reliable young comrade to aid me. He then told me he had another job for me and hoped I would be willing to accept it. He said that two of the comrades from Nestor Makhno's army who had been at the conference wanted to speak to me. Just as he was telling me this, the two comrades walked into the bookstore and the four of us went into a back room.

After I was introduced to them, one of them said to me, "For a long time, the comrades in Makhno's army have wanted to send some food to our teacher, Peter Kropotkin. We have the food but so far we've been unable to figure out a way to get it to him.

"A rumor has reached us that you might be able to handle such a delivery and we hope you will be able to help us fulfill this plan. We have brought with us two boxes of food and we ask if you will bring them to Comrade Kropotkin."

I assured them I would be happy to help them and told them that I would know in a few days when I would be leaving Kharkov and would arrange with them then where and when to bring the two boxes.

The two young comrades had obviously been heavily burdened by the responsibility and somewhat worried at their inability to find a way to carry out their mission and my answer delighted them.

I was aware that it was time to report to my superiors that my health had improved. Sure enough, when I arrived at the office the next morning, the chief commissar summoned me into this private office and inquired after my health and asked when I would be ready to leave for Moscow. To demonstrate that I was a devoted worker, I replied that, while I still did not feel one hundred percent recovered, I was prepared to leave Kharkov as soon as he had issued the appropriate orders.

He seemed almost disappointed in my answer and then told me that, for the return trip, I would be riding in a special coach. It seems they had received a request from the Foreign Commissariat in Moscow to send as much as possible in the way of foodstuffs for the workers in the Commissariat, and also of course, a special parcel for the deputy commissar, Karochan. As soon as I heard this I started figuring and immediately knew that, by the same procedure by which I would bring food to Moscow, I could devise a way to bring our literature to Kharkov.

The chief commissar instructed the commissar of the railway to prepare a fourth-class coach and when this had been done, I received a number of vouchers for all kinds of food products which were still available in Kharkov. It took several days for all the items to be assembled and placed aboard the special coach, which was kept on a special siding at the station and was guarded by Red Army men. I cite this is incident as typical of the times and quite representative of living conditions throughout central Russia, particularly in the larger cities. Another contributing factor was the fact that the population was famished and, for a few meager foodstuffs, people would resort to measures which could bring serious consequences, perhaps even the death penalty.

In addition to these factors, there also arose, regarding such products, a type of bureaucracy mentality extending from the most menial official to the highest echelons. For instance, Chicherin, commissar for foreign affairs, was engrossed in his labors and gave little thought to adequate or savory foodstuffs. I asked him on one occasion what I should bring him from the Ukraine. He did not lift his eyes for a moment from the document he was reading, but gave me his answer, "If you can get hold of some lard for me, I would be most grateful." His deputy, Karochan, on the other hand, had extremely aristocratic tastes and insisted on only the best and most expensive foods, liquors and cigars.

In the Kremlin, there was a so-called "cooperative," where one could often obtain some groceries, especially fresh fish. The editor of the Moscow Izvestia, Steklov, while still occupying that position, would never fail to select for himself the very choicest cuts of meat. It is no exaggeration to state that the bureaucracy was born at the same time as the October revolution.

As I previously mentioned, it required several days before I was ready to depart from Kharkov, and I decided to take advantage of this free time to acquaint myself with the other two anarchist groups operating there. To be sure, the Nabat group carried on elaborate propaganda activity, but after the constructive undertakings we had worked at in Novorossiysk, I was not content with mere propaganda. It was my constant ambition to see these groups engage in various constructive projects.

Every evening, at a park in the middle of the city of Kharkov, there were meetings, debates and discussions on the most diverse topics among the large crowds which would assemble there. It was there that I became acquainted with several members of the anarcho-syndicalist group, and was invited to one of their meetings for the next day. Compared to Nabat, they were a rather small group. Several of their members knew of my work in Novorossiysk and I was in turn interested in their activities, especially in any constructive work they might be engaged in.

I learned that, in addition to their propaganda work at night, they had connections through several comrades who were employed there, with a large railway shop and had a considerable following among the workers. However they had made no attempt to have these workers organize an Internal Affairs Committee so that they might take over management of that huge plant through an Economic Soviet. the result was that there was an abundance of verbal and written propaganda resulting in a dead end – no constructive achievement.

The second group consisted of so-called "individualist anarchists." Even at the earlier meetings, when I had first heard the speeches of their spokesmen, I had take something of a dislike to them. They were bombastic and rude, with no ethical consideration for an adversary in argument. In order to acquaint myself better with them, I decided to attend one of their meetings. Two young ladies who had accompanied me from Moscow were connected with this group through their husbands or lovers. When I indicated my desire to attend one of their meetings, the two girls came to my hotel to inform me that such a gathering was taking place that evening and that they would conduct me there.

We arrived at about nine o'clock that evening and found about thirty persons assembled in a dimly-lit cellar. At first, it appeared to be an intellectual circle. Some attempts were made to recite poetry or prose, but the general atmosphere wasn't amenable to such things. A large number of those present were obviously there simply for a good time and since there was no dearth of wine and whiskey, there was some heavy drinking going on. The more they drank, the gayer and more uninhibited they became. I shall not dwell on the subject of morality, except to state that in the months to come, sex orgies were indulged in and several relatively innocent young girls paid dearly, both morally and physically. The end of that group came when they eventually turned to spying for the Cheka. But more of that story later.

Shortly before my departure for Moscow, I met with Joseph Goodman and a few other comrades, and we discussed the matter of what kind of literature I should acquire. A sum of money was given to me and an assistant, a rather reserved young man, to help me in case I found it possible to transport our literature to Kharkov. When I arrived at the office the following morning, all the essential papers for my journey were ready. These documents forbade members of the Cheka or the army to stage any search or investigations in my coach, since everything carried in it was the property of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

In those days, it was still possible to obtain some foodstuffs in the Ukraine, but on the border between the Ukraine and Greater Russia one met military inspectors at certain of the stations who would make a thorough search of the train. If they found any foodstuff, it was confiscated. As

a result, I engaged in several small skirmishes with these officers between Kharkov and Moscow and succeeded in salvaging the greater part of the produce. This made it possible for me to help some of our comrades in Moscow and also assured me it would be possible to transport a stock of our literature later to Kharkov.

When I reached Moscow, I saw to it that our coach was placed on a special siding at the station, and obtained a permanent guard from the military commandant until such time as the contents could be removed. With this task completed, I left my young comrade in the coach and went to the hotel where a room was still reserved for me from before my departure for Kharkov. To my pleasant surprise, I found that my room was still vacant. It was obvious that the influence of Shatov and Karochan had made itself felt, and I was quite relieved to find that I would not have to scurry about to look for another room. Out of gratitude I immediately telephoned Karochan to inquire when I could see him and turn over a parcel addressed to him personally.

It was no easy matter to reach a deputy to the Commissar of Foreign Affairs by telephone; however, in my capacity of diplomatic courier i used a little diplomacy and told one of the secretaries, who insisted on knowing the purpose of my call, that I had just arrived from Kharkov and had a parcel for Karochan and that she should communicate with him on this as soon as possible. I also added that I had brought some foodstuffs for the personnel of the Commissariat, and indicated the address where I could be reached. Karochan returned the call barely five minutes later and told me that he had sent his automobile to bring me directly to his office at the Commissariat, where I should bring his parcel. I remained in his office long enough to watch him open up the package which contained the finest cigars, chocolates and other delicacies which could not possibly be obtained in Moscow, and about which the famished public in general could hardly even dream.

The following day, the remaining products were hauled from the station to the Commissariat. A list of the employees working under Karochan was prepared and a committee, on which I was included, was selected to distribute the various items. After the distribution was made among the half-starved employees of the Commissariat, I became quite a popular figure. If at any time I needed anything, they felt obligated to help me. I became particularly friendly with Comrade Moisey, who was the chief assistant to Boris Reinstein. He was still a young man, an immigrant from Switzerland. He had arrived a full-fledged Bolshevik, but at the time was a very likeable fellow by nature. He maintained an individual outlook about many things and, where it was possible to ignore Bolshevik dogma, he did so.

The various VIPs in the Commissariat were so enthusiastic over my success in delivering these items to them that none of them even thought to ask what I was doing in Moscow when I had been dispatched to the territory held by the White Army.

I therefore decided that, before I handed over the letter from the Kharkov bureau to Boris Reinstein, in which the reason for my return to Moscow was explained, I had best have a talk with Bill Shatov, who at that time wielded considerable influence on both Reinstein and Karochan. After I had related the entire story to Shatov, he remarked, “Come and see me this evening, because both Karochan and Reinstein will be there. We’ll do everything possible to see that you don’t have to ‘invade’ the White Army area, where you would obviously be in great danger.”

When I arrived at his home that evening, I found a considerable crowd already present, many of them already somewhat tipsy. As usual, there was no lack of food or drink in Shatov’s apartment. As soon as I arrived, Shatov began to speak to Karochan and Reinstein about me. As soon as he noticed me, Karochan beckoned me over and in an amiable tone reproached me for not telling

him previously that I had been active in the zone to which I was being dispatched. He also asked me whether I had with me a letter from the Bureau in Kharkov. I handed him the letter which he read rapidly and then remarked: "Forget the whole matter of that assignment; I believe i have a special mission for you which I am certain you can execute successfully and will enjoy. Come and see me tomorrow and I and several of my co-workers will consider the matter so that we can have you designated for this special work."

I had not had the opportunity when I first arrived in Moscow, nor in Kharkov, to discuss Bill Shatov with any of my comrades. His style of living had aroused some suspicion. To be sure, I had known back in the States even that Shatov was, as we put it in those days, on intimate terms with John Barleycorn, but I did not suspect that, upon his return to Moscow, he had severed all connections with the Golas Truda group, which had published a journal under that name, first in New York and then in St. Petersburg. Nor was I at first aware that he had become chummy with Zinoviev, the "boss" of St. Petersburg, as well as the chief of the railway police, and that the two of them were having the time of their lives. Apparently both of them were partial to the life of luxury and shared an affection for heavy drinking. But more of Shatov later on.

When I reached Karochan's office the next morning, I found Boris Reinstein already there. Karochan informed me that I would remain at my post as a diplomatic courier; and that in such a capacity, I would be required to travel about and distribute literature, particularly in the larger cities of the Ukraine. For this purpose, the special railroad car in which I had come would still be reserved for the Foreign Commissariat and I would be in charge of it. Furthermore, my pay would be increased and while en route I would receive extra compensation.

He also told me that instructions would be issued to build a number of sleeping rooms into my coach and that a special overseer would be appointed for the car. Karochan then handed me a packet of vouchers with a coupon entitling me to one month's pay, and added that, as soon as the journal The Third International came off the press, it would be my task to go on a long journey to disseminate it as well as other literature; this would take about two weeks. He then pulled out of his huge desk a packet of tickets for the theater and the opera, handed me a goodly number and bade me enjoy myself until it was time for my journey.

I saw that I would have ample time at my disposal and decided that this would be my chance to acquaint myself more thoroughly with our movement in Moscow. But before that I still had the task of delivering the two boxes of food I' d brought from Kharkov to Peter Kropotkin.

I had not encountered any trouble getting the two boxes from Kharkov to Moscow since, with my Foreign Commissariat credentials and documents, none of the bureaucrats cared to dig to deeply into what I was carrying in the railroad car. But, though the distance from Moscow to Dimitrov, where Kropotkin was living, was quite short my credentials would not help me. I had good connections and realized I could probably get help from them but I wanted to make sure everything thing went smoothly so there would be no chance of losing the food.

It occurred to me that I might as well use this incident to let the powers in the Kremlin know that the followers of Peter Kropotkin, themselves in a bad situation, were still trying to help their mentor. I set myself the goal of obtaining an order from Lenin himself guaranteeing a safe passage for myself and the two boxes of food.

That same day I approached my immediate boss, Boris Reinstein. He was one of the warmer, more human Bolsheviks, was from the U.S. and had a friendly attitude towards most of us who had come from there and also knew of my good relations with Bill Shatov. When I explained my predicament to him he got quite excited and I was surprised when he immediately called

Lenin's secretary at the Kremlin. When the secretary answered, Reinstein identified himself and asked if it would be possible to speak for a few moments to Lenin himself, adding that it was an emergency. In a minute or two Lenin came on the line and, after a greeting, Reinstein told him the story of the boxes of food for Kropotkin and asked if Lenin himself would issue an order for a safe passage. I could hear that Lenin himself was quite excited and he assured Reinstein he would be happy to help and asked for the name of the person who was transporting the food. Reinstein gave him my name and Lenin assured him that the order would be in his office in a short time. In half an hour I had in front of me the hand-written order from Lenin, identifying me and explaining that I was delivering boxes of food to the great revolutionary, Peter Kropotkin:

"…I, as president of the U.S.S.R. Commissar's Council, order all railroad authorities, police, etc., to assist and to be of help to Boris Yelensky."

N. Lenin

I was off for Dimitrov the next morning with the two boxes of food and the precious document. I was excited and nervous at the prospect of finally coming face to face with this man, whose writings had so heavily influenced my entire life.

I arrived at Kropotkin's house and after a few knocks the door was opened by a friendly-faced woman who I realized immediately must be Sophia Kropotkin. I introduced myself and told her that the two boxes in front of me were a gift for the Kropotkin family. I hadn't finished explaining the rest of the story when Peter Kropotkin himself appeared beside her. I can still remember that feeling–like an electric shock–when I faced for the first time the patriarch of anarchist philosophy; the long beard, the friendly smile and the glow in his eyes which enchanted me and left me quite speechless.

Sophia came to my rescue, telling Kropotkin that this comrade had brought two boxes of gifts for them. Kropotkin's face brightened even more and he said to Sophia, "Why are you keeping the comrade on the doorstep?" and then he said to me, "Do please come into my home." In the excitement, we both forgot to introduce ourselves and he suddenly stopped, thrust out his hand and said, "I am Peter Kropotkin." I blushed, took his hand, and told him my name. When we had placed the two boxes in the kitchen he invited me to join him in his workroom and tell him what this was about and who had sent the food to him.

I told him the whole story of how the comrades from Makhno's army had gathered this food to send to their teacher and that I was just an instrument to deliver the gift. As I was telling him this his face drew into a worried frown and he said to me: "Comrade Yelensky, I appreciate very much what the comrades and you have done for us; but before I can accept this gift, I must be sure – very sure – that this does not come from the government, because I do not accept anything from them." I could see the pain in his face as he said this.

I said to him that the only assurance I could give him was my word of honor as a comrade and references to other comrades that we both knew who would vouch for me, such as Maximov and Alexandra Shapiro, and many others.

He sensed immediately that I was somewhat distraught and told me with a warm tone, "No, no, comrade. I trust you and your word of honor is enough for me. I will only ask you to accept my thanks and that of my family. Sophia and I very much appreciate what you and the comrades have done. Now, we do hope you will have time to stay with us, at least overnight, so we may have the opportunity to talk with you and find out what is happening in our movement."

He took me into the living room at this point to introduce me to two guests who were already present, one a professor and old friend of Kropotkin's and the other a comrade who had come

especially to see him from deep Siberia. After we had become acquainted, Kropotkin asked our comrade from Siberia to continue his report about life there and the effects of the revolution on the situation there.

He told us of life in their little town, surrounded by the vast expanses of tundra and that the revolution had really done more harm than good to the spiritual life of the place, since more than half the population had been political exiles and most of these had left when news of the revolution came, and with them most of the political and social thought. What was left was the beauty of the wilderness but little intellectual stimulation, though they had a goodly amount of freedom, since there was little in the way of authority in such a small, isolated place.

From some remarks I made, they gathered that I had come from the U.S. and the talk turned naturally to that country and the many people Kropotkin knew there.

Our conversation was proceeding at such a rate that none of us noticed that evening was approaching until Sophia came in to tell us it was time for tea and a bite to eat.

When we went into the dining room, we found on the table many of the good things I had brought in the two boxes, food of a quality that made all three sets of eyes pop, so that at the table our conversation was mainly about the food situation in the southern part of Russia.

Finally the two guests departed and, after the table was cleared, the Kropotkins and I went into his study. Kropotkin took out writing paper and a pen and said to me, "Now Comrade Yelensky, I want you to tell me the whole story of your activities – and please take your time. Don't omit anything as I am prepared to sit with you all night if necessary."

I told him I would be happy to oblige him and told him the story of my childhood, how I got involved in the revolutionary movement in Russia and the 1905 revolution, then had to leave my home city to avoid being arrested. I spoke of my time in Europe and in America, my first years in Philadelphia and my involvement in the Radical Library act-cities under Joseph Cohen and how I became an active worker in our movement. I told him of my main aim in life; to help our comrades in the Russian prisons and how a group of us had organized a branch of the Anarchist Red Cross and later, after I had moved to Chicago, another branch there, of which I was the secretary.

At this point Kropotkin stopped me and said, "When you introduced yourself your last name seemed familiar to me and now it has come back to me. We had some correspondence when I was the Treasurer of the Anarchist Red Cross in London many years ago. But please go on."

I continued with my story of my activities with the anarchist groups in Chicago and how, in February of 1917 I had come to Russia at the beginning of the new epoch in Russia.

It was already 10 o'clock at this point and I felt it must be somewhat hard for this grand old man so sit and listen to me talk for so long so I made a remark to that effect.

He was in deep thought as I was telling my story but when he heard my remark he stirred and said to me, "Comrade Yelensky, you are wrong if you think I am tired of listening to you. I am concentrating on what you are saying and trying to digest it all and am quite ready to sit here with you all night! You know that I am cut off out here, not only from active life, but also from all news about what is happening all over Russia and the world so I am more than happy to have you here with us to tell us these things–it brings me back to life."

I was touched deeply that this noble man, this scholar and great human being should be so cut off from all that was happening around him.

Meanwhile, Kropotkin said to his wife, Sophia, "Dear, do you think we could have some tea? I am sure Comrade Yelensky's voice and throat are getting dry from talking so long." Then he said to me, "I take a walk every night if I feel well enough. Will you join me in such a walk?"

Here and there in Dimitrov you could see a dim light in one of the houses but most of the little town was already asleep and it was very quiet all around. It was a beautiful night, with a full moon illuminating the poor houses of the village. We walked without saying anything, both of us under the spell of the night and the quiet.

On the way back to the house, Kropotkin finally broke the silence: "You know, Comrade Yelensky, every time I take a walk on such a beautiful night, all manner of questions come into my head that I cannot find answers for.

"Russia went through a 300 year dark age of untold suffering until at last we rid ourselves of the Tsar and all that he stood for. Now we are again experiencing a reaction, both physical and spiritual, that I am afraid will again plunge Russia back into that dark age for many years to come. The only hope is that, in the coming years, the younger generation will rebel again and bring back the spirit of 1917 and the constructive forces and start to build a new society in the spirit of our ideas.

"But I am afraid I will depress you with my gloomy thoughts. Let us go hack into the house and let me hear the rest of your story."

After tea, we went back to Kropotkin's workroom and, by the time I was through telling my story, it was after midnight. I told Kropotkin of the times in the U.S. and of the reaction of the colony there to the news of the revolution, how I came back to the city where I grew up and got my revolutionary schooling and my attempt, in the city of Novorossiysk, to find other anarchists. I spoke of the organization of our small group and of our decision to try to organize the life of the city on the ideal of a free society.

I told him of our great experiment in Novorossisyk in detail. When I was through, I looked again at him and he appeared to be almost dreaming, but it was obvious he was deeply caught up emotionally in my story, that it was something new to him and had excited him greatly.

For a few moments it was very quiet in the room then Kropotkin started and said to me, "I want to thank you very much for this story. I can assure you it is very valuable information for me and, if I am able to continue my work, I will use it to good advantage. Please now–some details. How many people were in your group? And how many of them were active in developing the plan for your great experiment?"

I explained that when the group was first organized, in August of 1917, there were seven comrades and that later on three more joined us. I explained that the plan was developed mainly by three of us: Katya Garbova, Vanya Budnik and myself. The idea had come originally to Vanya Budnik and myself that, in the short time the revolution had been in existence, there had already been more than enough destruction and that it was time to do constructive work and to begin attempting to build up a new society. Later on, Katya Garbova accepted our ideas and the three of us started to work out a plan as to what our group should do. After a few days of arguing out our differences, we decided to propose to our group that we start propagandizing the workers, urging that a Regional Economic Soviet be organized to coordinate production and distribution. We felt that the Soviet should consist of two delegates from, each shop or factory.

The workers in each shop or factory should organize work committees consisting of delegates from each section of work and these committees should then take over the work place and make it communal property devoted to maintaining the life and welfare of the community. Since we

believed in equality for every human being we would recommend equal pay for every worker, with 25% extra above the basic pay for each dependent in the worker's family. We decided to accept any of the administrative or engineering staffs who wished to join us on an equal basis without any retaliation for what they had been before the revolution.

We had further agreed to propose to the Regional Economic Soviet that they contact the cooperatives of the region and try to arrange with them that they take over all the work of distribution of products produced in the shops and factories; and that the Regional Soviet should organize the care for the old and sick people who were unable to work.

I told Kropotkin that this, in brief, was what our group had proposed to the first conference of delegates from the shops and factories, that all our recommendations were accepted and that this resulted in the establishment of the Economic Soviet in the city of Novorossiysk. I apologized for not having available a copy of the rules and regulations of the Internal Shop Committees which would have given him a better picture of how the whole setup worked and finished by telling him I felt that his principle of mutual aid had worked so perfectly in this experiment even we had been amazed.

I again told him I thought I had talked enough for one night and he replied, "I have felt so good hearing this story that I could stay up all night!" but at this point Sophia intervened firmly and said, "Peter, you are going to bed now! You have had a very big day," and she turned to me with a smile and said, in English, "Enough is enough!"

The next morning, after breakfast, we adjourned again to his workroom and it was obvious his mind had been working during the night as he fired question after question at me, inquiring about activities of our movement in the various places I had visited and asking for more details about our experiment in Novorossiysk, devouring every detail like a starving man confronted by a meal. I could see that the old man was emotionally reliving these experiences with me and savoring them vicariously. When I saw how deeply affected he was by all this I stopped talking and after a few moments of quiet, he pulled himself together and said to me, "Comrade Yelensky, the story you have told me of your great experiment in Novorossiysk has helped prove to me that I was right in my ideas and theories; that they can be applied in real life and that, in the proper environment, human beings can indeed change and create a free society. It also reinforces my conviction that we must continue to struggle against the conception of the State, even the so-called "proletarian" state, that can destroy the nucleus of any free society.

"Yes! We cannot bring back what you had in Novorossiysk, but, we can still try as hard as possible to collect and preserve the evidence of this experiment–every document we can get our hands on. And, most important to me, you and the other comrades that were working with you should collectively and individually record everything you did in the attempt to build a free society. This material may then prove of help to future historians to bring out what really happened. I went through this experience when I did my research on the great French social revolution and I know what is involved. I do hope you will do this important work for us."

At that point, Sophia came in to tell Kropotkin that another comrade had arrived to visit him and could he be shown in. "Why not?" said Kropotkin, "Tell him to come in and join us."

The visitor turned out to be my old friend and comrade, Aron Baron. We greeted each other warmly and Kropotkin said, "Ah, I see that you know each other. Comrade Baron, do you know of Comrade Yelensky's experiences in Novorossiysk?" Baron answered that he had only heard of the experiment after it was over and had been sorry not to have found out in time to come and take part.

It had come, time for me to regretfully take my leave. After I had said my goodbyes to the others in the house, Kropotkin said, "Come, I will walk you to the corner and we will make our goodbyes there." When we got to the corner he said to me in parting, "Comrade, you should be proud to have had the opportunity to take part in such a great experiment. Don't forget what I asked you–record everything about your experience. Now goodbye, and come to see us when you can."

This ended my visit and I regret to this day that I never had the opportunity to see him again.

When I returned to Moscow, I immediately set about acquainting myself with the activities of our movement there. I had known since the beginning of 1918 that the Bolsheviks were engaged in a covert campaign against the anarchist movement, under the pretext that they were combatting "bandits" and "criminal elements." It was under these subterfuges that the organized military pogroms against the anarchist groups in Moscow had been carried out. For two full days there had been a genuine military contest waged, during which a violent assault had been launched on the "Anarchia" house and its periodical. A second house which the anarchists used as a headquarters suffered the same fate.

April 12, l9l8 should be marked as the date when the Bolsheviks attacked and destroyed the anarchist movement in Moscow, as well as in other cities. For those interested in acquainting themselves with the full array of historical facts concerning this event, I would recommend reading G. Maximov's The Guillotine at Work–Twenty Years of Terror in Russia, issued by the Alexander Berkman Aid Fund in English in 1940.

But the Bolsheviks still lacked the audacity to liquidate the entire anarchist movement. Besides, our eminent spokesman, Peter Kropotkin, was still alive and Lenin eagerly craved his help and sympathy. Lenin badly needed the support of the internaticnal proletariat and sought to enlist the help of the syndicalist and anarcho-syndicalist movements throughout the world. This brought about a situation where, after having staged the pogrom against the organized anarchist movement, the Soviet authorities were busy trying to convince the workers of the rest of the world that they were not suppressing anarchists, but "bandits" who were allegedly exploiting the anarchist movement for their own selfish ends.

In my quest for our groups in Moscow, I encountered several which bore our narme but which did absolutely nothing in the way of constructive work and which I styled "paper groups."

In the Hotel National itself (it was then known as "The First Soviet House"), there was lodging at that time a certain Apollon Karelin, a veteran comrade who was widely known in Russia as well as among the emigres; his two rooms served as headquarters for the "All-Russian Federation of Anarcho-Communists. "

I did not succeed in discovering how many of these groups existed or what they were like. According to Karelin and Maximov, the conclusion is inescapable that anyone who declared himself an anarcho-communist was eligible to become a member of the Federation. When I introduced myself to Karelin, he informed me that our group in Novorossiysk were all members of the Federation. WIhen I asked him how it was that I, an active mernber of the group, knew nothing about this, he replied that the mere fact that our group received the anarchist publication, "The Free Worker," signified to him that we had joined the Federation. This provoked my curiosity and I enquired after what sort of activity the Federation was engaged in, particularly in Moscow. Karelin replied that he conducted correspondence with several comrades and circulated the newspaper. As for Moscow itself, a meeting was held every week in his home and certain matters were discussed there.

On the day of my visit with Comrade Karelin, the regular meeting of the group was held and I was invited to attend that evening. As a guest, I was given the privilege of making a few remarks and my reporting on what our group had accomplished in Novorossiysk. My story seemed like a fantasy to many of them. Following an open forum discussion, Comrade Karelin read a few communications, and there was a discussion of abstract matters which were of no particular interest to me. Viewed as an "All-Russian Federation of Anarchists in Moscow," this gatheing impressed me as a very ephemeral thing, with no impact on the mighty events which were shaking all of Russia, and there was obviously no visible effort to carry through any constructive projects. Here again was a small gathering of individuals with a fine-sounding name, sunk in lethargic slumber and dreaming that a new cooperative society wuld somehow descend from heaven.

There was active at that time in Moscow, a Comrade Atabekian, who possessed a small printing press and was issuing a mini-journal. He did all the various jobs himself – sort of a one-man anarchist center. As was expected, Moscow, being the focus of great events, harboring a concentration of anarchist intellectuals who did not adhere to any particular group, but who would engage in such activities such as writing or giving lectures on every possible occasion. The "All-Russian Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists" consisted of a small group of comrades who operated a bookshop under the name of Golas Truda. This group also existed more as a theoretical than a functional society, and its influence on the laboring masses was minimal. They do deserve some credit however, for being the only ones to stage protests against the Bolshevik regime. Again, fcr those interested more detail on this subject, I recommend Maximov's The Guillotine at Work.

"The All-Russian Division cf Anarcho-Universalists" was organized in the summer of 1920, consisting of con eries of discordant elements and at the very first gathering a cleavage occurred. There was no coordinated aim or program among the many factions.

The anarchist movement in Moscow also boasted a fraternal "Gordin Group," which sought to propagate its "Socio-Technics." They did not so much write books, as "bake" them, so prolific was their literary output. Whether or not anyone read their outpourings was a different matter. They owned a large bookshop filled with their own creations. The Gordin Brothers also operated a restaurant, where the daily bill-of-fare was posted prominently, however, only the two brothers themselves knew what dishes would actually be served. The reason for that was that the Gordin Brothers had spun a whole web of new theories for solving social problems and found that they needed an entirely new language for this purpose, which they developed and styled the "Bee-0-Bo." It was in this artificial tongue that the daily bill-of-fare was written up on the walls.

Abba Gordin at times "fell from grace" and, when someone insisted, would speak Russian–only as an exception however. The only day the brothers would converse in Russian was on Sunday. On any other day, if one approached Velvel Gordin and began to speak in Russian, he would draw out a slip of paper and write in. Russian: "Come back Sunday; then I will talk to you in Russian."

There was also an underground group which resorted to terror and expropriation. It was this unit which threw a bomb at a building where the Moscow Bolshevik leaders were to meet; it also executed several expropriations. This group was connected with non-anarchist factions whose leading figure was a veteran comrade who had formerly participated in the syndicalist movement among the railway workers. A number of youthrul comrades with romantic ideas also joined this underground group; most of them with only a very vague understanding of the group's aims. I recall in particular a number of very young women who had come in from Switzerland.

The majority of these comrades were killed when the Cheka dlscovered their hideout. I will have more to say about this group later on.

I found very little satisfaction in my observations of and contact with the Moscow anarchist movement. Even granting the difficulties caused bv the Bolshevik pogrom, still there was no evidence of any attempt to develop a constructive approach to a new social trip. order. The old-time anarchist romanticism hovered enticingly in the air as evidenced by such curiosities as the Gordin brothers "Bee-O-Bo" and the destructive activities of the underground Group. I even began to question if our criticism of the Bolsheviks – aside from our opposition to dictatorship – was really justified, coming at a time when the greater part of the Russian anarchist movement had no clear image or concept of the responsibilities involved in governing or coordinating a vast land like Russia. They seemed to be waiting for some new Messiah to emerge, who would miraculously reconstruct the old social system on a new foundation of libertarian equality.

The more I delve into this theme and recollect those tempestuous days, the more I am troubled by the question cf whether a large share of the guilt for the lamentable outcome of the great Russian social revolution does not fall squarely on the shoulders of the Russian anarchist movement.

I was free as a bird in my new assignment and could come and go as I pleased. One evening, however, I received a phone call from my co-worker, Comrade Moisey, to report to the Commissariat early the following mornlng. When I arrived, Moisey called in Boris Reinstein, who informed me he had an important mission for me which would involve travelling to Kharkov, Ekaterinoslav, Poltava, Kiev and Odessa. I was told that literature would be packed and ready in a day or two for those cities and that in the meanttime I was to go to the railroad station and inspect the specially reconstructed railway coach. Reinstein instructed Moisey to prepare the necessary documents for the trip. When I inquired how much literature would be involved, Reinstein said it would total some 150 parcels. When I heard this, it immediately occurred to me that this would be an ideal opportunity to take along some of our own books to Kharkov.

By this time, Comrade Moisey and I were on terms of mutual trust. Even though he was a Bolshevik, he often engaged me in conversation on topics which most Bolsheviks were afraid to discuss. Aware of this mutual trust, I decided to be frank with him and told him flatly that my Kharkov comrades had requested that I bring some of our literature to that city. I explained that I already had the literature but lacked the means tc transport it and asked him if he had any objections against the step I contemplated. With practically no deliberation, he asked me how many packages I had, and I estimated my "cargo" at fifty packages, more or less. He then drew out a booklet with military requisitions, signed his name and aff'ixed the seal of the Commissariat. He handed this requisition to rne casually and remarked, "You can insert the number of packages you wish to take along when you know the exact number."

Now that I had the military o.k. in my hands, I was in a position to carry a substantial number of books. I promptly 1ooked up the young man who had accompanied me from Kharkov and we got down to business. We went first to the Gordin brothers bookstore, where we found Abba Gordin. We could not acquire too many books with the sum we had available, so I explained to Gordin that I had a good possibility to transport considerable printed matter to Kharkov but had insufficient funds. I gave him my word of honour that, on my return to Moscow, I would bring him the balance due. He agreed to this proposal, but only on condition that half of our order must consist of writings by him and his brother, Velvel. In that case we would be given works by Kropotkin and other anarchist literature. There was no alternative, so Abba and I began to select the literature, while my assistant packed the material. Then I noticed out of the corner of my eye that my assistant was putting back the Gordin volumes and lifting out from behind the counter

packages of Kropotkin's works. Thus the two of us committed the "sin" of leaving behind the Gordin brother's "literature." From there we went to the bookshop of Golos Truda.

This enterprise was being managed by Maximov's wife, Olga. She was truly a one hundred percent anarcho-syndicalist and took somewhat excessive pride in the fact that she had once been deported to Siberia. Her major weakness was that she could tolerate only "great personalities" and she never failed to remind people that she was an intellectual, a member of the "intelligentsia." She carried this weakness with her throughout her life, while her husband and comrade, G.P. Maximov, was almost an exact antithesis of his wife. He as a man without rancor, permeated with a deep empathy and kindness toward all mankind.

When we came to the bookstore, she already knew me personally, and was well aware of my activities in Novorossiysk which, to a great extent were close to her own convictions as an exponent of anarcho-syndicalism. However she also knew that I was closely identified with the Nabat movement and this was enough to make me somewhat suspect in her eyes. At any rate, when we entered, I could sense a certain coolness on her part toward us. I explained to her that I had the possibility of moving a considerable stock of our literature to Kharkov, and told her that the Gordin brothers and consented to give us a number of books on credit until my return from Kharkov.

Olga categorically refused to let us have any books on credit. This struck me as a little short-sighted on her part, since with the situation so touchy, she had no assurnace at all that the Bolsheviks would not liquidate and confiscate all this literature at any moment. Yet here was a good possibility to make good use of this literature and here was a woman who called herself "comrade," declining to trust a comrade who guaranteed payment. When I finally realized that further argument was futile, we picked out a small supply of literature to match our ready cash and departed.

In addition to the modest amount of cash, I still owned some food products which in Moscow at that time were more precious than currency. My young companion took a portion of these edibles and went to peddle them on the market. He returned very shortly carrying a fair amount of cash, though it was still not enough. I decided therefore to call on my friend Moisey and obtain the needed balance from him. We then returned to the Golas Truda center, made full payment for the books and packed them away. With this job completed we found that we had a total of more than sixty packages of literature from the two sources. This made us a little nervous as one might say that we had a whole cargo of "heretical" liteature and this at a time when members of the Cheka, the dreaded secret police, spied on every step people took – not to mention journeys of any length.

The following morning I arranged with my young companion to hire two wagons to haul the books away from the Gordin brothers' bookshop and from Olga's store. I had at my disposal four wagons already loaded with Bolshevik literature and arranged to meet him on a certain street not far from the station. I issued instructions for the wagons and, after bidding farewell to my co-workers at the Commissariat and promising to bring back more food, I set out.

This time my route was a long one and the trip would take at least a month for, in addition to Kharkov, I was supposed to visit Ekaterinoslav, Poltava, Elisavetrad, Kiev and Odessa. I harboured the hope that this journey would afford me the opportunity to acquaint myself more closely with our Ukrainian Nabat group, as well as some of the other groups.

I spotted my young companion and the other two wagons easily and we joined forces and set out together for the station. When I reached the railroad station, I noticed that the special coach was standing not far away from the place where the baggage was loaded.

While the literature was, to be sure, the property of the Bolshevik government, it was still somehow thought necessary to take it through quite a few yards of government red tape. The bureaucracy decreed that first all the packages must be weighed; then we had to draw up a requisition to the effect that so many parcels and so many pounds were being loaded onto a special railroad coach. Only when this ordeal was completed could the entire load be placed on board the coach. I recalled that I had a special note addressed to the railroad Cheka from the Commissariat requesting that they extend all necessary assistance to me. I therefore approached the head Commissar and handed him my directive and the letter. He promptly called in one of the Cheka officers and directed him to summon a number of Red Army guards to lend whatever help was needed.

Within an hour's time, we had all the packages of literature stowed on the special coach, including of course the anarchist material. With this task completed, I went to inquire if an order had been issued to have my coach connected with the passenger traisn destined for Kharkov. Only with that clear did I begin to breathe freely – but not for long.

When the train was ready to receive passengers, there were several times as many passengers waiting as the train could accomodate. With as many of these packed inside as possible, plus those standing on the steps of the coaches and lying on the roof, this train also resembled an overfilled herring barrel.

Even my coach had no dearth of special passengers. My Commissariat had dispatched several mailbags, and the chief of the railroad Cheka had brought along several passengers. On top of this, my comrades had gotten wind of the fact that a special coach had been assigned to me, so there was no lack of eager tourists to take up valuable space – and how can one refuse a favour to a comrade? As a result, the coach ended up crammed with passengers so my young friend and myself had no qualms of conscience about having a coach all to ourselves. As was customary in those days, the train pulled out several hours behind schedule. Considering the conditions then, when a journey might last for weeks, or even months, it was not such a bad thing to be travelling in a special coach. However this privilege carried with it a responsibility to be on the alert day and night because there were thousands of these coaches throughout Russia. In particular, one had to be on guard at night to see that the car was not uncoupled from the train. The superior employees on the railways were, for the most part, old-time government officials and, whenever officers of the Red Army with weapons in their hands insisted that their car should be coupled on to the train, it was customary to uncouple the last coach and connect the other in its place. Several such attempts were made against my own coach. It was only by use of the weapons we had on hand and the strict directives from the higher-ups that we were spared having ourselves stuck for an indefinite period of time at some station en route.

We have been speaking for the most part here about persons who had authority or were connected with the Commissariats in the bureaucratic regime. However the ordinary rank-and-file Ivans, who lived in the larger centers of Russia where hunger was becoming more and more a desperate problem would, when hearing that in the Ukraine, the Don and the Caucasus it was possible to obtain some food, set out in droves in the hope of being able to reach such places and bring back some vital nourishment for their families.

This was a supreme dream for countless persons who, in the early months of 1919, were in desperate straights from hunger and were prepared to go to any length to find food. Ethical convictions and moral principles began to vanish. As you can well imagine, finding any kind of food entailed the greatest hardships and the countless tragedies resulting from this famine and the poignant scenes observable on the railroad platforms would fill many volumes.

It is a curious fact that, as soon as a human being satisfies his hunger, even in part, he rapidly forgets the hunger crises he has experienced. I had occasion to talk to a number of people who at times suffered extreme hunger, particularly those who had languished in Hitler's concentration camps, and it was interesting to note that even these people quickly forgot what they had suffered in the recent past.

Rather than pausing to dwell on the great many happenings during that dreadful period of famine, I shall confine myself to mention of one episode which should illustrate what was really taking place in the lives of a hungry Russian people.

We arrived late the first night in the well-known city of Tula. This was an industrial center of some importance, noted particularly for the production of samovars. When we came to a stop there, over a thousand people swarmed in a mass over the train to try and find seats for themselves. Unfortunately the train was already packed to capacity and very few of the clamouring mob had the good fortune to squeeze their way into the train. I left my seat to make sure they did not uncouple our coach, since we were at the very rear of the train.

As I circled the coach I noticed a woman and a young girl standing near the door. I was puzzled as to why they had picked this particular spot to stand. The train had been standing for about two hours and, when the first signal of the train's departure sounded, the older woman approached me and asked if I was in command of the coach. When I replied that I was, she told me with bowed head and tears in her eyes that she and her daughter had been sitting there for nearly a week without any means of transportation; and then she added: "If yu will let us on board, you can have anything you want from me or my daughter." Her meaning was quite unmistakeable and the words unnerved me, especially since she appeared to be a highly cultured woman and daughter was so young.

Before I could reply, she added: "Don't imagine that I have brought my daughter along only for this purpose. I know what you may be thinking, but it's not that at all. I have been driven to this by eight hungry mouths. I have all the necessary papers to prove that this is my eldest daughter. It is only hunger that has driven me to this. My husband was shot to death, and his parents and mine and four other children are living at my home.

"My husband was an engineer and did not mix in politics; but a scoundrel in his factory became angry at him and denounced him falsely to the Cheka. Five days later they executed him. Ten weeks later they caught the informer red-handed stealing and he suffered the same fate."

I felt intuitively that she was telling the truth and her melancholy story moved me deeply. I asked to see her papers and noted that all her documents were in order, permitting both her daughter and herself to travel. I didn't have the heart to refuse them and admitted them into the coach with the remark that she forget completely the notion of "paying" for her trip with the bodies of herself or her daughter.

When the train set out again for Kharkov I re-entered our coach and found hot tea and some pastry awaiting me in my compartment. I asked my young companion to call in the mother and daughter, realizing that they must be terribly hungry. I was not mistaken. The two of them ate every morsel of bread with relish and, watching them in the warm comfort of the coach, I

realized what a terrible ordeal they had experienced. My young companion proved himself a real gentleman by offering them his berth for the night, while he himself went off to sleep on top of the sacks of literature.

The incident had left me shaken and I could not sleep. The train rumbled on monotonously, while in my head swirled a jumble of thoughts and haunting questions. Novorossiysk appeared to me in that half-sleep, part real and part illusion. The wheels of the train seemed to murmur that if we were to do away with such unnecessary anguish and misery, all forms of regimentation and force must be abolished and man must be free to create his own social destiny.

We reached Kharkov on the morning of the second day. When all my passengers had left the coach, I approached the station officials and requested that they uncouple my coach and have it placed in a suitable spot so that I could have the literature removed. This operation was accomplished quickly and we were placed in a spot where it was easy to leave the station.

I had previously arranged with my young companion to place the literature in two piles so that we could remove the Bolshevik literature and then our own. With this job completed, I went to the railroad Cheka, presented my credentials to the Commissar and asked for workers to remove the literature from the coach. I had expected to receive the help of Red Army men but this time the Commissar sent six Cheka agents to help me. My heart kept thumping until the last sack of literature had been lifted out of the coach and placed on the wagon. When we finally got on our way I could not help exclaiming: "Cheka agents helping bring anarchist literature to Kharkov! What is the world coming to?"

When we reached our agreed-upon destination, my young comrade went on to the Nabat book store and I made my way to my office where they were expecting me. I sought to dispose of my official business as quickly as possible. When I presented my papers and credentials, I told the head Commissar that I would be in Kharkov only two or three days, after which I would be going on to Ekaterinoslav, and if he had anything to dispatch he should have it ready.

From there I drove to the hotel where I could rest a while. The journey itself had been strenuous enough but I had also been under an intense strain from the fear that we might be apprehended carrying the contraband literature. My young comrade and myself were prepared to make any sacrifice but this did not lessen our fear. As a matter of fact, almost every step we took in those days involved personal peril, though at that time we gave the matter little thought. In a way, we assumed a sportsman-like attitude of adventure to every event and danger to which we were exposed. What disturbed me most however was the possibly dire fate of the people who had helped us and who had not the slightest connection with our movement–indeed they were members of the Bolshevik party–and who might pay with their lives for their help. This thought continued to burden my conscience as I gradually lapsed into a fitful sleep.

In spite of my strained nerves, it is quite possible I might have continued sleeping until the following morning; but early in the night Comrade Goodman and several other comrades woke me–it seems they could not wait until the following morning. We set out for the bookshop where we unpacked the books and arranged them on shelves. In a short time, that half-empty store assumed the aspect of a well-furnished enterprise with a large selection of anarchist volumes.

I had instructed my young comrade to tell no one where the literature had come from or how it had arrived at the book store, for we knew that Cheka agents visited the store from time to time and it was necessary for us to be somewhat conspiratorial.

It went something like this: The hotel telephone awoke me and the supervisor informed me that a certain Comrade Joseph Goodman and a few of his friends had come to call on me and

wanted to know whether I was expecting them. In a drowsy state, I replied that I was and to allow them up to my room. In a few minutes–I was not even fully dressed–the gang invaded my room. After cordial greetings, I could observe on their faces the unspoken question: Tell us pal, how did you manage to carry out such a risky job? Then Joseph Goodman turned to me and in a voice full of gratitude told me that when they had originally asked me to bring back some literature, the most they had hoped for was a load double that which I had brought before and that bringing in a whole stock like this was too great a risk. The others were equally eager to know how I had managed. I then acknowledged that Cheka agents had unwittingly helped us in both Moscow and Kharkov; and I remarked to Goodman that, after all, one only dies once. Whether the Cheka arrested us with only two or three packages or with a huge mountain of books would make little difference - the verdict would be the same.

I explained to them that when the two of us undertook to discharge this task, our primary motivation was to help these comrades in their efforts here. "What I now ask of you," I continued, "is that all this remain a secret; for it was not only my young comrade and myself who were involved but also another person. In the second place, I need money to compensate the Gordin brothers for the books. In the third place, I added, "I am desperately hungry."

Joseph Goodman, who usually took a dim view of celebrations, was first to opine that an achievement like this called for some celebrating. Katya Abrams, a member of the group who was staying at my hotel, proposed that we go to her home, purchase some food and beverages on the way, and stage our little party. Before long, we were all seated around a table, drinking aperitifs and eating a fairly savory supper.

When we had concluded our little fiesta, I told my comrades of my plans for the future. I explained that I would only be in Kharkov for two or three days and showed them my itinerary. I suggested that if they had any material of any kind to transmit to the groups in the cities I would be visiting, they get it ready and also if any of them desired to travel to these places they could do so, but only under the condition that they agree to act in a responsible manner, I told them I would be returning by way of Kharkov to Moscow and added that, in the event I could not visit them, they should dispatch my young comrade with the necessary funds so that we could bring them another load of literature.

The following morning, when I arrived at the bookstore, I encountered several more comrades, including Yoshke Meyers, a returnee from Philadelphia who was extremely active in the Nabat group. He looked like a high school boy, but actually was a husband and the father of two children. Comrade Ivan Apolon used to upbraid him mercilessly for the way he treated his family. Comrade Benjamin Epstein was also there, better known under the nickname Naumke (the white one). He was among the activists in Krinky as well as in Bialystok. We became close friends, since my wife, Bessie, also came from Krinky and I myself was well acquainted with a number of comrades in both cities. I shall have more to relate later about Naumke.

Comrade David Kogan, nicknamed "The Little Christosik," was inclined toward anarcho-syndicalism. He was of a serious turn of mind, and when he saw the vast propaganda effort conducted by the Nabat group in Kharkov, he volunteered his assistance.

In addition to a group of American-Jewish "returnees" who were preparing to travel to Poland and from there back to the States, I also met two other emigres from America, Adolf and Jenny. I actually met a number of other comrades for the first time there but my acquaintance with them was brief and the lapse of a half century has banished their names from my mind.

I departed that night by train from Kharkov, accompanied by five young comrades whose intent was to ride up to a certain station where they hoped they could make contact with Nestor Makhno's partisan band and lend whatever help they could. We were scheduled to arrive at this station quite early in the morning so we went to sleep as soon as our train had pulled out of Kharkov–all but me. My mind was still busy trying to analyze the makeup of the Kharkov group and sort out all the various comrades I had met.

Among the substantial Nabat group were several comrades I had already formed an attachment towards. As for Ivan Apolon, I was seeing him for the second time, and the same was true of some of the other comrades.

Ivan Apolon was a giant of a man, with a gentle smile constantly playing about his face and reflecting his kindly nature. His closest companion was Abram Christos, a rather nervous type, almost totally devoid of the magnetic power which Ivan possessed. As if to compensate for this, Abram's wife, Katya, was generous to a fault, with a genial smile always on her attractive face. She contrasted sharply with her husband in her general attitude and in her approach to the other comrades and this fact created a bond of genuine friendship between us.

Vanya Tarasyuk-Karas, while a totally different man physically, was much the same type of personality as Ivan Apolon and ever since our first encounter, we had been drawn closer to each other. Needless to say, Joseph Goodman and I had become intimate friends and devoted comrades. Of all six, only Abram Christos was an exception–his rather neurotic nature made him somewhat difficult to get along with.

I finally fell into a sleep so deep that I failed to hear the train grind to a halt at one of the stations. The reason for the stop was that a rumor had reached the Bolsheviks that detachments of Makhno's partisans were close by. This was good news for the five young comrades who were seeking just such an encounter.

I find I have forgotten to mention Comrade Alexey. Every coach on the trains in Russia in those days had a special attendant who spent his entire time there. It is his task to keep the car clean and warm, to fetch hot water for tea and generally to act as overseer of the coach–a position similar to that of porter on trains in the United States. From the first day that Alexey took charge of my coach, he sensed that we were not regular officials, but it was some time before I was able to persuade him that there was nothing wrong with him drinking tea or sharing a meal with us. I had to keep assuring him that, as long as he was traveling in my company, he was on a basis of equality with all of us. At first, I detected an expression of doubt on his face as to my sanity, but I finally overcame this with the aid of a little brochure I kept in my compartment.

It is my personal opinion that, of all the prolific writings of Abba Gordin, there was a single pamphlet which possessed real propaganda value. It was titled How a Peasant Entered the Anarchist Kingdom. On those days when I was absent from the car, Alexey would avidly read this brochure, to such an extent that he must have known it by heart.

When we departed from Kharkov, I noticed that the brochure was so placed that it could be readily seen. Suddenly, Alexey rushed into my compartment and confessed that, while I had been gone, since he didn't have much to do, he had picked up the brochure and read it. He followed up this confession with a barrage of questions: What is anarchism? Where does one find the "Kingdom of Anarchism," – or is it merely a fantasy? I explained to him that the pamphlet was written in the form of a fantasy, but that the conditions depicted there could become a reality in the life of society; a world free of hunger and want with all human beings enjoying equal status. Alexey was so deeply impressed that later, when we returned to Moscow, he asked me to procure

a dozen copies of the pamphlet so that he could distribute them in his village. Unexpectedly, our movement had won a new disciple.

When we reached Ekaterinoslav I immediately discharged my official obligations by turning over to the chairman of the Soviet several packs of literature. I also informed him that I would remain for a day in his city and that, if he desired to send anything to Moscow, to have it brought to me at the station. I then went in search of our comrades, who were rather few in number. Ekaterinoslav was in the very center of Nestor Makhno's sphere of military operation and the authorities kept a watchful eye on our comrades in the city, but I succeeded in spending one evening with a small group of young comrades.

The following day we left for Elisavetgrad, where again I discharged my official functions and went to look for our local group, which boasted considerable strength. One of its members was Vishnevsky, a returnee from Chicago; another was the younger brother of the chief editor of the Moscow Izvestia, Steklov by name. Still another was a younger brother of Zinoviev. The latter two young comrades were both highly competent and gifted and for a brief period of time they published the Yelisavetski Nabat. We talked until late that night and the following morning the entire group paid me a visit in my coach, where we spent several pleasant hours until departure time. When we said our goodbyes, none of us realized that, before long, Vishnevsky, as well as the brothers of Steklov and Zinoviev, would be slain in a pogrom perpetrated by Grigoriev, who had formerly been with the Red Army and then vainly sought to join forces with Makhno's partisans.

The following morning I arrived in the ancient Ukrainian city of Poltava, where it took me only a couple of hours to fulfill my official duties, after which I made my usual search for anarchist comrades, finally locating several of them at an anarchist club. For the most part they were quite young and engaged in the responsible task of disseminating the Kharkov edition of Nabat and also of arranging periodic meetings and open forum discussions. In Poltava there was also a small group of anarcho-syndicalists, fewer in number than in Kharkov. About two years later, the Poltava and Kharkov groups suffered a fiasco with an "expropriation"–but more of this later.

Regarding Poltava; it was about two years later, whiIe traveling by train, that I chanced to meet a young man who, in the course of our

conversation, dropped an English word. When I asked if he spoke English, he replied that he did and had in fact been born in the United States. I answered in English that I was an emigre also, from Chicago and before long we had become close friends. I learned that he was living not far from Poltava, where his father had organized several communist "free cornmunes" among the peasants and that, notwithstanding the occasional raids perpetrated by the pogrom-makers, his father had achieved remarkable success with the peasants. The young man was at that time on his way to Moscow to try to obtain machines for their agricultural projects and to plead for some respite from the local bureaucrats. I took down the address and promised to visit that interesting venture, where a single individual had managed to build a series of colonies. However my hopes were frustrated as the expanding civil war began to destroy everything of value which the revolution had created.

From Poltava I moved on to Kiev, the metropolis of the Ukraine, and one of Russia's most glamorous cities. At that time it was the capital of the Ukrainian Bolshevik government, headed by Rakovsky. As in the other cities on my itinerary, I fulfilled my official functions, but here I was informed that I would have several passengers accompanying me on my ride to Odessa.

In Kiev there was a Nabat group, one of whose active memnbers was the gifted writer and agitator, Aron Baron, as well as his dynamic wife, Fanny; both of thern close friends and comrades

frcm the United States. Also affiliated with this group were the two Ovrutsky sisters, emigres from France (only the elder one succeeded in getting out of Russia), and also the widow of the deceased Gomrade P. Gdaalych, Sonia. Aside from this group, there were also in Kiev two distinguished comrades, Drucker and Andrey Andreyev, both of whom were earnest and dedicated co-workers of the anarcho-individualist orientation. They frequently collaborated with the Nabat group, and we spent two days together in Kiev, after which I set out on the last leg of my journey, toward the city of Odessa.

When I departed, my coach was overcrowded with passengers, including several of our comrades, among them Aron Baron. Trouble could always be anticipated on the stretch of track from Kiev to Odessa, since numerous partisan groups of various ideological colorings operated in that area and in addition, the route was not at all direct. The train wound, zig-zagged and detoured so that it took twice the normal time to reach our destination. Here I shall pause to relate one incident which almost cost Baron his liberty and his life.

Alone with me in the coach, Comrade Baron remarked that, in his judgment we did not make sufficient use of the English language and proposed that we engage in a dialogue on the theme of the Soviet regime. He suggested that I take the affirmative side and he the negative. It was not long before we almost imperceptibly glided into a heated debate which lasted more than a day, both of us taking time off only for eating and sleeping. In the course of that trip, I saw nothing that aroused my suspicions against the fellow passengers in our car. It was only when I returned to Moscow that it came out. I was inormed that Karochan wanted to see me at a certain hour. I was at a loss to understand what he wanted with me, since the previous day I had seen him and turned over to him the parcels sent to him personally.

When I arrived at his office at the appointed hour, I detected a curious expression on his secretary's face. He informed Karochan of my arrival and the latter bade me enter his private office. There was another man present. Karochan was very courteous and formal and bade me sit down at his table. After I had done so, I recognized the other man as one of the passengers who had been with us from Kiev to Odessa. Karochan asked me if I knew the man and I replied that I thought he was one of the passengers who had been in my coach from Kiev to Odessa. Karochan replied that I was correct and that this passenger was a high official in the Ukrainian government who had come with a complaint against me.

"We are aware of the fact," said Karochan, "that you are a devoted worker in the Foreign Commissariat, but we fail to understand why you took into your coach such a counter-revolutionary." For a moment I was taken aback, but then I understood what was going on. He must have been referring to my discussion with Aron Baron. I played naive, and inquired who the "counter-revolutionary" might be. The third man chimed in with the explanation that they were referring to the man who had engaged in the discussion with me and who attacked the Soviet regime.

I hastened to explain that the other man in question was a personal friend of mine who showed documents from the professional bakers' association, and who requested special permission to ride in my coach. The discussion, I explained, was merely intended to pass the time, and that our main motive was really just to practice our English. I pointed out that, in such a debate, one person takes the affirmative and therefore the other must assume the negative. Then I added, challengingly, that if this discussion struck them as counter-revolutionary I was prepared to resign from my post. I then turned to Karochan and sought his aid in effecting my resignation so that I might return to Kharkov.

Karochan arose from his chair and urged me to forget about any resignations. The other man also arose and assured me that I should drop any though of resigning, and that there was no reason fcr it. "In fact," he added, "I now regret that I wasn't able to take part in your discussion and thus improve my own English a bit." Then he turned to Karochan and said: "You always keep some liquor on hand so why don't we all have a drink and forget what happened?" Karochan, as usual, needed no coaxing at all. He took a bottle of ccgnac from his cabinet and, after each of us had treated himself to two or three glasses of the stuff, the entire incident was forgotter.

The greater part of the literature I had with me was intended for Odessa. In this huge port city there were vast possibilities for transmitting propaganda matter via Turkey to various parts of Europe. Furthermore we were expecting a blockade by the Allied Powers, and the Bolsheviks were eager to distribute their major publication, "The Third International," in three languages. It took more than a day to get all the literature delivered which I had brought along for Odessa. When my official tasks were completed, I decided to remain in Odessa an extra two weeks, since a number of our comrades were situated there, particularly returnees from England and the United States. In addition, my sister Ethel and brother-in-law, Nymke, both from New York, were living at that time in Odessa.

Also present were Semke Friedman, Sasha Feldman, "Clara, the Black One," Ploshe Gomberg, Shalom Schwartzberg and his wife, Slovke, and a number of other comrades whose names escape me. There was a group cf newcomers from England and others who had been there for some time. All of these constituted quite a substantial group at Passover time in 1919.

Some of the circumstances in Odessa at the time impeded our propaganda activity. To begin with, there were the Naliochikes, who specialized in expropriations, lived off the fat of the land, and pretended to be anarchists.

In addition to this group, there was another group of malcontents who operated in the suburbs and called themselves the "Moldavanka." They had their own leader or "king," Mishke Yapanchik. This fellow claimed to have some kind of affiliation with the anarchists and his favorite argument was: "You are against the rich and so are we; therefore, let's confiscate their property."

Odessa's anarchist group was, at that time, the second largest in the Ukraine, composed mainly of political emigres from many countries. They had their own club and headquarters, where nightly a number of comrades would gather. Their activities were similar to that of other groups I had visited except that in Odessa their efforts were more extensive.

We spent a rather interesting week in Odessa and I was expecting to remain an additional week, but unexpectedly I received a cable from Moscow directing me to return there forthwith. This irked me but there was no way out. The second day after that I departed by military train, headed directly for Kiev. In that city, at the Ukrainian foreign commissariat, Rakovsky already awaited ne. That same night my coach was hitched on to the passenger train destined for Moscow. During the day, all kinds of food articles and a list of the passengers who were to accompany me were brought to my car.

Comrade Moisey had issued orders even before our arrival that my coach should be transferred immediately to the Kursk Station. On our way to the hotel, Moisey informed me that I had been designated to be the personal diplomatic courier of the Secretary of the Third International, Angelica Balabanova. These tidings were not exactly to my liking. In the first place, I did not know what my new duties would be like and in the second place, I had no desire to be connected directly with the Third International. Subsequently however, I learned that I would have the same freedom of movement as before.

When Iarrived at the hotel with Comrade Moisey, we had a drink together and partook of some of the foodstuffs I had personally brought back with me. After that, I distributed some of the provisions among the hotel employees who attended to my room, including the telephone operator. I was pleased to realize that these people would be able to enjoy several hearty meals with these foodstuffs and, furthermore this gesture of generosity enabled me to obtain certain confidential information from the telephone operators.

With this task disposed of, I treated myself to a warm bath, of which I was in urgent need after the long journey. Comrade Moisey telephoned Angelica Balabanova to inform her of my arrival, and suggested that we come over to visit her (she was staying in the same hotel). She replied that she would be pleased to acquaint herself personally with her special diplomatic courier.

Angelica Balabanova was a woman of medium height, with a gracious smile, who radiated kindness through a gentle and winning voice such as one seldom encounters anywhere.

After official introductions, her first question was whether we might not be hungry. When we assured her that we had just partaken of some refreshments in my room, she still insisted that we oin her in a cup of tea. While she was occupied in preparing the refreshments, I thought to myself: How can so gracious a woman be a Bolshevik and occupy so eminent a post as that of Secretary of the Third International? I was unaware at the time that Karl Radek and his cohorts had already forged a conspiracy to eliminate her from the Third International. After we had our tea, Balabanova informed me that she needed to travel to Kharkov and from there to Kiev,and that she would like me to organize the journey. She was from a rather wealthy, aristocratic Jewish family and I was not aware of how she had joined the Socialist movement; however her aristocratic demeanor remained with her. In Bolshevik circles she was widely known for her mastery of several foreign languages and for her exceptional oratorical talents. Besides her patrician aspect and manner, she possessed, as the saying goes, a heart o' gold. The more time I spent in her company, the more I could discern on her countenance deep chagrin over what was taking place in Russia. Whatever foodstuffs or other products she was able to get hold of, she would quickly distribute among the needy. She took to heart and grieved over the persecution which the Bolsheviks were inflicting on all political factions across the country. Indeed, she was among the very first to abandon both the organization and her native Russia.

In the meantime, an epidemic of typhoid fever was spreading ominously throughout Russia, and particularly through the railroad coaches. Balabanova therefore suggested that my private coach should be disinfected and that no one except myself, Alexey and herself should travel in this coach.

We were to leave in about two weeks time and Comrade Moisey was to see to it that all necessary preparations were made for the journey. The latter then expressed his opinion that we ought to take with us a large stock of literature, as there was no one else with whom to transport it and, besides, I had the requisite experience in that regard. Balabanova assented to this suggestion and this greatly facilitated our hauling of literature to Kharkov.

Since I was exhausted from the long journey, I went to my room to rest up that evening and did not call on our comrades. As I lay in bed I made a rough reckoning of my expansive journey in the course of which I had visited a number of groups and met numerous comrades. Although I had enjoyed the opportunity of travelling widely and making the acquaintance of hundreds of comrades, the whole thing afforded me little intellectual satisfaction, particularly following the great experimental project we had put through in Novorossiysk. At the beginning of my trip I had cherished some hopes that among these various groups I might possibly encounter some evidence

of positive achievements and not merely propaganda, but in this hope I was disillusioned. The only activist group which I had really found to my liking was the Nabat group in Kharkov.

The basic question of what I should do next loomed in my mind. Should I abandon my post, which would liberate me from playing a double role which was against my grain, knowing as I did about the vast number of victims our movement had lost to the Bolsheviks and feeling as I did, that we were justified in carrying on our propaganda activities? In spite of this, underground activities were distasteful to me and it was this fact, primarily, which impelled me to want to surrender my position and offer my cooperation to the Kharkov Nabat group. However, cool logic asserted itself and this question arose in my mind: Where could I perform the most useful labor – by remaining in Kharkov or by being in a position. to help all of our affiliated groups? Thus, as I dozed off, I resolved for the time being to remain at my post.

The following morning I went to try and locate my young comrade to find out whether he had returned yet from Kharkov with the funds to pay off our literature debt and for purchasing additional books for Kharkov. We had agreed to meet either at the Gordin brothers' place or in the book store of Golos Truda. I visited both locations and was informed that Ivan Apolon and Abram Christos were looking for me, and that they had left an address where I could locate them. It was somewhat of a surprise to me to find that these two activist comrades were in Moscow and I was eager to learn of the reason for their visit. It appeared that both of them had been working with the Ekaterinburg group and were publishing a newspaper there. When Kolchak seized that area, a partisan unit was on the scene and waged a bitter struggle against his army. Finally the partisan unit gave up the area and departed for Kharkov. However a number of comrades remained in Ekaterinburg and the surrounding area. Apolon and Christos were knowledgeable in the craft of publishing an underground journal and were seeking a way to bypass the military front and reach that city, where they would need the help of several local comrades to fulfill their task.

At the time of our encounter and conversation, I forgot to inquire after Katya and why she was not with them. Christos finally volunteered the information that it was a very tedious journey for a woman to undertake and therefore she had decided to remain in Kharkov and to operate there with an underground group. An additional reason was that, according to information received from Makhno, sometime in August the Red Army would be obliged to abandon the entire Ukraine, as well as a portion of central Russia. It seemed that the blockade by the Allied Powers, plus the aid that was being given to General Denikin, would enable the Allied Forces to occupy certain areas.

As a consequence of this news, the Nabat Confederation organized a special meeting and decided to set up a clandestine group comprised of comrades who would volunteer to remain at their posts in such an eventuality. Ivan Apolon advised me that, after they became stabilized and traveling was less complicated, Katya would come to Ekaterinburg. He also turned over to me a sum of money sufficient to pay our debt, as well as to purchase the greater part of the propaganda pamphlets which the underground group would need. We spent several days together and after that they set out on their difficult and dangerous way.

The following day, I visited the two book shops again, paid our bill with the Gordins and placed an order for more literature, then did the same with Golos Truda. When my mission was accomplished, I began calling on various comrades with the intention of finding and becoming acquainted with new comrades. One thing which puzzled me considerably was the fact that I failed to locate any of the considerable number of comrades whom the American Red Cross had assisted morally and materially, and with a number of whom I had conducted a correspondence

over the past years. There was one exception, a comrade who inquired after me, but I had no opportunity to meet him. During my six years sojourn in Russia, I did not have the good fortune to meet any of these comrades, who apparently had been sentenced to hard labor and disappeared as if by magic.

In addition to my own visits to various individual comrades and to the clubs, my hotel room became a rendezvous for a number of companions who used to pay me special visits. This was especially true of those who were not too well fed, and who knew that in my apartment they could always count on a glass of tea and something to eat. Consequently my stay in Moscow, while I was relieved of official duties, was always in congenial company. I am not certain whether it was good fortune or coincidence that in the Hotel National, where I was lodged, there were also living a number of high-ranking Bolshevik officials and officers. At this time, after the lapse of so many years, I still wonder at my good fortune in not being dismissed from my position and condemned to the dungeons of the Cheka. The young comrades who visited me would frequently engage in arguments and in the midst of these heated discussions both they and I would forget that we were surrounded by Bolsheviks.

On one occasion, as we were returning from one of the clubs, a comrade informed me that a young woman named Olga Laich had been present at the club and had inquired after me. She left an address where I could find her. Notwithstanding the fact that she had disregarded my warning and that of Vanya Budnik not to run off with the sailor, the old-time comradely friendship which existed between us gained the upper hand and I decided to visit her. Since her apartment was not far from my hotel, I decided to call on her that same evening.

She embraced me and we exchanged warm kisses. It was evident from her hearty reception that our encounter recalled for her the many delightful incidents and evenings which we had spent together in Novorossiysk. More than a year had passed since she had left that city. At that time she was in her thirties and in the full bloom of womanhood. Now she was still a relatively young woman, but she showed traces of the many trying experiences she had lived through. There were noticeable bags under her eyes. We sat there and she would not release my hand from hers and I was obliged to relate to her in detail what had taken place in Novorossiysk after her departure, and also my own trying experiences in getting out of that city. As I spoke I could feel her hand tremble and discern tears in her eyes. Inwardly she was living through all the vicissitudes that I had experienced and I could detect from her face that she felt guilty about not remaining with us in Novorossiysk. Since I didn't know what she was doing in Moscow and what had become of her sailor boy friend, I refrained from telling her where I was employed and what I was doing.

When I concluded my tale, she informed me that she had received a letter from her brother, Volodya, who was an army officer. By nature he was a rather rash and undisciplined fellow, and for some blunder he had committed was almost shot by a firing squad. This happened in Novorossiysk when General Denikin entered with his army. Volodya was conscripted and appointed a military commandant for the city. The first thing he did was to inquire through our acquaintances about my whereabouts, and he requested Bessie to come and visit him at his headquarters. The first question he put to her was to ask if I was in need of any help. She assured him that I was quite safe and thanked him for his friendly interest. He, in turn, pledged that should she at any time need his assistance, he would be pleased to help her in any way that he could.

To some extent I had already known about the whole business; now, however, when Olga related how her brother, an officer in General Denikin's army, was eager to help me, I could sense that she felt uncomfortable about the whole business. Something was obviously tormenting her.

Despite the fact that she was happy to see me, I could sense a certain tenseness in the atmosphere. This was probably due to the fact that I had not said a single word about the sailor with whom she had eloped, and this seemed to prey on her mind.

In spite of my own reticence about the sailor, I was still curious to learn what sort of adventure the two of them had been involved in. Olga had two younger sisters and she informed me that the middle one was living in Leningrad and had married one of our Jewish comrades and the younger had married another comrade. I am uncertain precisely what eventually happened to the three sisters, but, as best I could assemble the facts, this is what happened:

The middle one finally divorced her husband because there was a deep suspicion that he was a Cheka agent. She herself, as a militant anarchist, was deported to Siberia. The youngest sister also left her husband and went to live with a member of the Cheka. As for Olga herself, I entertained a suspicion that she had been dragged into some clandestine activity by her sailor companion.

While we were engaged in this conversation, the door suddenly opened and the sailor entered. Now I understood why she was under such nervous tension all this time. I still failed to grasp how Olga, possessed of such a delicate nature and with such intellectual interests, could allow herself to live with so crude and culturally backward a man as this sailor obviously was. He was taken aback when he saw me and it was obvious that he was embarrassed by my visit. The furniture and decor in the apartment, as well as the refreshments she had prepared, clearly suggested that they were in the higher ranks of the privileged class, or perhaps even connected in some way with the Cheka or some other Bolshevik body. After partaking of a drink and dessert, Olga began to recount to him all that we had experienced until our successful flight from Novorossiysk.

He began to apologize and express regrets for all the hardships we had undergone. It appeared that he, Olga and Sofein had been engaged on a special mission and were unable to return to Novorossiysk. Even though I was a guest in their home, I told him bluntly that his behavior and that of Sofein in Novorossiysk was not the way a true comrade should act. I visited them on two further occasions, and then they disappeared again and none of our comrades saw them after that.

When I reached Moscow, a few of my more intimate comrades communicated to me that they were organizing an underground group whose mission would be to wage terror against the Bolsheviks and to engage in expropriations and sabotage, in a word, to do everything possible to disrupt the Bolshevik regime. One of the ringleaders of this group was a comrade named Kovalevich. If I am not mistaken, he wielded considerable influence upon the railroad workers. He and one other comrade, whose name I no longer recall, were relatively older persons, whereas the others of my acquaintance were young people who were attracted to the unit by the ’heroism” and glamour which exerted tremendous impact upon their imaginations.

The entire issue of organizing such a clandestine group generated vehement discussions among the Moscow comrades, and these controversies often lasted late into the night.

Among the members of this group was a young lady, a highly devoted co-worker who had arrived with her entire family from Switzerland. She was living with another young woman who was also a member of the group. The girl’s name was Nina; she had a gorgeous complexion, was full of life and vitality and always wore an enchanting smile. Her entire appearance was such that few men could resist being attracted to her. She and her companion were of such an impulsive nature that they might at any time on the spur of the moment embrace one of us and plant a warm kiss, though in no way connected with sex.

I became acquainted with Nina on the second day after my return to Moscow. When I was visiting the club, some of my close comrades, knowing that refreshments were nearly always available in my apartment, invited themselves for a party to my room. They urged me to invite Nina also and she accepted readily, as if we had been longtime friends. I was somewhat puzzled how and why Nina, possessed of such rare beauty and charm, with such sexual magnetism and so young, could belong to so destructive a group. After a couple of hours my comrades departed, except for one young man who wanted to spend the night at my place. The impression Nina had made on me left me tense and kept me awake that night. I was eager to know more about her. Presently my companion told me that Nina had been in Moscow for about two months but that he did not know exactly when she came. He was a fairly close friend of hers and yet, despite her cordial and informal attitude toward men, Nina was the only one in the group who refrained consistently from sexual involvements. In fact, he remarked to me, "Did you notice how she embraced several comrades – even you, whom she had just met? But be assured that she merely regards men as comrades in a common cause, and nothing more."

The following morning the telephone awoke me. It was Nina calling. I admit that I was surprised to hear her voice, and w:hen I asked her what was on her mind and why she was calling me so early, she explained that she wanted to be sure to catch me before I left for my office. She added that she would like to see me, if possible at the club. The thought came to me that here was my chance to try out the accuracy of what my comrade had told me about Nina, so I told her that I could complete my work by about noon, and that we could meet at a suitable place, join in a meal and then discuss our problem. My comrade, hearing that Nina was telephoning, immediately assured me that she had been assigned the job of persuading me to join their underground group. The specific mission I would be expected to fulfill would be to utilize my traveling privileges for their purposes.

When I arrived at my hotel towards noon, Nina was already awaiting me. We went up to my rooms and telephoned downstairs for room service to bring up hot water to brew some tea with. Nina immediately set about arranging the table and the provisions I had taken out for the occasion. It was difficult to believe we had only been acquainted for twenty four hours. Nina was free and graceful in her movements and I gained the impression that she had lived in this suite for a long time. She possessed the elegant manners of a lady and the gentleness of a mother. As I sat there and partook of the refreshments with her, I marveled at how this lovely young woman exhibited no nervousness at finding herself alone in a room with a strange man.

When we had concluded our meal, Nina cleared the table and would not allow me to help with the dishes. She was obviously quite adroit at the task. Then she remarked to me that my hotel room was not the proper spot to discuss this important issue, so I suggested a park located not far away, near a famous cloister, where we could speak unobserved. When we reached our destination, she said to me: "I suppose you are aware of the fact, Boris, that I belong to the underground group and it is on their behalf that I want to speak to you now. They have urged me on several occasions to try and interest you in their activities."

Then, with extraordinary fervor, she began to delineate for me a picture of the ruins and wreckage the Bolsheviks had made of the October revolution, and how they had set out to exterminate the anarchist movement. It was obvious she was speaking from profound conviction and that she was striving to convince me that the methods proposed by her underground group were fully warranted by the situation.

As she spoke, her face glowed. I could sense she was experiencing in her mind the tragedy that was occurring at that time in Russia. While she was pleading with me, I continued to be puzzled as to why the spirit of revenge had grown so intense in this young woman. I felt bitter against whoever it was who had implanted such sinister ideas in the head of this young and lovely creature.

When she had concluded her plea, I replied that I would make no attempt to detach her from the underground group; presumably she was mature enough to know what she was doing and to order her own life as she saw fit. I added that she had been seduced into this ideology of romantic anarchism which may have been suitable for conditions existing decades ago, but was sadly out of place in the modern anarchist movement. I further reminded her that this recourse to expropriations had led to the moral and spiritual destruction of a number of our comrades. I pointedly told her of the episode I had witnessed in Kharkov in connection with the group which was practicing expropriations and indulging in bacchanalian revels – all in the name of anarchism.

Then I gave her a brief account of the constructive experiment we had put through in Novorossiysk, without expropriations or other destructive tactics. Even now, I emphasized, when we realized that the Bolsheviks were prepared to wreck the entire anarchist movement in Russia, I felt we had no right, from a moral point of view, to employ terror against the Bolsheviks – particularly at a time when all the sinister reactionary forces of the world were uniting to do their utmost to destroy the fruits of the revolution and bring back the hated old Czarism. I told her that the vast majority of comrades throughout the country opposed such terrorist tactics, because they simply provided ammunition for the Bolsheviks to broadcast to workers and to the revolutionary world about how the anarchists had combined with these dark powers to wipe out the gains of the October revolution. I added that while it was possible we would pay dearly for such an attitude, in recompense, history would vindicate the anarchist movement and its high moral imperatives.

When I had concluded, Nina asked me point blank whether I was refusing to help her group. My reply was that it was not a question of helping or not helping but that vital principles and attitudes were at stake here. Finally, I expressed the hope that our disagreement on this point would not disrupt our new-found friendship. She leaped to her feet, grasped my hand in hers and said with deep feeling: "Of course not! I am more than happy to be a friend of yours and right now I must confide a secret to you – I am hungry." It appeared we had both been unaware that a half day had passed and that twilight was approaching.

When we arrived at my hotel, several of our comrades were already waiting for me. We all went up to my room, ordered some hot water for tea, and prepared a modest repast for the hungry ones – and who was not hungry in those days?

Since the officials of the commissariat felt that I was entitled to some rest after my lengthy journey, all my visits to the Foreign Office were in the nature of official calls. I had been back in Moscow only four days and besides, Balabanova was far from ready to set out on her trip. Thus I would spend only a short time at the commissariat, dropping in to say hello to Balabanova, and was more or less at leisure the rest of the time.

I took advantage of the free time to visit the two clubs to become acquainted with new comrades and to continue my search for the "bluebird' which I had lost in Novorossiysk. But much as I sought among my comrades, I found not the slightest trace of this elusive bird of happiness. Indeed, in a few cases, I was accused of "anarcho-Bolshevism," simply because I demanded that

the anarchists undertake some constructive endeavor and not just sit around their clubs arguing about abstract issues and defying the police while waiting for someone else to erect a new social structure for them. Frequently I became so hoarse from these arguments I would lose my voice completely. At such times, the young and lively Nina would drag me away from the club and that would bring an end to the heated discussions. During those two weeks in Moscow, I had my happiest moments, in the company of Nina, her young girl companion and a few other youthful comrades.

On one occasion an incident occurred which illustrated how naive was Nina's approach to the problem of relations between men and women. It was about 11 o'clock at night; I had already retired and was about to fall asleep when I heard the phone ring. I picked it up and inquired who it was and heard Nina's voice. She told me that she and her young girl companion wanted to come up to see me, but were not permitted admission because of the late hour. I dressed hurriedly, went down to the lobby entrance and, since I was on good terms with the doorman, he promptly admitted my two comrades without too many questions.

When we got to my room, Nina told me that they had nowhere to spend the night. After they had left the club that night and walked a few blocks, they had become aware of someone following them. Nina, who possessed a strong conspiratorial instinct, crossed over with her friend to the other side of the street, hailed the first cab that came along and drove to my hotel, fearing to go to their own home.

My room contained a single bed, several chairs and a table, so I stated that I would try to sleep on the table and they could have the bed. Nina objected and suggested that all three of us sleep in the bed. She added that if we could not trust each other, there was no value in our comradeship. Her companion was a bit embarrassed by Nina's plan and Nina scolded her for not having confidence in herself, then suggested that I sleep against the wall, she in the middle and her friend at the other end. Without another word, she commenced undressing, as normally as if she was in her own bedroom. Since her young companion was obviously still uneasy about the whole thing, I suggested we turn out the light. Only then did her friend begin to undress. I am unaware if her companion slept that night, but Nina was soon sound asleep and did not seem in the least concerned that a man was lying next to her. I must say in all candor that seldom in my life have I encountered such a morally pure and innocent person, in spite of my extensive connections with the many elements of our movement throughout the country.

With this in mind, it is understandable what a severe emotional blow it was to me when, about two months later, I learned that Nina, along with the majority of her group, were torn to pieces by a charge of dynamite when the Cheka surrounded their villa, where they maintained their conspiratorial activities.

Back in the United States, I had contact with our comrades, the Taratutas, who at that time were playing an important role in our movement in Russia. At this time a brother of theirs was living on a farm near Moscow with an old-time comrade, a former Siberian exile named Savitchky. They were cultivating a plot of land in order to produce a few provisions. I had given him some assistance with the school which they had organized for children who also made their home there. On a Friday afternoon I set out to visit the Taratutas and Savitchky; no easy task, as I could ride only part of the distance by trolley and after that had to walk for miles. When I arrived I was quite exhausted but the warm reception given me by Olga and Savitchky (the brother was not home at the time) quickly dispelled my fatigue. Both of these comrades had heard about me,

and about Novorossiysk, but from the moment I sat down, I had to recount all the details of the Novorossiysk episode.

I argued and discussed various problems with them until Sunday afternoon, when I set out on my way again. Living on a farm they had become somewhat cut off from the dynamic activities of our movement, but in later years when I had the opportunity to visit them again, I left each time intellectually refreshed. Some years later Olga was arrested and disappeared from the scene, as was the case with so many other of our comrades.

Day after day, more new comrades were arriving in Moscow, particularly from the Ukraine, and I began to feel that the Bolsheviks would not be able to hold on to that territory very long. This feeling pervaded our commissariat also; but since I was an "outsider" and not a member of the party, the matter was not discussed in my presence. Because of all this, I was wondering why Balabanova was so resolved to visit Kharkov and Kiev. When I returned from my visit to the Taratutas, I received a phone cal1 from Balabanova, asking me to come and see her in her rooms. When I arrived, she informed me that she still had some preparation to make for her journey, but that she should be able to leave before the end or the week and that she would apprise me of the exact date of our departure.

The following day I began to prepare the commissariat literature as well as our own. With the aid of two comrades, I managed to carry over all this propaganda material and, as on previous occasions, the members of the Cheka helped to bring in the literature. Everything seemed to be progressing smoothly.

I had prepared everything we needed for the journey and had also persuaded Balabanova to allow my wife's sister, Ethel Sigalovich, to accompany us to Kiev.

The evening prior to our departure, Nina and a group of other comrades met in my room. The main theme of our conversation involved two or three expropriations which had been very cleverly executed, so that none of our comrades had been arrested. It was evident that the Bolsheviks did not have any suspicions that the underground group had participated in these expropriations.

In addition, we discussed at some length the news we were receiving concerning the political situation and about the menace of the counter-revolution which was rearing its head. This was due in part to the fact that the Red Army was beginning to lose its vantage positions. All those present were deeply concerned over what the times might bring and what it all might lead to. Late that night, after most of the comrades had left for their respective homes, the mood became one of some depression.

The following day we departed with a special military train which was going through non-stop except for emergencies. By noon the next day we were in Kharkov.

Balabanova immediately went to the hotel, while Ethel Sigalovich and I remained to remove the literature. Fortunately this task was much simpler now, partly because it was evident that everything was calm politically. We transferred the literature to the railroad station and Ethel removed our books while I took care of the literature from the commissariat. With that completed, I returned to the hotel where I met Balabanova, and she reported that we would remain here in Kharkov for quite some time. Since I had completed my official duties, I soon had a week of vacation. I took advantage of my leisure time to spend my days with our comrades. The Nabat group, headquartered in Kharkov, not far from the fighting front, was quite active at that time. Our close ties with Makhno had given us a clear impression that it would not be long before the Bolsheviks would have to abandon the entire Ukraine. As a consequence, the Nabat Confederation set about to organize underground units, prepare propaganda material and weapons

and a clandestine rendezvous. Conspiratorial meetings were arranged, enlivened by discussions and debates about the program of resistance. The actual down-to-earth work would be done by those co-mrades who had decided to remain in Kharkov in order to carry on their underground activity.

The main group subdivided into several small, cellular units, so that in the event one was uncovered, it would not harm the other comrades. For the same reason, a number of residences were rented with one group in each and each group handling a share of the activity.

As I have mentioned previously, in the course of my stays in Kharkov, I had encountered a comrade I had known about in the states, Naumke, "the White One." He appeared to be a born conspirator and the hatching of conspiracies seemed to be the aim of his life. One evening when we met by chance, we drifted into a chat about our Krinky and Bialystok comrades who had remained in America and with whom Naumke had been acquainted for many years. He now evinced a keen interest in knowing what had become of these men in the "Promised Land." We met several times during my week's stay in Kharkov. The evening preceding my departure, I joined a group of comrades at an evening's program and that was the last time I was to see Naumke. When Deniken's forces penetrated Kharkov, Naumke was arrested and, together with a number of other comrades from different groups, was executed in the city square.

Another comrade with whom I became closely acquainted and with whom I spent considerable time was Katya Christos. She had come to Russia from Philadelphia. I don't know how or where she met Abram Christos, but there was no doubt that she was deeply in love with him. Nature makes strange bedfellows. Katya was gentle and lovable, a serious-minded, devoted comrade. Despite our brief acquaintance, there was no distance between us and we felt as if we had been friends for a long time. By contrast, her husband was a high-strung, rather unamiable person. He seemed determined to impress all his comrades as a dangerous conspirator. I often wondered how Ivan Apolon and Katya managed to put up with his morose, oppressive temperament. I bade them farewell that night and it was nine months before we met again.

The following day, when we arrived in Kiev, Balabanova revealed that she had a rather special and urgent assignment for me. A carload of literature had to be transported to Odessa. I was instructed to leave our special coach in Kiev, as the material was already packed in a freight car. She directed me to fulfill my mission promptly, return quickly to Kiev and from there to Moscow.

I left that night for Odessa in the company of Bessie's sister, Ethel. The train was only of moderate size but was conspicuous because of the two large machine guns mounted on top of the locomotive and two more on top of the last coach. Toward nine the next morning the train was delayed at a minor station for some time because the tracks ahead had been dynamited. As a result, the commandant of the train telephoned a larger station to dispatch an army contingent.

The surrounding country was at that time swarming with all manner and type of partisan bands, as well as bandits. We waited until noon but no military units arrived. The commandant then announced that someone who was armed should ride out with the locomotive only to try and find a way for the train to proceed. We set out with that intent, but soon had to return, since the damage from the explosion required the effort of special workers and material for repairs. Back at the station I dispatched a military telegram to communicate what had happened. An hour later I received a phone call from Balabanova ordering me to turn over the coach to those concerned and return to Kiev. Since my sister-in-law, Ethel, was obliged to travel to Odessa where her husband was staying, I issued a directive for her to remain at that spot until passage was secured and returned to Kiev.

It became evident when I arrived at the railroad station in Kiev that a feeling of panic was spreading. The heavy concentration of Red Army forces and the brisk movement of trains coming and going indicated that the military front was not a great distance from the city.

I found my coach intact at the railroad station and Alexey informed me that they were awaiting my arrival and that I was to leave for Moscow. He also notified me that I had an assistant. This was something of a surprise to me, but I soon learned that the man was a diplomatic courier like myself and, since he was to return to Moscow, he had been designated as my assistant; also for the reason that we were to take with us a number of the families of high ranking party officials.

When I reported to Balabanova, she greeted me with a deep sigh and voiced the opinion that before long we would probably have to abandon Kiev, which meant virtually the entire Ukraine. She warned me to be ready to depart for Kiev in a few days and inquired about how many people I could accommodate in my coach, as well as the capacity for a load of products and provisions and articles for the workers in our commissariat. I replied that I thought we could handle everyone who wished to make the journey. Balabanova stated that we would prepare a list of the passengers, and a day or two later she would provide the provisions. On completing the official tasks with Balabanova, I left to make contact with our own comrades.

Arriving at the home where the comrades normally congregated, I met a considerable number who had arrived that same day from Kharkov, which ws in the midst of evacuation. General Denikin's army was approaching the gates of the city with the result that, except for a few comrades who remained there to carry on underground activity, the great majority had departed. There existed no possibility of reaching Moscow directly, so they had come to Kiev in the hopes of eventually making their way from there to Moscow. Among the arrivals were several members of Makhno's partisan army. The arrivals told us of an interesting episode. It appears that General Denikin, who by this time was receiving military and financial aid from the Allied powers, feared Makhno's partisans much more than he did the Red Army, which was later to become so famous. The White Army general fully realized, corrrectly as subsequent events brought out, that unless he first eliminated Makhno's forces, he would be in serious trouble. When the Red Army began to retreat more deeply into central Russia, Denikin marshalled his choicest regiments, consisting of officers and cossacks, and launched a vicious attack on Makhno's troops. The latter then withdrew into the depths of the forests, where General Denikin managed to surround them, but was powerless to destroy them.

Makhno and his forces became aware of their precarious situation and made several valiant attempts to break out of the iron ring but this only resulted in severe losses for the partisans. Since among Makhno's partisan ranks there prevailed a free spirit and a high sense of initiative, Makhno summoned his most trusted and veteran warriors to discuss possible ways of escaping from their trap. It appeared that the only possible prospect was for a relatively small group of partisans to make a forced march toward a town not far away, where they could by stealth attack and wipe out the night watch, penetrate the community, engage and if possible rout the White Army contingent there. They would be followed by another, larger unit of partisans and the two combined would then attempt to liquidate the various contigents of Denikin's army.

That same day, a patrol of selected men made their way to the outskirts of the town to learn there the main enemy force was located and, in particular, to ascertain how many patrols were circling the place. By evening, Makhno's staff had the needed information. The commander then turned to his followers and asked who would volunteer for the perilous assignment. The response

was almost unanimous. He then chose men for both the first and second contingents, while the entire force prepared for the general assault, should things work out according to plan.

The "armaments" of Makhno's forces were not very formidable. They consisted in large part of light wagons harnessed to two sturdy, swift horses, with a number of machine guns mounted on top of the wagons. Otherwise, the partisan army consisted of calvary units.

That night, Makhno and the first contingent, with some of the wagons, set out on their dangerous mission, moving noiselessly through the dense forest. When the first rays of dawn appeared, they were already close to their objective. At that hour when most people are normally in their deepest slumber, Makhno, with a handful of companions, silently dismounted and swiftly moved toward the pre-arranged spot where they slew the sentries guarding the city. With this preliminary step accomplished, the main force joined Makhno and they moved forward to attempt to wipe out the enemy watch.

Meanwhile the second unit had arrived and the carnage began. Makhno and his men surrounded the drowsy military units and the combined partisan forces then undertook to annihilate Denikin's elite units. In this bitter battle, Denikin lost the greater part of his choicest fighting units. The survivors fled hastily and Makhno's army succeeded in breaking out of their encirclement. This was undoubtedly one of the more decisive victories won in the civil war against the White Army.

In spit of this signal triumph, Makhno and his partisans realized that they were still in dire peril, but to a man they were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the social revolution. What is equally significant is the fact that, thought they fought like tigers, they were not permeated by that spirit of reckless romanticism and vain illusions from which so much of the rest of our movement suffered. Rather they cherished a firm faith in constructive effort in close touch with reality. This is what made the Makhno movement almost legendary and lent it its strength. In a certain sense, this mass movement can be likened to such historic folk uprisings as those of Pugachev and Stenka Razin, though to be sure their methods and tactics differed widely. I shall return later to the remarkable story of Makhno and his partisans.

Now the burning question among the comrades in Kiev was where they could safely evacuate to. Everyone wanted to head for Moscow but that entailed numerous complications, since it was next to impossible to secure a ticket to leave Kiev. Of course all the comrades were aware of the fact that I had a railroad coach at my disposal and wanted me to take them along to Moscow. They could not understand that, in the middle of this panic situation, it was out of the question. I nonetheless pledged to do my utmost to help my comrades get out of Kiev. Since I was in possession of official passes and had influential connections, I found certain doors open for me and thus managed to secure a limited number of permits and railway tickets for Moscow. The task was then to make some provisions for the other comrades who sought to leave the city.

I finally decided to make a plea to Angelica Balabanova to allow me to take along a certain number of my comrades in my railway car. I assured her that they would not monopolize the places reserved for the families travelling with me. She understood the situation and readily granted my plea but asked my firm assurance that none of my companions were counter-revolutionaries or were waging an armed fight against the Soviet regime. This placed me in a predicament since I knew quite well that among those clamoring to travel with me were those young comrades who had just reached us from Makhno's army; still, they also had to be rescued. Hence, I gave her my word as she had requested. She then directed her secretary to prepare a permit which authorized me to take along a certain number of persons in my coach. I then explained to my comrades

that I had given my word of honor that there were no counter-revolutionaries in their midst and I added that, while I had no intention of trying to control their thoughts or convictions, they must promise not to engage in arguments with the other people travelling in my coach, since these latter were family members of high Bolshevik officials. I also exacted from them the pledge that, until their arrival in Moscow, they would not reveal who they were, and stated flatly that only those willing to fulfill these conditions would be able to come along. "One more thing," I told them, "none of you can occupy any seats until all the evacuees have been installed in their places."

My comrades readily assented to these conditions and promised to "behave," though I had a presentiment that some of them might cause me grief before the journey was over. But I could not very well abandon them to almost certain death, though it was a matter of deep concern to me not to break my word to or lose the respect of Angelica Balabanova. In the end, willy-nilly, I had to pack into my coach all my comrades.

The next day when I called on Balabanova, she informed me that she had already received a directive to hitch my coach at night on to the passenger train that was to leave for Moscow two days later. She instructed my assistant and myself to call at the commissariat in charge of provisions and, if everything was in readiness, to load them aboard the coach.

At this juncture, I encountered some embarrassment from my assistant. He was a party member; I was not only not a member of the party but was an anarchist to boot And here I was, entrusted with an important mission while he was reduced to the level of an auxiliary. I noticed his glumness and, eager to forestall any difficulties with him, I requested Balabanova to designate him in my place while I would be content to serve as his assistant. She wondered at my willingness to give up a post which I had so far filled so successfully and I admitted to her my feelings that my assistant was disgruntled over my being "top dog." I assured her that I did not crave any honor, and since he thought his experience equal to mine, I was prepared to turn the responsibility over to him. Balabanova listened to me patiently and then proceeded to deliver a stern lecture to the young Communist, reminding him that I had already fulfilled a number of missions with high success, while he was only beginning his career as a diplomatic courier; that he had indeed been assigned as my assistant so that he could learn something, and that if he was too proud to serve as an assistant she would procure a regular railway ticket for him. Abashed by this rebuke, the young man apologized to Balabanova and accepted his lesser rank.

She then informed me that all my "fellow travelers" would carry slips or stubs with her signature, and she provided me with a list of the passengers assigned to my coach. That night my comrades and I staged a farewell party with those of our co-workers who had chosen to remain in Kiev for underground work. At the same time I arranged with my prospective train companions to meet us at the railroad station. Our gathering lasted into the night. We discussed with special zest the question of the clandestine group in moscow, and whether their activities were constructive or destructive. The majority among us opposed the group. The main sentiment at our meeting was that here we were evacuating territory threatened by the White Army, which could restore the ancient regime of the Czars. If now we should attack or sabotage the Bolsheviks, it would be tantamount to abetting directly or indirectly the reactionary forces all over Russia. However the romanticists in our midst refused to see it that way. The great danger envisaged in those days, when faith and trust were still present, was the fear that after shattering the reactionary forces, other dictatorial tendencies might arise which would nullify the gains of the social revolution.

Since my coach stood close to the railroad station, my passengers began to arrive soon after noon, despite the fact that the train was not due to pull out until midnight. The ladies, these "grande dames" of the new bureaucratic elite, expected that there would be compartments in my coach where they could sleep peacefully. Several hours passed before all my passengers had entered and occupied their places in the coach, which was already coupled to the train. I then returned to the waiting room of the station where my comrades were impatiently waiting for me. With the aid of my array official permits I managed to conduct them through the gates of the station and guided them to my coach. They were taken to the section crammed with crates of provisions where we contrived to clear a space for them.

As a result of all the hurrying about that day, I was nearly exhausted and feeling quite faint. Late that night when the train began to chug along on its long journey and most of the passengers had gone to sleep, I bade my assistant lie down and catch three or four hours sleep, while I stayed alert so that our car was not uncoupled somewhere at one of the larger stations. I stretched out on my bunk, but the farther the train ground and crunched into the blackness, the more acute my pain became. When the train arrived at one of the larger stations, I awakened my assistant, but I lacked the strength to rise from my bed. I felt sickness creeping up on me. I was carrying a bottle of whiskey with me, so I asked my aide to procure some hot water for tea at the following station. I mixed this with the whiskey and after sipping a couple of glasses of this concoction, I begged my assistant to let me sleep for awhile. I told him that if he needed any help he should call on my comrades.

I slept until well past noon. My fellow passengers tried to persuade me to leave the train at a town which we ,would be passing through and enter a hospital there, but I resolved to go on to Moscow where I knew I would receive good medical care. In the meantime good order prevailed in the coach, with the exception of the displeasure shown by the wives of the Bolshevik bureaucrats when they noticed that my comrades were aboard. However my assistant reassured them by informing them that my comrades were travelling with the express permission of Angelica Balabanova.

My sickness seemed to produce a friendly atmosphere, as everyone around sought to help me in some way. I forced myself to remain in bed the entire day and night and began to feel somewhat better the following day, so that when our train reached a larger station shortly before noon, I had the urge to step out on the platform and catch a breath of fresh air. In this connection, I should mention that at every important railroad station the peasants would bring produce for sale; indeed this was the last major depot in the Ukraine where it was still possible to procure some foodstuffs. I therefore decided to take my helper with me and entrusted our maintenance man, Alexy, to supervise our coach.

Behind the station a regular market had sprung up. The large number of passengers, plus a goodly group of arriving peasants created quite a multitude. As I strolled about the grounds with my assistant, I noted at some distance, the four youthful comrades who had come with us from Makhno's army, each carrying a pack of the special issue of the Nabat journal, which dealt with the question of the Makhno movement and with the Bolsheviks' ruthless campaign to destroy it. Observing this, I turned in another direction, hoping my companion would not notice this development. I pleaded indisposition and we returned to the coach. However, I sensed from the expression on his face that he had indeed seen the "contraband" which these four comrades were carrying. When we reached our car, he pretended that he wanted to go back to buy some produce, but there was no doubt in my mind that he intended to go to the railway Cheka to report

that anarchists were distributing a Makhno paper. To try and forestall serious consequences, I summoned two of my comrades, told them hurriedly of the ominous situation and sent them to follow my helper. When they had left, i approached the other comrades, told them about the matter and reminded them of their collective word of honor, pledged to me in Kiev, not to reveal their identity in any way. I spoke harshly to them on the importance of keeping one's word, even to a Bolshevik. I gave them an ultimatum: to hurry to the market and immediately halt the distribution of the propaganda material or else to leave the coach, since I would not tolerate such irresponsibility.

The entire incident, coming as it did on top of my recent illness, unnerved me and I began to feel weak again, but the thought that the following morning would bring us to Moscow sustained me. Barely half an hour later, the comrades returned and the four offenders secluded themselves in a corner of the coach and did not show their faces until we reached Moscow. Shortly thereafter, my aide arrived carrying a load of produce; the two comrades who had trailed him informed me that he had spent the entire time at the market!

To this day I fail to understand why this young Bolshevik, who in Kiev was very unhappy over the prospect of serving as a subordinate to an anarchist, did not report to the railway Cheka that he had seen anarchists distributing the Nabat newspaper. This alone would have made a hero of him and elevated him to take over my post. Whatever it was that inhibited him from acting remains a riddle to me.

In the evening when the train arrived at another major station, I dispatched a telegram to Karochan, informing him that I had fallen seriously ill for a time and that he should arrange to have someone from the Commissariat come with a wagon to remove the provisions from the coach. I also requested him to provide a room for me. When we reached Moscow the following day, an automobile, along with a wagon carrying two men from the Commissariat awaited us. I was told that this time a room had been reserved for me in the Hotel Metropol, a portion of which was occupied by the Foreign Commissariat. They also assured me that I would find in my room all the produce we had brought with us.

Promptly upon my arrival at the hotel a physician arrived. After a thorough examination, he ordered me to remain in bed for not less than a week. He was accompanied by a woman doctor who was living in the hotel and who was charged with taking care of me. The following morning the bulk of the edibles were distributed and I saw to it that our comrades did not go hungry.

That same evening I was visited by a roomful of comrades. Among them were Mark Mrochny, Nina and Fanny Avrutskaya. The latter two settled themselves in my room, which was quite large and contained two beds, besides the a couple of sofas. So I had little rest or privacy that night. Aside from these two "angels," one or two other comrades would usually spend the night in my room. This was quite illegal of course, since a special permit was required to be admitted to the hotel. Only the general knowledge that I was harboring a supply of valuable edibles helped me to avoid unpleasant consequences.

From the number of visitors who called on me by day and night, one could gain the impression that the bulk of our followers in Russia were concentrated in Moscow. Indeed, one day something like an informal anarchist gathering took place in my hotel room, embracing, among others, Mark Mrochny, Aron Baron, Aronchik, another member of the underground group, and Nina. As usual, the activities of the clandestine group provided the main topic of conversation.

With the exception of the three comrades mentioned above, all of our co-workers sharply criticized the activities of the underground group, several of whose members would also call on

us from time to time. During the week of my confinement, my two lady comrades, Nina and Fanny, constantly danced attendance on me and took the best care of me. Likewise the other comrades who visited me cheered me up and kept me from becoming bored, so that in time I began to feel better. Finally the physician permitted me to leave my bed, but it required a full month before I was myself again.

It was only after I got out into the streets and began engaging Bolshevik acquaintances in conversation that I began to feel the political pulse of the land. General Denikin had compelled the Bolshevik forces to abandon the Ukraine and he was now invading the territory of Great Russia proper with the aid of the Czechoslovak army which was stranded in Siberia and wanted to return to its homeland. Admiral Kolchak was neither able nor willing to allow this. The Czechs then proceeded to seize Admiral Kolchak, commander of the White Army who, if I remember correctly, had gained possession of a huge reserve of gold and sequestered it in the town of Yaroslavel. They now offered to bargain with the Bolsheviks; to turn over this gold stock to them and to throw in Kolchak too, provided the Bolsheviks would agree not to interfere with their returning to their native land. The Bolsheviks eagerly agreed to this offer, however at the time Great Russia somewhat resembled an ever-shrinking ring, with a ribbon-like path extending to the Ural Mountains. It is therefore not too surprising that a degree of panic arose and that people quietly began to remove valuable possessions from Leningrad and Moscow.

One day during my convalescence, Angelica Balabanova phoned me and asked me to call on her. Here was a woman who, although a Bolshevik and occupying the high post of Secretary of the Third Intenational, was the incarnation of amiability and simplicity. When I arrived at her office, she asked whether I was able to walk with her to the headquarters of the Third International. This surprised me, as I knew she had an automobile at her disposal and the office was quite a distance away. She explained that she had already walked that distance several times and there were some matters she wanted to discuss with me.

It was only several days later that I learned that Lenin, Radek, and the rest of the Communist hierarchy were bent on ousting her from her post of the Third International. But even Lenin himself did not have the courage to inform her of that decision, and that was the reason they had dispatched her first to Rakovsky in Kharkov. Even on her return to Moscow, she had not known of the fact that a new Secretary had been named in her place, and she would appear daily at the main office of the Third International. They deprived her of her automobile, hoping thus to get rid of her, but she countered their underhanded maneuvers by ignoring their action and reporting every day to the Bureau.

During our walk we talked of various matters, but suddenly she stopped and said: "I must find out something from you. I know that during the several months that you have been engaged as a diplomatic courier you have discharged your duties ably and devotedly and I can assure you that, from Chicherin down to the minor officials, all, including myself, repose high confidence in you, even though you are not a member of the party. However, something has happened which I must have clarified. When, in Kiev, you asked for permission to take along several of your comrades to Moscow, I demanded a guarantee that none of them was engaged in counter-revolutionary activity, and you gave me your word on that. Now I am informed that several of those who accompanied you distributed the Nabat journal at the railway stations." I now realized that apparently my assistant had reported the incident to her.

Despite my moral inhibitions against lying to her, I was obliged to resort to the device of a half-truth, since it was obvious that the whole truth could provoke dire consequences. I told her

that, as she knew, I had been taken quite ill the first night after our departure from Kiev, and that, during the entire journey to Moscow, I had ventured out from our coach only once for a few minutes and therefore knew nothing of the episode. I added that if the informant had immediately reported the matter to me I would have taken the necessary steps to have put a stop to it and would have expelled the "miscreants." Bellabanova readily accepted my explanation and bade me forget this part of our conversation.

To this day, my conscience bothers me that I was unable to tell her the entire truth. I must emphasize again that such "anarchistic-romanticism" engendered an atmosphere of irresponsibility, leading to infinite arguments and debates but to very little constructive achievement.

To this day, my conscience bothers me that I was unable to tell her the entire truth. I must emphasize again that such "anarchistic-romanticism" engendered an atmosphere of irresponsibility, leading to infinite arguments and debates but to very little constructive achievement.

With every passing day new comrades arrived, and at the two clubs then in existence, one could encounter all day and late into the night groups of comrades debating endlessly concerning the newly created political situation, particularly regarding the Moscow underground group. This group was taking advantage of the fact that the Bolsheviks were fighting on the various military fronts and had perpetrated several daring expropriations. This issue provoked heated argument, with the majority of the comrades vigorously opposing the tactics of the underground group.

As I have previously remarked, there would take place every day and often also at night, gatherings in my room of comrades with whom I was closely associated. Among the Moscow comrades who had become more or less steady residents in that city was my now deceased friend, G.P. Maximoff. Since I traveled about a great deal and came in contact with numerous comrades and groups, he kept in close touch with me and was keenly interested in what was going on in these circles. In the course of time, a warm friendship developed between us, which lasted until his death (he passed away on March 15, 1950). I would also visit from time to time with Apollon Karelin, an old comrade who was already living largely in the past, out of touch with reality. Occasionally I would drop in at the bookshop and restaurant maintained by the Gordin brothers, though aside from a handful of faddists, they had no real following for their philosophy of "inter-individualism" and their invented language, "Bee-O-Bo." Our main rendezvous was the "Universalist Club," where comrades representing all shades of opinion could be encountered and a variety of issues discussed.

On one occasion I met Mark Mrochny there. He was deep in conversation with a rather attractive woman who he introduced to me as Comrade Claudia. On the side, he whispered to me the suggestion that I invite the two of them to my hotel room for some refreshments, as they were both hungry. I accepted the proposal, treated them to a snack and as might be expected, we launched off into a discussion of the general situation, particularly that of the Moscow underground group.

Comrade Claudia was profoundly influenced by the activities of that group and was quite militant in her views. While this didn't impress me too favorably, it was quite evident that this young woman possessed a resolute character and some hidden springs of personality which evoked in me a feeling of friendship for her. It was not until about a year later that I gained the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with her and Bessie and I became her close friends.

The days and weeks passed quickly and the military and political situations grew worse. A quiet evacuation had begun some weeks previously as more and more persons began to remove their personal effects from Moscow and Leningrad and the general mood of the public deterio-

rated from day to day. Early one morning near the beginning of September, 1919, I recieved a telephone call from Karochan's secretary, directing me to report to the Commissariat. Karochan recieved me cordially but came promptly to the point. "I regret this deeply," he said, "but I have unpleasant news for you. Chicherin (Chief Commissar for Foreign Affairs) and Balabanova esteem your work highly, but the decision has been made that a non-Bolshevik can no longer serve in the capacity of diplomatic courier." He added that if I were to join the Communist party all three of them would give me the highest recommendations. He advised me to take ample time to deliberate, and in the meantime I would remain as an employee of the Commissariat. I gave him my reply promptly: that one is justified in becoming a member of the party if one believes in its program, and certainly not merely to hold on to a position. Karochan assured me he understood my point of view, and added that, until I obtained some other employment, I could keep my post in the Commissariat and could also retain my hotel room – quite a concession in those days.

When I left Karochan's office, his secretary informed me that Boris Reinstein wanted to see me. I found Comrade Moisey also waiting. Both of them expressed regret that I was leaving my post and they even confided in me that a sharp controversy had taken place between Karochan and themselves in the Commissariat party cell, but that they were powerless to retain me as a diplomatic courier in view of the directive from the party. Both of them assured me of their readiness to help me whenever I needed assistance. I had become a particularly close friend of Boris Reinstein and his youthful wife (since his family had remained in the United States and his first wife refused to join him in Russia, he had remarried in Moscow).

I was not too happy over the prospect of joining the ranks of the unemployed and it was against my nature to roam around without a definite occupation, especially in Moscow. I could, to be sure, remain another month or so in my hotel room, but sooner or later I would have to find new lodgings for myself and that was no easy task. In the summertime it was still possible to exist in Moscow, but in winter one could quite literally freeze to death in an ordinary hotel room.

Fortune again favoured me, as it had so frequently in the past when I faced death or some critical situation. My correspondence in those days cme to the home of a comrade of mine and one day he handed me a letter from Ivan Apolon, posted from Ekaterinburg, in which he discussed the possibility of developing some anarchist activity there. It seemed there was ample food as well and he begged me to send him some of our co-workers.

A merciless winter was about to descend on Moscow and the economic situation was growing more desperate from day to day. I therefore summoned several of my comrades to my hotel room and reported to them on the request from Ekaterinburg. The first to volunteer for the mission were Mark and Claudia, and also a woman from Bessarabia of whom I knew very little, but who came highly recommended by Mark. So we decided to go there, but we were then faced with the problem of how to carry out such a journey. For even the smallest trip, one had to procure official permission and for a trip such as this, which might take a week or so, a permit from the military commissariat would be necessary.

Again, Angelica Balabanova came to my rescue. I told her I had lost my post, was not in the best of health and had decided to go to Ekaterinburg where I had friends and where it was easier to find food. She was kind enough to recommend me to a friend of hers who was Commissar of Education and Culture for the entire Red Army. She informed me that she was looking for people to work with a department of the Red Army located not far from Ekaterinburg and issued me an official pass for the journey. I then told her that I had several friends who would also like

to work for the Red Army. In about an hour, on my assurance and guarantee that I knew these people well and that they were reliable, I had in my possession all the necessary documentation for myself as well as for Claudia and Mark.

About a week before our departure, two comrades from the underground group came to me and asked me to take along a pack of their proclamations and promised to pay a substantial sum of money for that privilege. I had to state to them bluntly that first of all I was opposed to the tactics of their group, and furthermore, if we should be caught with that sort of propaganda material, Balabanova and her friend, our two benefactors, would be jeopardized and that we had no right to do anything like that to them. Claudia and Mark were in full accord.

On Monday, September 19, 1919, we decided to leave Moscow, and that day will remain fixed in my memory until I draw my last breath. Our train was to pull out at 6 in the evening, so we came down to the depot an hour ahead of time. Aron Baron accompanied us to the station. We entered our coach and began to arrange our baggage and personal effects in our compartment. Suddenly the door swung open and we were confronted with eight uninvited guests; one of them showed us a Cheka identification card. They immediately went into action. First they turned their attention to Comrade Baron, frisking him from head to foot and minutely examined every scrap of paper they came across. They found nothing incriminating on his person and allowed him to step out of the compartment. My turn was next and with me also everything was in order and they allowed me to leave the compartment. When I emerged from the coach I could see that it was surrounded by armed Cheka members. I stood alongside of the coach waiting; every minute seemed like an eternity. The thought kept driving at me that possibly they had found some illegal article on my comrades. My eyes were glued to the door of the coach. A full twenty-seven Chekists came out of the coach, and then their chief apologized to me, saying it was all due to a misunderstanding.

I climbed into the coach and stood in the entranceway as if frozen. The train began to move and I still stood there motionless. When I finally regained my composure somewhat, I went back into the compartment to be confronted by two "living corpses," for both Claudia and Mark were white as chalk. Many minutes passed and not a word was spoken. It finally became clear to me that my comrades had broken their promise and had taken along with them the forbidden proclamations from the underground group. Through mere chance the Chekists had overlooked one suitcase and that alone had saved us from certain death.

When the train had gained some speed and we had left the suburbs of Moscow behind, I shut the door of our compartment and flung the question at Mark and Claudia in three blunt words: "Have you that?" Their answer was, "Yes."

Only a piece of good fortune had spared us. Claudia was carrying with her a small black handbag which contained the package of proclamations. When we entered the compartment, she placed the handbag in a corner of the lower bunk, and set my suitcase down next to it. When the Chekists searched my valise they laid my effects in the corner where the handbag was, covering it, and when they completed the search of my luggage they were unable to see what they were looking for so strenuously – and this saved our necks! When it grew dark outside, I removed the proclamations, opened the window and threw them out. I am not sure who it was who broke their promise but I rather suspect it was Claudia, under the prodding of Mark.

Needless to say, our journey to Ekaterinburg was none too pleasant after this incident. During the entire week the trip lasted, I could not recover my composure after this unsettling episode. The trip was also complicated by the fact that, up until a few weeks previously, the Kolchak forces

had held sway here. The tracks were torn up and a number of bridges had been blown up, making it necessary to tow the railroad cars with horses.

When we finally reached Ekaterinburg we found a small colony of our comrades there. In addition to Ivan Apolon and Abram Christos, there were several others, including one woman. We found on our arrival that it had rained the whole day, but when we arose the next morning, we found the whole city blanketed by snow. It was only toward the end of September but that memorable Siberian winter was already moving in on us.

Apolon and Christos had entered the city with the Red Army men and had soon obtained two apartments with a courtyard. In the larger one they even came across a meal still hot, left behind by the fleeing residents who sought to avoid being seized by the Red Army. Thus they had the good fortune to take over these two apartments with all the conveniences. We counted a total of ten of our "gang" not counting those who would be visiting us from time to time from the surrounding country.

By the day following our arrival, Apolon knew what had befallen us in Moscow and during the long journey. Accordingly, our small colony held a meeting and the matter of how to order our daily life was discussed. Since they knew I possessed some culinary talents, it was proposed that I should function as cook and prepare the meals for the group. I eagerly accepted this charge and the other comrades each took over his or her share of the work in the house. In only a few days our little community was operating smoothly, with everyone fulfilling their appointed assignments.

About that time depressing news began reaching us. The Bolsheviks were having a hard time of it in Moscow and we learned that the underground group, together with the left-wing Social-Revolutionaries, had exploded a huge bomb at the Moscow headquarters of the Bolshevik party. An urgent meeting of all important persons was scheduled to take place and we braced ourselves for more trouble to come.

On top of this, the Bolsheviks decided to order full mobilization, including persons past middle age, for Denikin was rapidly approaching the gates to the ancient city of Tula. To be sure, we had not waged an open fight against the Bolsheviks; yet none of us had considered joining the Red Army or defending the dictatorship of the Bolsheviks. Among our comrades was a chemist and he was able to wash our passports with some chemical substance and enable us to alter them to make ourselves appear several years older, thus liberating us from the mobilization and leaving us in the apparent position of law-abiding citizens.

The group had a modest-sized printing press and all the necessary accessories for printing a newspaper or other material and this work was Apolon's specialty. In addition there was a veteran comrade living in Ekaterinburg who was chief engineer at the platinum plant. Two more of our companions also assisted in the printing work, working at the little plant which was located at a secret spot when it was time to publish our journal, entitled "The Ural Tocsin." Along with a few other comrades, I was footloose and this went against my grain. To be sure, I discharged my duties as cook, but this was scarcely sufficient outlet for my energies. I therefore, on one occasion, voiced my opinion that we must find some useful employment; first, so that we were not simply roaming about idle and second, because I was sure that the Cheka had us under observation. If we were to find jobs, it might create a more favorable impression. Thirdly, while our farmer comrades were bringing us sufficient produce from their cultivated land, it was still necessary to purchase certain items. All in all, I felt our position would become more secure if we obtained employment.

The comrades discussed my proposal and it was decided that Apolon and Christos, who had been in Ekaterinburg at the outbreak of the revolution and were acquainted with some of the leading Bolsheviks, should call on some of them the next day and try to procure work for us. However, it turned out there was no need to wait for the next day.

While we were engaged in this discussion, someone knocked on the door and, before we had the time to answer that it was not locked, it opened and a man rushed in. He was a highly nervous and excited individual, so much so that one might almost think him emotionally disturbed. He turned out to be a close acquaintance of Ivan Apolon, who introduced him to us and then asked him if he wouldn't like something to eat before telling us his story. He readily accepted the food, and while munching on his grub, began to relate his tribulations.

The Party had assigned to him the mission of organizing the "Tsentro-Pechat." Since the Bolsheviks centralized all activities, they likewise centralized all printed matter, including newspapers, books and all manner of propaganda material. While such centralization was efficient enough for production, distributing the publications throughout Russia was quite another matter. Since neither the post office nor the railroads were equal to the task, the Bolshevik masters in Moscow conceived the notion of organizing an agency or apparatus, which would be in charge of disseminating all this printed matter throughout the country. This new agency was given the title "Tsentro-Pechat." In this connection, the government issued a stringent order to the effect that a plain freight car should be coupled to all passenger trains, in which, under the direction of a special courier, the various publications would be shipped. This courier would be charged with dropping off at the principle stations, the special packages of printed matter for that area.

This was followed by a decree that all provincial capitals were to organize Tsentro-Pechats of their own, in order to disseminate the material thus received throughout the gubernis, or province. So here was this hapless, distraught fellow, charged with organizing such a system and without the slightest notion of how to go about the task.

He then addressed himself to Apolon: "I got word today around town that several comrades have arrived from Moscow. I want to find out if any of them are looking for positions as there is more work to be done than there are available workers. If they will accept the jobs and organize the enterprise, I will see to it that they get good pay and other privileges."

I personally was quite interested in such an enterprise and told the visitor I was willing to serve. Three more of my comrades followed suit, even though none of us had even the slightest specific knowledge how to go about such an undertaking. The following morning when we reached the appointed place, we found about a dozen men and women present, sitting by a hot stove trying to keep warm, while piled about the place were scores of packs of newspapers, many already weeks old.

Presently Kapilovich, the harassed fellow of the night before, arrived. It was difficult to understand how he had got hooked up with the Bolshevik party–he looked much more like a retail merchant.

At about ten o'clock, phone calls began to pour in from the Bolshevik chieftains with demands for the various journals. They needed these urgently in order to keep up with the floods of new party directives being published daily in Moscow. The distracted Kapilovich tried to move frantically in seven directions at once, but was quite helpless to satisfy their demands. Finally, almost as if by instinct, I walked over and took the phone from Kapilovich and addressed myself to the caller: "With whom have I the honor of speaking?" A voice replied that he was the secretary of the Bolshevik party in Ekaterinburg. I told him I was speaking for four new employees and was

confident we could get matters organized so that the jounals would arrive on time to all official offices, but we would need two or three days to complete arrangements. He asked to speak to Kapilovich again and he in turn advised us that the time requested would be allowed us.

I now decided to exercise some initiative and directed the workers to unpack the newspapers and arrange them on the shelves according to date. I asked Kapilovich to prepare a list of who was entitled to receive which periodicals and how many. When this was completed, I directed the others to ascertain to what towns and cities these were to be dispatched, how many were allotted for each one and what means of transportation were to be employed. By the time Kapilovich had complied with these instructions, the "big shots" were already receiving the issues of the newspapers.

In short, each day, within hours of the time the packages of journals were brought in from the station, the head men among the Bolsheviks had them in their offices. It required more time, but we soon contrived to organize the distribution of the newspapers and other literature throughout the province. As a result, the party leaders began poking their noses in the doors of the "Tsentro-Pechat" to become acquainted with the persons who had achieved this marvel of organization and system.

Additionally, I had worked out a form for submitting daily, weekly and monthly reports showing quantities of each publication received, number distributed and to whom and other information necessary to present a clear picture of the entire operation. A copy of the monthly report was sent to the Soviet and one to the central "Tsentro-Pechat" office in Moscow. About two months later, a special representative and organizer from the Moscow "Tsentro-Pechat" arrived. It seemed that our monthly reports had made a favorable impression on the top officials. The visitor told me that, if I so desired, I could have a more important post as special representative with a considerably higher salary than I was receiving here, plus a special coach for traveling about Russia. The offer was tempting but for the time being I thought it more prudent to decline.

Things were looking quite rosy for the time being. We had more workers than we needed and the work was not too arduous. We were unaware that dark clouds were moving in on us. The bomb which had been exploded by the Moscow anarchists underground group was causing repercussions throughout Russia. The head offices of the Cheka issued orders to the local Checkas to arrest all anarchists that they could uncover. As Dzerzhinsky, the Cheka chief expressed it, he was collecting a "bouquet of anarchists."

One evening when, luckily enough, not all of our group was present, there was a knock at the door and when we answered it, we found ourselves facing an armed squad of Chekists and Red Army men. We were each examined from head to foot and every scrap of paper we had was examined and taken away. Not a single book was ignored nor a single corner of the house left untouched in their search for anarchist literature. Early in the morning when their search was completed, they told us that while it was unpleasant for them to do so, they had orders to arrest us all and take us to Cheka headquarters. After enduring the official "procedures," we were taken to a large basement already filled with over a hundred people. There was scarcely a free spot to sit down.

In the morning, we demanded an explanation for our arrest and a statement of the charges against us, and threatened to go on a hunger strike unless this demand was granted. An hour later one of us was finally summoned. The Commissar of the Cheka, with whom we were all acquainted, declared that we had been arrested on orders from Moscow, that our names had been cabled to him, and that now he was awaiting instructions as to what to do with us.

The other comrades who had not been home at the time of the raid had seen that the house was surrounded by armed Red Army men, deduced an arrest was in progress and taken themselves to the homes of friends for the nig

ht. The following morning they went to the house again, found no one there and gathered up some food, which they brought to us at the Cheka office.

We soon understood that our arrest was connected in some way with the bomb which had been thrown in Moscow and we began to fear that we would be sent to that city. Our arrest created quite a furor among the Bolshevik higher-ups and naturally the entire activity of the Tsentro-Pechat was paralyzed.

When our supervisor, kapilovich, learned of our arrest, he frantically appealed to the big shots, demanding our freedom. Otherwise, he warned, the entire Tsentro-Pechat project would go to pieces. The rest of our fellow-workers stood by us unflinchingly and began to tacitly sabotage the operation of the Tsentro-Pechat. As a result, the newspapers and the other literature distribution ground to a halt and the Bolshevik hierarchy became alarmed and complained. But Kapilovich simply insisted that only if we were set free could things return to normal.

The chairman of the Soviet and the secretary of the local Bolshevik party branch both maintained that they were powerless in the matter, since the order for the arrest came from Moscow. Thus three days went by in stalemate. We were on the point of exhaustion in our cellar where there was no fresh air and where we were pressed together like sardines in a tin. On the fourth day, Kapilovich came to us with the good news that he had prevailed upon the authorities to set us free for the entire day so that we could pursue our labors. We thanked him for his efforts, but refused to accept the offer. Our answer was plain: either we were set free completely or we could continue to languish in the cellars of the Cheka.

He left deeply disappointed, but returned a few hours later with a new scheme. We could be at liberty the entire and evening, but at night we must return to sleep under Cheka supervision. We told him to return later for our reply. Meanwhile, we had become more and more weakened and fatigued, since sleep in that basement was almost impossible. Besides the terribly compressed situation, throughout the night there was constant hubbub. Furthermore, Kapilovich's appeal to us had evoked our sympathy and we decided to accept the proposal under one condition, that he should persuade them to liberate us from the cellar and at least give us a separate room where we would find it possible to get a little sleep.

When he received our reply, it required only about an hour to arrange for us to get out of the cellar and to be transferred to a separate room that had been prepared for us. As we left the building we observed that an armed Red Army guard was accompanying us; so we stopped near the building and told Kapilovich that we would not work under an armed guard under any circumstances. He hastened back to the Cheka Commissar and before long the Red Army escort was withdrawn. We then accompanied Kapilovich to the Tsentro-Pechat, where we continued working for a week, days and evenings, during which time we were free men; but at night we slept under Cheka supervision.

Finally, one morning as we were about to leave for our jobs, the Deputy Commissar summoned us to his office and returned to us all the personal effects that had been taken away from us at the time of our arrest. He then informed us that we were now entirely free to leave. This had been my first experience at being placed under arrest. For me, it was also the first evidence that the revolution was following a path of destroying everything which the great social upheaval

had created, and that all revolutionary forces were being confronted with a bitter battle against physical annihilation.

Our own group engaged in very few activities except for publishing our own Uralsky Nabat from time to time and distributing it half secretly. There were a few other comrades in the city and they would come to us to discuss everyday problems. There were also some comrades from the smaller towns, as well as peasants who would call on us from time to time.

There were two comrades who worked as telegraphers, and through them we received daily reports about what was going on in Moscow, as well as concerning the entire political and military situation in Russia. The news about the latter was not cheerful.

After our liberation from the Cheka, we were no longer molested, and, because of our efficient work at the Tsentro-Pechat headquarters, the Bolshevik chieftains treated us generally in a courteous manner.

Ekaterinburg had been and still remained an historic city. It was there that the dynasty of the Romanoffs came to an end, a dynasty which had reigned over the Russians for more than 300 years. Near the edge of the city stood a large, abandoned house, which gave the impression it was in the midst of a dangerous epidemic. The building was kept locked and people would cross the street to avoid walking by it. Through an acquaintance of mine, we succeeded in obtaining permission to enter it. The man who conducted us to the building was one of those who had taken part in the liquidation of the entire Czarist family. He took us into the room where the Czar had been executed, as well as to the other chambers where the rest of the royal family had been slain. One could still see the traces on the walls of the bullets that had put an end to this tragic family. It was here that the last chapter of the story of a dynasty that had lasted for 300 years had been written.

Our group was joined by guests from Moscow. The underground group knew very well about our attitude toward their terrorist activity, but since Mark and Claudia had taken along their proclamations, they decided to send Comrade Aranchik, an immigrant from the United States, with a sack full of them. Since Apolon was more or less “leader” of our group, he instructed Aranchik that he must not disseminate this propaganda as long as he was with us, particularly in view of the hardships we had so recently undergone as a result of their group’s activities. We never did learn precisely what he did with the proclamations and a few days later he returned to Moscow.

Our problem of how to obtain literature was solved unexpectedly. A letter arrived from the head of the Tsentro-Pechat in Moscow notifying us that a gathering of all the executives of Tsentro-Pechat was being convened. Our supervisor, Kapilovich, declined to travel such a long distance; however the local Soviet and the party secretary wrote to Moscow that they needed more literature, and kapilovich was obviously not in a position to act against the wishes of the Secretary and the Party. He came to me and asked me whether I would not like to travel to Moscow to represent the Ekaterinburg Tsentro-Pechat. I promised him an answer the following day.

After supper that evening, I told my companions of Kapilovich’s proposal and they were all in accord that I should make the trip and try to bring some of our literature. A few days afterwards I was on my way to Moscow in a special coach which also carried a number of important figures traveling on the same mission. My official errand was accomplished in two or three days and I persuaded the powers that be to have the Tsentro-Pechat assign more literature to Ekaterinburg. That would, of course, facilitate taking along our own books.

When I reached Moscow I found a mood of depression among our comrades. Most of the participants in the underground group were dead. Denikin's army was nearing the gates of Tula, with the Allies furnishing military contingents for his army. In addition, reports were reaching us that, after Denikin's armies occupied some of the areas, they were followed by the former barons and landowners who proceeded to reoccupy land which the peasants had already divided among themselves. As a result, the peasants formed partisan units and launched attacks on army trains. Simultaneously, Makhno's army tore up the railway bridges and carried out devastating attacks on the supply lines to Denikin's front. While it was obvious that the bulk of the population had no great love for the Bolsheviks, their hatred was even greater against the intruders who would help to restore the despotic Czarist regime. Signs began to appear that Denikin's army and the military contingents of the Allied powers were about to collapse and that civil war might come to an end.

The Chief Commissar of the Tsentro-Pechat was a social-revolutionary, of the left-wing persuasion. Shortly before my departure he requested that I visit him. He voiced the opinion that the civil war would come to an end before long and that soon special organizers would be needed. Since he knew of my work in the Ural areas, he was anxious to have me return to Moscow, where I would be given the post of a special representative and organizer of the Tsentro-Pechat. A special railway coach with three assistants would be assigned to me. If I was willing to accept the offer promptly, he would cable an order to release me from the present position. I replied that, while his proposal interested me, before I could accept such a post I must find my family, whom I had not seen for a full seventeen months. I did, however, promise not to accept any other position.

The comrades I contacted reported that they had endured a difficult and dangerous ordeal when the Bolsheviks decided to arrest all anarchists following the aforementioned bomb explosion. There was a time when it seemed likely that a large number of our comrades would be executed. This episode in itself illustrated how weak and ineffectual our movement was in the heartland of Russia, for it consisted mostly of individual comrades whose effects on society as a whole were very meager.

On our way back to Ekaterinburg, we received the first reports that General Denikin's army had begun to retreat; that was toward the end of March, 1920. When we arrived in Ekaterinburg, we learned that the majority of the railroad bridges had been blown up by the partisans and that Denikin's forces were in headlong retreat toward the Black Sea and the Crimean Peninsula. The Allied powers had brought in a large stock of war material and this vast inventory pf weaponry fell into the hands of the Red Army.

My supervisor was highly pleased with the pack of literature I had brought with me, but was disappointed when I informed him that, as soon as the news was received of the liberation of Novorossiysk, I would return there to try and rejoin my family. Our own group was re-animated upon receiving a generous supply of our literature and promptly proceeded to distribute it throughout the province. They were also pleased that contact had been re-established with Moscow and began to assemble more often and even at times to entertain special guests. One of these for instance, was a comrade who owned a large farm. In appearance he resembled a genuine Siberian farmer. On his visits to us, he never failed to bring a generous supply of fruits and vegetables – usually enough to last until he returned. Meanwhile, our colony had shrunk somewhat; Mark Mrochny and Claudia had accepted positions as teachers.

It can be stated frankly now that there was one occasion when a comrade deserted our ranks and became a Bolshevik. To be sure, after the October revolution, several of our followers became eager "fellow-travellers" or even actual members of the Bolshevik party. Such was the case with Alpha, who had been a well-known and active activist abroad. We also had one comrade who worked in the cultural department of the Red Army. One of his co-workers was a member of the Kharkov group, an emigre from Philadelphia named Yoshka-Meyers. The first comrade had begun to notice that Yoshka was behaving in his work more and more like a Bolshevik than a member of the Nabat group and finally presented charges to that effect before our group. We had previously had no intimation of this sort of thing at all. Meyers had visited us from time to time, but no one suspected his "conversion" to Bolshevism.

Ivan Apolon wrote him a letter and asked him to come to see us. Shortly afterwards, when Yoshka made his appearance, none of us believed that he was capable of such a thing. During supper, Ivan began to quiz him about the kind of work he was doing, and finally bluntly told him of our reports we had received of his becoming a Bolshevik. At first, Yoshka denied the accusation, but when Ivan persisted in his interrogation, he finally confessed that the charge was true. In the middle of the night, Apolon ordered him to leave the house at once and Yoshka then became a full-fledged member of the Bolshevik party.

Reports continued to reach us of Denikin's army retreating in panic toward the Black Sea. When word came to us that he had abandoned Rostov-on-Don, I decided to prepare for my trip. Work in the Tsentro-Pechat was organized well enough by now, with each one doing his share. Kapilovich stoutly opposed my departure, but he realized that I was set on my course. We made plans for Abram Christos to take over my post.

Early in April, when the severe frosts began to abate, I decided to leave Ekaterinburg. For a period of seven months I had become intimately involved with our group and with the community and the comrades were reluctant to see me leave. Nor did they have any idea who would take over as "chef" for the group. Apart from our own group, we had a number of friends among the left social revolutionaries; one family in particular, a mother with four daughters proved to be a highly interesting group and we spent many congenial hours at their home.

A few days before I left, Ivan Apolon and Abram Christos had a rather unpleasant incident. Beginning about two month before my departure, I had begun to notice that Christos was returning home very late each night to sleep, or sometimes not coming in at all. We immediately suspected a case of "cherchez la femme" but we said nothing about it. We did know, however, that Katya was still in Kharkov, eagerly awaiting her reunion with him. From the letters we received from her, it was becoming apparent that she was puzzled by his failure to return to her and also by the fact that he did not desire her to come to him. Only two days before I was due to depart, I had a talk with Apolon about this unhappy state of affairs and we decided to urge Christos to write to Katya and tell her the truth. Accordingly, after our evening meal, we went into a separate room and Apolon urged Christos to sit down immediately and write Katya exactly what was taking place. He added that it was none of our concern that Christos had fallen in love with another woman, but Katya was a devoted comrade our ours and we felt it was his moral obligation to tell her the truth.

Abram tried to evade the painful task, and suggested instead that, when I got to Kharkov, I should report to Katya what had happened. However, Ivan was insistent that, if Christos expected to maintain our fraternal relationship, he must write the whole truth to her himself. Abram sat up almost the whole night before he could compose the message. I agreed to take the letter along

with me, but throughout my journey indignation burned in me, for the adorable and dedicated katya surely did not deserve such cavalier treatment. When I finally departed, I carried with me the accumulated memories of nearly eight months of lively experiences.

Arriving in Moscow, I was faced with the problem of how to continue my journey. As I have mentioned, the partisan forces had torn up many railroad bridges and Denikin's army had done the same during their retreat from the wrath of the partisans. I learned that it was possible to reach Kharkov, though with great difficulty, and that beyond Kharkov, travel was extremely precarious as the greater part of the railway line was shattered. In addition, the areas were under the control of the Red Army, so that I would need special permits to take a trip anywhere.

On the day following my arrival in Moscow, I went to call on the chief administrator of the Tsentro-Pechat and received a very warm reception. I hastened to tell him that, until I was reunited with my family, I could accept no assignments. When I told him I was bound for Novorossiysk, he informed me that he had just received telegrams from that city, as well as from Krasnodar, requesting that he dispatch someone to that area to organize the Tsentro-Pechat. He added that he would like me to undertake that task as soon as I had found my family, and that, whether I chose to remain there or not, he wanted me to accept the post of special representative of the Tsentro-Pechat, in which case I would receive all the credentials necessary to open doors and provide any assistance I might need. The only condition he laid down was that, upon completion of my organizational effort, I should return to Moscow, so that, together with several of my aides, we would make the journey from Moscow through the Caucasus area as far as Batum, on the Black Sea. I promised this, whereupon he summoned his secretary and directed her to prepare all the requisite documentation, procure a railway ticket for me to Novorossiysk, advance to me two month's salary and, in addition, to prepare a directive from the military commandant instructing all army units to extend any needed assistance to me.

Within two days, I had in my possession all the required papers to enable me to effect the journey to Novorossiysk. I took some time off to meet with my comrades and acquaintances. During the eight months of my absence, the shattering social and political events were reflected in the physical aspects of the city. This was a consequence of the vast famine which was spreading through Central Russia. There was in the city an air of despair and sheer exhaustion; it was a time when one's thoughts were directed chiefly toward finding enough nourishment to keep body and soul together. In many areas, a mood of resignation–at times even of indifference–seemed to prevail, so that even the discussions which took place lacked the animation of former days. In addition, we still heard echoes of the events that had followed the exploding of the bomb by the underground anarchists and mass arrests of anarchists throughout the country.

In general, we could sense that an ominous reaction was setting in against all those who were not one hundred percent in accord with the Bolshevik regime. This was true even of some of my close acquaintances and former co-workers in the Foreign Commissariat. To be sure, these Bolsheviks were pleased to see me and maintained a friendly attitude, yet I could detect in these attitudes a certain degree of reserve. Despite all this, I did not imagine that before long a mass pogram against the entire anarchist movement would be launched. Amidst all these misgivings and premonitions, I visited a number of my comrades, met more at their club meetings, and about a week later departed from Moscow, with Kharkov as my immediate destination.

As far as Tula, the train maintained its normal schedule; but at a point some miles past that historic city, the panorama of the civil war and the invasion of the Allied armies began to unfold before us. From Moscow to the Caucasus, the railway had two distinct lines. However, at this

point I could see that one line was crammed with freight cars carrying military supplies and weapons of all kinds, and on the second line there were trains running in both directions, all the way to the Black Sea. All along the route, men were working feverishly to repair the shattered bridges and to relieve the second line of the overcrowded cars. Under these conditions it required more than a full day to reach Kharkov.

When I arrived in Kharkov, I met a considerable number of my comrades, as well as the Nabat group, in the bookshop I mentioned previously. However, a number of my comrades were missing and it was at this time that I learned that Naumke, along with a number of others, had been executed by the White Guard units. Joseph Goodman, Lea and Yasha Gutman, Katya and several other comrades were striving desperately to repair the destruction wrought by the White armies. To add to their woes, there was the constant menace from the Cheka, which staged arrests from time to time, imposed restraints on the publication of the Nabat newspaper and made life miserable for them in general. On the whole, the mood was nothing like that which had prevailed before the capture of the city by General Denikin.

The Bolsheviks, exuberant over the liquidation of Denikin's army, which had really been accomplished largely by the partisan units, began to liquidate in turn these same partisan groups. Dissolution of the smaller bands presented no serious problem, but Nestor Makhno's partisan army proved a much tougher nut to crack. For though the Bolsheviks had entrenched themselves firmly in the larger cities, it was quite a different matter in the rural areas among the dissident peasants. For example, the southern areas of Gulyay-Pole and in the district of Ekaterinoslov, Makhno's partisan armies received the loyal support of the peasants from near and far. Furthermore, when General Denikin's forces were crushed, General Wrangel took over the leadership of the White armies and fortified his positions on the Crimean Peninsula, which were natural military strongholds blocking access to invading forces. Thus the Crimea was, at that time, the only region where remnants of the civil war persisted. These factors probably explain why the Bolsheviks avoided an immediate confrontation with Makhno's partisan units.

It is worth mentioning in this connection that the Bosheviks, intoxicated with their triumph over the White Army and its allied auxiliaries, made their notorious attempt to overwhelm Poland at about this time. The stunning defeat suffered by the former Cossack leader, Budenny, who became a general overnight, likely contributed to inducing the Bosheviks to forego for the time being any settling of accounts with Nestor Makhno.

In the larger cities, it had become quite a common event for the Bosheviks to arrest our comrades while searching for Makhno adherents. Thus the situation was extremely tense, but in spite of this, our co-workers in the Ukraine persevered in their task of publishing the Nabat newspaper. When we had held a conference in the summer of 1919, a resolution had been adopted to seek a means to establish contact with the outside world and to inform our comrades of what was taking place in Russia. This proved easier to resolve than to execute, because at this time we were obliged to abandon all of our legal activities and to evacuate in the face of the advancing Red Army. The Bolsheviks were now beginning to show their true face by launching a persecution of our movement, with the result that the necessity to establish a link with the outside world became more urgent.

At the time of my arrival in Kharkov, Joseph Goodman proposed that the more active comrades should stage a meeting where this question could be discussed. Such a gathering was held, but no one came up with any practical plan or device for effecting such contact. What we did learn was that the Bosheviks had organized a special section in the army, under the Cheka, designate

as Zagardat, the abbreviated version of Zagranichnaya Razvedka, whose obvious function was to engage in espionage. We were informed that the head office for the Caucasus area was located in Rostov-on-Don, with branches in the larger harbor cities. Establishing contact with this entity was no easy task, but we were determined and deemed it our moral obligation to let the outside world know to what a stage of degradation the great Russian social revolution had descended.

A decision was made to attempt to find a way to make contact with this new agency, and I was entrusted with this mission, since I was on my way to Novorossiysk, where a branch of Zagardat had been set up. I accepted the charge and at the same time proposed that our group start preparing the documentation to be smuggled out of Russia. My proposal was adopted and I became involved in an undertaking not precisely congenial to me–to make connections with an espionage organization.

With these preliminaries disposed of, my next task was to settle the unhappy matter of Katya and Abram Christos. When I met Katya on my arrival in Kharkov, her first inquiry, addressed to me with an undertone of fear in her voice, was why Abram had not accompanied me. Her gloomy manner and the look of fright in her lovely eyes deprived me of the courage to tell her the whole truth. Instead, I contrived a tale of Christos being unable to travel at this time. That evening we conversed until late into the night and I was obliged to relate all the events and experiences to which I had been party since my stay in Ekaterinburg. In particular, she insisted on knowing the most minute details about Abram. There was the constant presentiment in her voice that something had happened which I dared not disclose. Three days and nights passed while I tried to prepare her for the melancholy tidings and for the deep disillusionment which was shortly to bring her young life to a tragic end and rob us of an exceptionally gifted and devoted comrade.On the third day of our meetings, I proposed that we take a walk in the park. She said she was not equal to that but did want to have a talk with me. She addressed me in these words: "Comrade Boris, I hardly need remind you of my high esteem for you as a comrade and loyal friend; but here three days have gone by since your return, and from the very first I sensed that you have constantly avoided telling me exactly what has happened with Abram. Do you think it fair to keep me under such a nervous strain all this time? Of course I realize that you are only trying to spare me, but your silence only deepens my anxiety. I want to know the whole truth, no matter how bitter it is!"

"Yes, Katya," I replied, "I do have something to tell you about Abram. He is alive; in fact, I have a letter for you from him. But since I am aware of what he has written, I shall relate the entire episode from he beginning until the day I left Ekaterinburg."

Apparently Katya had no intimation all this time that Abram had been living with another woman, but feared instead that some physical harm had come to him. Now when she learned the reality, she was stunned. When I handed her Abram's letter, she read it immediately, then broke into uncontrollable sobbing. She wanted to know why he had misled her all this time that they would be reunited. It was this crude deception that agitated her most of all. She flung her arms around me and demanded to know why Abram should deceive her in such a manner–he must have known she would not try to hold him by force. She pleaded with me to remain by her side because she feared to be alone. I felt as if a large segment of her life had just ebbed away from the lovable woman. She finally fell asleep, but even as she slept it seemed as if she were reliving the poignant tragedy of being so cruelly deceived by a man she loved so deeply.

During the several remaining days of my stay in Kharkov, we spent a great deal of time together and it was all too apparent to me that with every passing day she was fading away like a candle,

much as I tried to calm her. It seemed as if her thoughts had drifted far away. A few months later, our beloved Katya passed away in a sanitarium.

The journey from Kharkov to Rostov was even more arduous than expected because of the smashed up track and blow bridges. However, my official papers stood me in great stead, enabling me to ride on military trains and even to help in procuring locomotives.

In Rostov, I brought several packages of the Nabat newspaper to a rather small group of comrades there. I also sought to learn if they had any information about the Zagardat espionage bureau but they knew nothing of it, so I set out on the trip to Novorossiysk. Normally this would require fourteen or fifteen hours, but this time it took nearly two days. We somehow managed to reach Krasnodar, but found that at that point the bridge spanning the Kuban River had been blown up, and that a special train was leaving for Novorossiysk once a day from the other bank of the river–in fact such a train had just left. Thanks to my special directives, the military commandant informed me that at midnight a special military train was to depart and that if I crossed the river I could arrange the matter of my transportation with the station master. The following morning, after an absence of eighteen months, I again found myself in Novorossiysk. Here my family eagerly awaited and welcomed my return.

I learned that Bessie, with the aid of a group of other women whose husbands were also absent from Novorossiysk, had organized a Red Cross unit to hep political prisoners, as well as those who were sentenced to the etap – that slow, lingering "exile on foot." The municipal administration, as well as the Allied forces, knew of the existence of this unit but looked the other way, and the women met no interference in their undertaking. On my arrival, I met my old friend, the Bolshevik Tolmachov, who was shortly afterwards named by Moscow as the Commissar of the Tchernomorsky and Kubansky regions.

I permitted myself a week to rest up and to recount my trials and then began to work at my assigned duties. At this point, Bessie told me she would like us to leave Russia and to try to make our way back to the United States. This surprised me somewhat, as I felt that with the expulsion of the alien forces and with the civil war drawing to a close, the regime in power would modify its tactics and we could perhaps build a new life in the Soviet Union. But I was unable to convince her that a political change must take place after so many great sacrifices and the social revolution must move forward once more. She finally decided to return to America alone with our son, Leon.

My return to Novorossiysk somewhat upset some of the local Bolsheviks, especially when on Sunday I attended the session of the local Soviet. As for the workers with whom we had collaborated so harmoniously in the economic Soviet, some went so far as to suggest the restoration of such a Soviet. When the Bolsheviks heard of this they began to look askance at me. I explained to the workers that I intended to remain there only a short time; however, we would get together some of the former activists and I would orient them on the situation existing throughout the country, of the dark reaction that was developing and of the need for me to exercise utmost caution, since otherwise the Cheka was sure to pounce on me. In fact, I told them that I was being followed and note taken of whom I was meeting and what places I was visiting.

None of the Bolsheviks who knew me personally had any notion of the purpose of my return to Novorossiysk, so I decided to pay a visit to the Chief Commissar, the chairman of the provincial Soviet. When I arrived there the secretary asked about the purpose of my visit and I resorted to the ruse of telling him that I was a special representative from Moscow and that I must see the Commissar at once. Before long he returned and bade me step into the Commissar's office. The latter was a relative newcomer to the city, to whom I was apparently unknown. He

addressed me in a somewhat stern manner to learn the purpose of my call. Instead of answering, I handed him my official credentials. He immediately softened his tone, offered me his fullest cooperation, adding that while they already had a bookshop there, they were experiencing great inconvenience in procuring the desired periodicals. I informed him I would be remaining in the area for two months or so and assured him that I would see to it that they received all newspapers regularly from Moscow. In fact, that same day I cabled Moscow to begin dispatching newspapers systematically to Novorossiysk and Krasnodar. While I was still in the office, the secretary of the local Bolshevik party, who had known me well in previous years, came in. He manifested some displeasure at finding me there, but when the Commissar showed him my orders and acquainted him with the official nature of my visit to Novorossiysk, he softened and offered me his assistance if I should need it. I requested both of them to announce that a special representative of the Tsentro-Pechat of Moscow was in the city.

When Bessie learned of my new assignment, she informed me that she was well acquainted with the managers of the bookshop. After disposing of my errand with the Commissar and the Party Secretary, I went with Bessie and my son to the bookstore. The enterprise was managed by a man named Anisimov and his wife, both of the left-wing Social-Revolutionary party. I sensed at first meeting that they were congenial folk, especially the husband. They belonged to the "old guard" of the intelligentsia, the intellectual circle, of the kind who attract friendship. Indeed, they remained staunch comrades and friends until the last day of our stay in Russia. They had established the bookstore according to their limited means, but encountered great difficulties in obtaining the newspapers. I assured them that within a week at the latest they would begin to regularly receive all periodicals from Moscow and within eight days there arrived the first carload of newspapers and other printed matter under the charge of a special courier.

It appeared that Anisimov, a person of high intelligence, performed his duties ably, so I did not have to spend a great deal of time working with him and could begin looking up my old comrades. Before long I found a few of our former co-workers, as well as several newcomers. No formal group existed, simply kindred spirits getting together from time to time. Among these was a young man named Sablin, of a well-known family, a left-wing Social Revolutionary who had linked up with our movement. Our rendezvous was a park located near the center of the city. When I became better acquainted with Sablin I inquired what he was doing in Novorossiysk. It seems he had met Bessie some time before my return and knew a good deal about my activities in the city. He informed me that he had accepted a rather distasteful position as head of the Zagardat. He had undertaken this post with the sole aims of helping Social Revolutionaries get out of the country and smuggling out forbidden articles.

I asked him if he could help arrange for some of our comrades to depart for Turkey and he replied that this would have to be handled by the main office in Rostov-on-Don. If approval could be obtained from there, he could provide transportation to Turkey and make the necessary connections. In reply to my query about how I could make contact with the head office in Rostov, he said that the very next day he would bring me a letter of recommendation to the Chief Commissar with whom I could discuss the matter.

Since I was not required to give an accounting of my movements to anyone, I decided to go the next day with my letter of introduction to Rostov. When I arrived in that city by train I went immediately to the Zagardat office, but was obliged to wait quite some time before I was admitted. Sablin had briefed me that, no matter how much they might inquire about the purpose of my visit, I should insist on seeing only a particular official, and this is precisely how things developed.

Some six or more employees sought to learn the purpose of my visit, but in vain. Finally they conducted me, after about an hour's wait, into a spacious office where I finally met the person described to me by Sablin. I approached him, gave him the correct password, and handed him the letter of recommendation from Sablin. After reading it, he remarked apologetically that he realized what a hard time I had gaining access to him. But of course, he continued, I surely realized that this was a top-secret agency and before they dealt with anyone, they must make sure he was reliable, could exercise self-control and reveal any information to the Zagardat employees – a test which I had apparently passed with flying colors. He now asked the purpose of my visit and I decided to play my cards cautiously and diplomatically.

I showed him my credentials and informed him of the post I was occupying at the time. I added that I had been acquainted with Sablin for some time. In the course of our conversation he asked whether I had mastered any foreign languages, as representatives were needed to operate abroad, particularly in Turkey. I answered that I knew of two or three comrades who would be willing to undertake such a mission; but of course I must verify a few facts first. I added that this was indeed the purpose of my visit to him, and he told me that he could use more than a score of qualified persons. I told him I was about to go to Kharkov where I expected to find volunteers for such an undertaking. I acknowledged that they would be chiefly comrades of mine, anarchists, but he assured me that this did not matter and that he knew that Sablin, as well as several other operators in the Crimea, belonged to our movement.

"All that concerns me," he emphasized, "is that they do their work well." We agreed on a secret password which I was to transmit to anyone who would come to him with my personal recommendation. Finally, I requested him not to hold me responsible if anything untoward should occur, since I had only acceded to comrade Sablin's request.

I left the same day for Kharkov. When I arrived the following day I met with Joseph Goodman at the bookshop and immediately revealed to him that I now had the necessary connections that would enable us to smuggle the requisite documentation out of Russia about what was really going on in our country. He promptly called together Katya, Lea and Yasha Gutman and several other comrades whose names I no longer recall. I told them the whole story of how I had come to hold the "key" for getting out of Russia. I asked them to pick a comrade to whom I could disclose my connections and also that the Kharkov group should procure suitable comrades for undertaking a task of this nature. I told them that I could remain in Kharkov for another day or two.

I did remain there an additional two days, chiefly for the sake of Katya, who had begged me to do so. In the course of the month that had passed since I had last seen her, telltale traces had appeared on her face of the agony she was enduring. Abram Christos' gross deception had produced a grave physical and psychic trauma in this fine, noble woman. At times it seemed as if she had become totally detached from reality. The last two days I spent in her company left an indelible imprint on my memory.

Before leaving Kharkov I urged my comrades to expedite the preparations for this important mission, since I did not expect to remain much longer in Novorossiysk. I then issued three letters of recommendation for those intending to go abroad and departed from Kharkov. In Novorossiysk I had relatively little to do, since the store manager, Anisimov, had organized the project with the highest efficiency. Two weeks passed and no word came from our comrades in Kharkov. I decided to go over to Krasnodar, where the work of the Tsentro-Pechat was not so well organized, and there was on hand an urgent inquiry from Moscow as to when I would go there. Arriving in that

city, I made all the necessary arrangements, procured two rooms in one of the hotels, and left word that I would return a few days later to complete the organization of the Tsentro-Pechat.

On my return to Novorossiysk, I met with several of the comrades who were now ready to be assigned to Turkey. Two of them were quite young and I deduced immediately that they were not adapted for this sort of undertaking, which calls for a high degree of skill and experience. To my surprise, the third comrade turned out to be Claudia – ever since the time when she and her companion had broken their promise not to carry along the proclamations from Moscow for the underground group, we had severed all fraternal relations.

Claudia was staying at our house. When I entered, she arose, extended her hand and embraced me. "I fully realize," she explained, "that I caused you some uncomfortable moments which could have brought disaster to you. Now I beseech your friendship and comradeship and I hope you will not reject me. Let bygones be bygones, and instead of dwelling on that unhappy past, let us build the friendship of today." A couple of days later, Comrade Sablin sent them on their way to Trebizond, Turkey, on a launch; as accredited agents of the the Zagardat, it was his duty to provide them with all facilities.

The following day, Bessie, Leon and I left for Krasnodar. On my arrival, I found only a pallid imitation of a Tsentro-Pechat. The manager was an elderly Bolshevik who, instead of organizing the agency, had gone on a rampage of confiscating all enterprises carrying related merchandise, such as stationary, ink and the like – in short, everything required for office use. If he had at least kept these supplies in some semblance of order it might have been tolerable. What he did was simply take over an empty storeroom and dump everything he had confiscated into it in complete chaotic disorder.

When I saw this chaos, I commented very unfavorably on it, telling him that he had done more harm than good. This angered my Bolshevik co-worker and he went to the local office of the Communist party and made up all sorts of silly slanders about me. I evened accounts with him by cabling the Moscow office of Tsentro-Pechat that the local manager was interfering with the organizational effort, and if they didn't take proper measures I would leave Krasnodar immediately.

The following day, the Commissar of the Soviet called on me to come and see him. On my arrival there I found the Secretary of the party present, as well as the manager of the Tsentro-Pechat. The Commissar handed me a telegram, which was apparently in reply to mine, in which all Commissars and the Party Secretary were instructed that so far as organizational efforts in Krasnodar were concerned, I was in charge of the entire undertaking as the special representative and organizer and that all civil and military entities must accord me the fullest cooperation. When I had read the telegram, the Commissar asked me why I had found it necessary to cable Moscow. I replied that when I search through a city for stationary supplies, I do not want to experience an unpleasant surprise, and I expect that the manager of the Tsentro-Pechat would know exactly where to find such supplies.

When I arrived at the Tsentro-Pechat, there were already more employees than were needed and they were apparently fearful that I might reorganize the personnel setup so that many of them would lose their jobs. In those days, to lose one's job meant to lose the "privilege" of obtaining food. I therefore called them all together and assured them that no one would be dismissed. I only asked one thing of them – that each perform his share of the work efficiently; after that they could do as they saw fit. I added that for a week or two we would have to work under pressure and sort out all the material which the previous manager had confiscated. This made them

all breathe more freely and they went cheerfully about their tasks. At the same time I sent out forms to all the commissars requesting them to draw up lists of what they needed in the way of stationary supplies. The employees, the commissars and the managers were all quite surprised when, after two weeks' time, all the requisitions were fully met. This episode added greatly to my prestige and, as a result, whatever I needed for the Tsentro-Pechat I was able to procure without any difficulty – even including some foodstuffs for the workers.

Under the new system, all the literature and periodicals which we received were promptly distributed among the various commissariats. In a relatively short time, the entire project was so well organized that I had very little to do. I then recommended one of the workers, the majority of whom were quite intelligent men and women, to serve as manager. I also decided to take along one of the more skillful of them with me to visit the major points of the Kuban area.

On one occasion, while walking home from the Tsentro-Pechat, I heard from some distance two familiar voices, which I had not dreamed I would hear in Krasnodar. I turned around and found it was indeed two of my active comrades from Ekaterinburg. They were both employed as telegraphers. They seemed delighted to see me and we promptly went to my apartment, where another surprise awaited me. Claudia was waiting for me. Apparently she and the other two comrades had been obliged to leave Trebizond in a hurry, and had been forced to destroy the entire stock of literature. Claudia had become well acquainted with the situation there and reported to us on how espionage was carried on in that area.

As soon as they arrived in the city they looked things over and didn't like what they found; nor could they find any opportunity to get out of Turkey, with the result that our entire project to inform the outside world of what was taking place in Soviet Russia fell through. This was a source of deep disappointment to us – we had seemed to be on the verge of achieving our goal, when suddenly the thread was severed and nothing came of it. Claudia felt somewhat guilty over the entire matter and we had to comfort her and assure her that she should count herself fortunate to be alive. She did however, assure us of one thing – that she would never undertake a task like this again as she had found it morally degrading. The two young comrades had promptly left for Kharkov.

In addition to the five of us I have mentioned, there was another comrade in Krasnodar, an extremely individualistic fellow. He was employed in a butcher shop but possessed great intellectual attainments. We had thus contrived to gather about us a congenial group of comrades and we would meet frequently to discuss current topics and events. About two weeks later, our group was joined by Rachel Hurwitz, an emigre from Philadelphia. She had come to us from Makhno's partisans where she had worked as a nurse's aid in a hospital. She was in a state of exhaustion, having been obliged to work constantly with very little rest. We persuaded her to stay with us and rest up for a few days to regain her strength. This made a total of five persons for our two small rooms, including Bessie and our son.

Our two telegrapher friends brought us news of the sort that was not published in the newspapers. One item of particular interest was the report that General Wrangel had entrenched himself on the Crimean Peninsula and that the Red Army had little chance of penetrating these natural fortresses. Sanguinary battles between the Bolsheviks and Wrangel's forces were being waged, but the former seemed unable to wipe out this last vestige of the civil war.

I now began to receive letters from the Executive Manager of the Tsentro-Pechat in Moscow, inquiring when I would complete my organizational activity in the Kuban and surrounding region. I was reluctant to leave Krasnodar and separate from my family again, for if I went to

Moscow at that time I would have to leave them just at the beginning of a bitter winter. Furthermore, hunger was raging in Moscow. I therefore replied that a great deal of work remained to be done, but that in a week or two I would return in person to present a full report. In the meantime, I informed the Chief Commissar of the local Soviet that Moscow was anxious for my return, but since my task was not completed, it would help if he could dispatch a communication to the Bureau Chief in Moscow, urging him to send me back to Krasnodar.

Having learned from experience what wonders a generous offering of produce could create in Moscow, I took along with me a substantial supply of foodstuffs, the likes of which had probably not been seen in Moscow in years. When I arrived, I presented my official report and distributed the provisions among the managers of the various departments with which I had dealings. I then had a session with the Bureau Chief with the result that they decided I should return to Krasnodar with the condition that at the beginning of 1921 I should return to Moscow.

During the few days I spent in Moscow, I found our movement in a semi-lethargic state. By this time the Bolsheviks were well organized and the Cheka kept a watchful eye on our comrades. In addition, the overpowering hunger had its effects, both morally and physically. The supreme concern among nearly all the residents seemed to be where they could find something to eat. Obviously, under such dire conditions, no one can concentrate much on social problems – he has to devote his entire energy to keeping himself alive. The general atmosphere was very depressing; a feeling of terror prevailed, and the first symptoms that the Russian people were beginning to lose hope for any real social betterment began to appear.

On my return, I stopped briefly in Kharkov. The bookshop and club were fairly active and economic conditions tolerable – indeed, one could state that, compared to Moscow, Kharkov was a veritable paradise.

The Soviet powers, particularly the Cheka, had grave suspicions that our comrades were maintaining a liaison with Makhno's partisan army. Actually the Bolsheviks sought to avoid major battles with this army. It was a curious situation. Some of our comrades reasoned that since the Bolsheviks were preoccupied with attempting to liquidate Wrangel's army in the Crimea, and since they had plenty of political problems elsewhere, they would refrain from a frontal attack on Makhno's forces.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Ukraine on a whole enjoyed a more favorable economic situation than most of the rest of Russia, the more than three years of revolutions, civil war, and occupations – first by the Germans and later by the Allied forces – had left profound traces of sheer exhaustion. Indeed, one could find some of the revolutionaries of yesterday, such as right-wing Social Revolutionaries and Social Democrats, in the ranks of the White Army, and this created deep disillusionment and anger. Obviously, the inspiration that had been so rife among the fighters and the people as a whole was being rapidly undermined.

When I returned to Krasnodar, our small group held a meeting, and I shared with them my impressions and experiences. At the time when I was still in Moscow the following incident had occurred. Since the Bolsheviks were unable to break through Wrangel's front, Wrangel, having at his disposal several medium-sized ships, decided to make an attempt to evacuate a portion of his forces to the Sea of Azov. He finally succeeded in removing a percentage of his troops to the town of Tomrook, located near the Kuban River and the Sea of Azov. General Wrangel calculated that the Kuban Cossacks would stage an uprising against the Bolsheviks. Indeed, matters moved so swiftly that the Bolsheviks began to evacuate the area in a panic. However, it appeared that the Bolsheviks had, as the saying goes, more luck than brains, for this is what happened.

There were substantial units of the Red Army stationed in the Ukraine and on the shores of the Don River. Leon Trotsky arrived with his staff, but in spite of this, a portion of Wrangel's army succeeded in fleeing toward the Crimea. The problem was liquidated but at the same time, Krasnodar lived through a period of great panic. Bessie, our son Leon, Claudia and Rachel Horwitz were stranded. My two telegrapher comrades were conscripted into the army and the three women and the child were helpless and could find no escape.

We were living at that time in one of the main buildings of the Soviet, and to be caught there when Wrangel's troops arrived would have meant certain death.

In the middle of the despair there was a rap on the door and they opened it to find the two telegraphers on their doorstep. It seems they had abandoned their posts without informing the military authorities, which could mean the death penalty for them. They were accompanied by an elderly gentleman whom Bessie did not immediately recognize, and who turned out to be Olga Lech's uncle, a former Cossack general. He and his wife, whose home we had visited several times, were aware of the fact that I had saved the life of their nephew, Olga's brother. He had therefore come to the house with the offer that Bessie and our son, Leon, should stay at their home where they would be safe. Bessie thanked them earnestly but said that she could not abandon her two friends. The elderly general grasped the situation immediately and agreed to shelter her friends also. Here was a man who was not lacking in a sense of gratitude and felt it to be his moral obligation to help those who had done a great service to his family.

By the time I returned the atmosphere of panic had faded, but the incident had a depressing effect on Bessie, and she again urged me to let us tear ourselves away from Russia and return to the United States. I opposed the idea, while within me a small voice whispered that Bessie was right. It was only for the present that I rejected the idea.

The colossal events in Russia had a certain hypnotizing effect and it was still difficult to believe that the great Russian social revolution had detoured onto a path of spiritual and moral decline. However, ominous signs appeared on the political horizon that Lenin, Trotsky and their cohorts were intent on seizing the maximum amount of power. The new social structure did not matter too much to them and the vast majority of the masses had no true conception of what was really going on. An inner voice kept telling me that a new force would appear which would undermine Bolshevik power and that the mighty social revolution would discard the Marxist theory so that the revolution could once more move forward to build a social system of justice throughout Russia and perhaps throughout the world. One thing however, became increasingly clear to me: the words of Michael Bakunin, "Socialism without freedom is a pig sty."

A week after my return to Krasnodar, I began to receive letters from my comrades in Kharkov. I should digress here to state that I had what amounted to my own private post office system. When my comrades wanted to communicate something to me, they would go to the depot at a time when the express train from Moscow was due, with a special coach and couriers for transporting the periodicals. They would then contact the courier destined for Krasnodar and give him letters addressed to me. In this particular letter, they informed me that the local Bolsheviks had suddenly become very friendly toward them. Shortly afterwards, the news reach me that the Bolsheviks had proposed making peace with Nestor Makhno's partisan army, which was still entrenched on the Crimean Peninsula.

In addition, our two telegrapher comrades picked up news off the military lines that momentous events could be expected soon. I waited impatiently from day to day for the arrival of the express train, hoping for another communication from the Kharkov comrades with fresh news,

but the news arrived from a different source. On November 24, 1920, we were awakened early in the morning by a vigorous rapping on the door. This threw a fright into all of us as we feared the Cheka had come for us. When we opened the door, we found a young member of the Red Guard, who handed me a telegram from the Eastern Military Staff in Kharkov and asked me to sign for it. The telegram carried the extraordinary news that a peace agreement had been concluded between that staff and Makhno's partisan army. It was signed by the Revolutionary Military Representative on that front, Belakun-Guyseyev. On behalf of Makhno, Comrades Krilenko and Popov signed.

In accordance with this agreement, the Soviet government ordered a cessation of all prosecution against the anarchists, except those who were fighting the regime with weapons in their hands. The anarchist movement was granted the freedom to conduct educational activities and peaceful propaganda and the government agreed to accord the anarchists all possible technical aid to publish newspapers and literature.

The telegram further stated that, in the light of this peace pact, the Ukrainian Confederation had decided to convene a special Anarchist Conference in Kharkov on November 26, 1920, and I was invited to participate. At the end, there was a directive addressed to all railway officials, army men and members of the Cheka to help me reach Kharkov. Now what had occurred to induce the Bolsheviks to make such substantial concessions to the Russian anarchist movement? It seemed the Bolsheviks had sent delegates to our Kharkov group and proposed the plan for a truce. The latter immediately sent a three-man delegation to Nestor Makhno, consisting of Joseph Goodman, Yasha Gutman and Safien, all of whom were energetic activists. To their great regret, they were unable to complete the mission as they became stranded along the way. There was no doubt in the minds of our comrades that they had fallen victims to the Bolsheviks. However, somewhat later the Bolsheviks and the spokesman for Makhno's army got together for this sudden "love affair" between the Bolsheviks and the anarchists.

With the exception of the Crimean Peninsula and Makhno's partisan army, the civil war had been virtually ended throughout Russia. Trotsky had assembled a considerable number of units of the Red Army and launched several attacks against General Wrangel's army, but had suffered severe defeats each time. In order to stage a successful assault against the peninsula, a naval force was necessary and this the Bolsheviks lacked, nor did they possess sufficient military power to attack through the narrow isthmus which connects the Crimea with the mainland, for this area was thoroughly fortified and defended by Wrangel's forces. In short, the Bolsheviks realized that the only military force capable of staging a breakthrough in that sector was Makhno's partisan army.

I must digress here and comment on two historical events. First, why was it that the Bolsheviks, with their huge army, thoroughly armed and equipped and infinitely larger than Wrangel's forces, were unable to defeat him? The answer is that Wrangel had in his favor the natural fortresses of the Crimean Peninsula, connected with the mainland by a narrow, easily-defended isthmus. In numerous places, bridges served as connecting links. On both sides of this passage was the Sea of Azov and close by were impenetrable salt marshes. In the second place, the Bolshevik leadership knew from experience that Makhno's partisan army did not conduct itself according to ordinary norms of discipline. Every man in this army was ready to sacrifice his life for the cause and a high degree of initiative prevailed in all units. All this produced a vigorous, battle-ready group of fighters which constituted a powerful fighting force, with no military mobilization. Their motto was: "No obstacles shall impede our righteous struggle."

I could mention a number of instances in which Makhno and his army shattered both White and Red military units and occupied towns and cities, but one episode will suffice to illustrate the kind of free initiative which makes the impossible possible.

The city of Ekaterinoslav was at that time occupied by the White Army. To capture the city it was necessary to cross the giant bridge spanning the Dnieper River. Ekaterinoslav was a thriving industrial center and when the Whites captured the city, the former manufacturers and employers remained behind with them and both combined to take revenge on the workers. Makhno's forces were gathered at the other end of the bridge, but it would have been an act of folly to attempt a direct assault on the bridge as the White Army had sufficient cannon and machine guns covering the structure to smash every such attempt. And here is where the factor of free initiative plays such an important role. One of Makhno's soldiers conceived this plan: on Sunday at noon, a couple was to be dressed up as bride and bridegroom. With them, decked out in Ukrainian national garb, would be a large group of fighters, along with women comrades who worked in the army hospital. In addition, a number of wagons were to be used and on these, concealed by straw, machine guns and other arms would be concealed. The entire group were, of course, to enact a wedding scene.

All these preparations were made at night. A generous quantity of bottles of whiskey were also taken along. At the appointed hour of noon, the wagons, to the accompaniment of joyous songs and musical instruments, began to move toward the bridge. Whenever an attempt was made to detain them, they would slip out the bottles of whiskey and distribute them among the White Army soldiers. The whole episode resembled a lively, joyous wedding party. The White Army officer bade them to keep moving. That was all that Makhno's soldiers needed. After advancing a short distance, they whipped out the machine guns and other weapons and it not long before the entire partisan army had crossed the bridge and seized the city of Ekaterinoslav, virtually wiping out the White Army contingent located there. This victory produced great rejoicing among the populace at being liberated from the yoke of the White Army.

Apparently Lenin and Trotsky conceived the three-fold diabolical plan of destroying with one blow General Wrangel's army, liquidating Makhno's partisan forces and and at the same time putting an end to the active anarchist movement in Russia. The previously mentioned agreement between the Bolsheviks and Makhno was not made public by the Bolsheviks. As a consequence, Makhno became suspicious and refused to take the field with his army against Wrangel. It was only then that the Bolsheviks made the agreement public. Shortly after the signing of this pact, on about October 23, 1920, the partisan army launched an attack against Wrangel's forces. Savage battles ensued, lasting for nearly three weeks. Makhno and his staff began to realize that they could achieve no real success through frontal attacks and that his troops would suffer serious losses in vain. They finally concluded that the road to victory lay through the Sea of Azov, which at that season was beginning to freeze over.

Disclosing nothing to the Bolsheviks, Makhno sent out a patrol one night to ascertain how strong the ice was on the Sea of Azov. The patrol reported that the ice was really not quite thick enough yet to support the whole army, but if the wagons and cavalry were spread out thinly, it would be possible to reach the encampment of Wrangel's army. The report was closely studied and it was recognized that this would be a perilous undertaking, for should the ice crack it could mean the extinction of the whole partisan force. Neither the military hierarchy of the Bolsheviks nor Wrangel's staff imagined for a moment that Makhno and his staff would undertake such a dangerous maneuver, but Makhno decided to take this calculated risk in the conviction that only

in this manner could they penetrate to the very core of Wrangel's forces and bring to a victorious close the battle for the Crimean Peninsula.

Thus a complete battle plan was worked out, including which units would move first. Also the members of each unit were assembled and informed of the plan of action. Preparations were completed swiftly. All excess material was removed from the wagons to make them as light as possible on the ice. When darkness fell, Makhno, with his first contingent, deployed over the ice and shortly afterwards the other units followed throughout the night, gliding over the frozen sea like shadows. On the morning of November 13, 1920, the partisan army had penetrated to the very heart of Wrangel's forces and begun to decimate the enemy. The following day, partisan forces laid siege to the city of Simferopol, so that Wrangel's army was now encircled on three sides. This created a vast panic in the White Army and led to the precipitous retreat on all fronts. The task of the Red Army was to liquidate the remnants of the Wrangel units. But here is where the infamous treachery of the Bolsheviks came into play. Their actual design was to do away with Makhno's partisans.

In total disregard of the agreement they had made, which clearly specified that the partisan forces would remain as a distinct unit in the Soviet army forces, the Bolsheviks issued orders for them to be integrated into the Red Army and to be dispatched to the Polish front. Makhno and his staff immediately perceived that the Bolsheviks were violating the official agreements and, in fact, on November 26, 1920, the Red Army began to stage assaults against Makhno's partisan army. However the Bolshevik ruse to catch the partisans in a trap failed. Within a short time, segments of the Red Army were routed or wiped out by the partisans, who broke out of the Bolshevik's encirclement and fought their way back to the Ukraine.

Makhno's staff began to realize that, with the virtual end of the civil war, the partisan army lacked the power to wage war against the Red Army. Consequently, they decided that those who wished to remain in the Ukraine might do so, while the others would let themselves be interned in Rumania. That same night an attack was launched against the partisan forces and, at the same time, orders were issued to the Cheka to seize all members of the Ukrainian Nabat Confederation, as well as all delegates to the All-Russian Anarchist Congress which was supposed to convene in the early part of December.

On the same day that I received the telegram to attend the congress in Kharkov, our radio telegrapher comrade brought us the news that he had intercepted an order from the Bolshevik army staff in the Ukraine to concentrate military units on the Kharkov-Crimea railway line. From scraps of news gathered here and there one could readily deduce that the Bolsheviks were preparing an assault against Makhno's partisans. That same evening our comrades in Krasnodar held a meeting and it was decided that I should go to the Kharkov Conference. However, with the information I had about the developing situation and suspecting the Bolsheviks of foul play, I did not avail myself of the telegram, but instead used my official documents which authorized me to travel the length and breadth of Russia.

All along the way to Kharkov, I encountered numerous trains loaded with Red Army men, all of them headed in the direction of the Crimea. There was no longer any doubt in my mind that the Bolsheviks were preparing an assault against Makhno's army, and before long my suspicions were confirmed. When our train made a stop at one of the larger depots, about fifty miles from Kharkov, I noticed a considerable number of people gathered around a bulletin posted on a wall. I approached and immediately saw before my eyes the "news" that Nestor Makhno had again betrayed the revolution, that his troops were beginning to plunder the city of Simferopol,

that Makhno had refused to transfer his forces to the Polish front, that the anarchist counter-revolution had reared its ugly head and therefore the general staff of the Ukrainian army had resolved to liquidate both the anarchists and Makhno's partisans. As I was reading this distorted document, I felt a hand placed on my back. It turned out to be one of the comrades who had accompanied us from Ekaterinoslav to Kharkov. By chance, we also spotted another young comrade who had just arrived from Kharkov and who informed us that the mains streets, as well as the depot in Kharkov, were besieged by Chekists and furthermore, that a number of the so-called anarcho-individualists were collaborating with the Cheka.

It seems that several months before the agreement with Makhno was concluded, the Bolsheviks in Poltava had arrested these "anarchists" when they attempted to pull off an expropriation. Among them there was a man named Rezin, who a couple of years later was dispatched to the Argentine as an agent. Also among them were Nicolai, "the Big One," the two Tymins brothers and a few others whose names I no longer recollect. The entire group had been sentenced to death, but before the order was carried out they were told that they could save their lives by becoming Cheka agents. They accepted the offer and proceeded to betray their fellow anarchists. These traitors then went ahead to help the Cheka arrest anarchists who were found in Kharkov, as well as those who arrived to attend the All-Russian Anarchist Congress. The comrade who reached us from Kharkov had escaped only by chance.

The three of us weighed the situation from all angles and finally decided to go to Kharkov after all, to see if we could extend any aid to our comrades there. Our plan was to travel only part of the way by train, alighting at the last station before Kharkov, located about five miles from the city. On the evening of our arrival we met with several other comrades at an appointed place. The Cheka headquarters was packed with our comrades – it seems that the All-Russian Anarchist Congress was being held in the cellars of the Cheka. We attempted to send some provisions to our arrested comrades through members of their families.

After about two weeks, when the arrests had subsided somewhat, I took a walk to the railroad depot, since my official coach was connected with the railroad. At the depot I came across an old-time acquaintance of mine from Chicago, Levitas, who subsequently became the editor of the English publication, The New Leader. He told me that he had been set free the day before by the Cheka, but was unable to procure a ticket to Moscow. Thanks to my official credentials, I was able to obtain transportation for him. We spent a couple of hours together and he informed me that all the Russian anarchists were going to be deported to Moscow. This information soon proved to be correct. It was thus, through Bolshevik treachery, that the liquidation of the anarchist movement in Russia began.

Here I must digress again to comment on the battle that was being fought around the Crimean Peninsula. As I have previously mentioned, the so-called anarcho-individualists, in order to have their skins spared, had become spies and provocateurs for the Cheka. If we look at it in an abstract manner, we might acknowledge that in perpetrating their expropriations, they were risking their lives without expecting any reward. In addition, there existed a number of so-called anarchists whose function consisted in spying for the Zagardat. It was this small group that worked for the Red Army and was generously paid for its espionage activity.

It is said that time and circumstance can compel people to do things that would normally be foreign to their natures. I am not sure how the person we are concerned with became involved in this espionage work. The fact is, however, that here was an American-Jewish emigre who had not even mastered the Russian language and who originated I believe, from the province of Grodno.

His name was Adolph and General Wrangel's counter-espionage would have been glad to pay a huge sum for him, dead or alive. Adolph grew a long beard and assumed all the appearance of a real peasant, which made it easier for him to gain access to difficult places and to smuggle military information to the Cheka and the Red Army.

This tragedy of betrayal becomes even more poignant when we realize to what depths some of these so-called anarchists descended. Shortly after the great victory of Makhno's partisan army over Wrangel, enabling the Bolsheviks to occupy the Crimean Peninsula, the Bolsheviks manifested their gratitude by assaulting Makhno's partisans and undertaking a total pogrom against the anarchist movement throughout Russia. At the same time, Adolph was officially proclaimed a national hero in Moscow, and was awarded the Order of Lenin, the highest citation in the Soviet Union. In addition, Adolph's photograph was hung among those of the numerous heroes in the Museum of the Revolution in Moscow. At the same time, the Bolsheviks were executing a number of innocent anarchists while hundreds of others were being arrested. Thus, the pseudo-anarchists were proclaimed as "National Heroes."

The same evening that I returned to Krasnodar, our comrades held a meeting and I submitted a full report. The consensus was that the events constituted the beginning of a plan to annihilate the anarchist movement throughout Russia, both physically and morally. To be sure, we felt secure for the moment in Krasnodar, since the Chief Commissar was a personal friend of mine and was an idealistic Bolshevik, possessing a high degree of tolerance. In addition, there was vigorous opposition among the working people against the Bolshevik's treatment of anarchists. A struggle was taking place between the Bolshevik party and the labor opposition with the latter embracing an array of prominent old-time members of the Bolshevik party, such as Shliapnikov, Galantai and other figures.

It was in this atmosphere among the top leadership of the Bolshevik party that we found ourselves and in spite of the fact that the Cheka looked askance at us, we felt more or less secure. Indeed, in the home of the Chief Commissar himself there frequently occurred discussions of anarchist topics and problems, and the Commissar would sometimes say in jest that the anarchist revolution would start from his home. In spite of all these privileges, we decided to be on the alert, as well as extending help to our arrested comrades, most of whom had already been transferred to Moscow prisons. By this time, reports had begun to reach us that these prisons were becoming heavily congested because of the large number of political prisoners. Hunger strikes likewise broke out. This situation worried us a great deal but we were not able to help very much. At the same time, in the notorious Butirky Penitentiary for hard labor, the situation became so desperate that the prisoners there prepared a hunger strike. The Bolsheviks and the Cheka resolved to break the strike. With that in mind, they tried to transfer groups of the prisoners to other jails. When some of these victims showed resistance, the Bolsheviks resorted to force and dragged them off to the Butirky prison.

Notwithstanding the fact that I was active in our movement, I faithfully discharged all the missions connected with my official post. The Bolshevik officials in Moscow were quite pleased with my organizational effort, and particularly with the fact that from time to time I would bring sorely needed foodstuffs. This was especially true of the Chief Commissar, who had a weakness for delicatessen which, to some extent, could still be procured in Krasnodar. My superiors were eager for me to undertake an organizational tour from Moscow to Batum on the Black Sea, the most remote area in the Caucasus. Since this journey was to take no less than four months, it would have been impractical to take along the family. In addition, I was beginning to entertain

serious doubts that the political situation would change for the better, though there was a brief period of improvement when Lenin came out with his now famous "New Economic Policy," later known as NEP.

I finally received a telegram from the Head Commissar that he was summoning all the organizers to a consultation and requesting me to be present in Moscow by a certain date. When I arrived there toward the middle of January, I first devoted some attention to a conference of the Tsentro-Pechat, where a discussion took place about organizing the dissemination of periodicals and literature which were being dispatched daily from Moscow. There was no lack of such so-called organizers, but the majority of them merely held these posts in order to make life easier for themselves and to be able to travel about the country. In addition, a number of them indulged in speculation or black market activities. There was no lack of credentials from above and special privileges, but the newly-created bureaucracy exercised little control over this army of organizers.

To cite one example, when I was in Krasnodar I received a cable from the Head Commissar of the Tsentro-Pechat to the effect that two organizers had been dispatched to Stavropol to organize the distribution of printed matter in that province. He therefore requested that I take several assistants and go to Stavropol to find out what was going on there. With one woman as secretary and two men as assistants, I set out on my mission in the special coach assigned to me. When we arrived there the following day, I called on the Chief Commissar of the Soviet and explained the purpose of my mission. With great astonishment, he told me that organizers from our agency had indeed come on two occasions and circulated about the city for a couple of days, but he had no idea of what they were accomplishing. He knew only that they had obtained permission to ship out several hundred pounds of salt (in numerous parts of Russia, salt was at that time more precious than gold). I informed the Commissar that our aim was to set up a local Tsentro-Pechat branch and that it would be of utmost urgency to secure the services of a number of employees capable of taking over the entire work of the Tsentro-Pechat. At the depot we found packs of newspapers and printed matter and other literature which had been piling up there for months. During the two weeks of our stay in Simferopol, the four of us, aided by six others, engaged by the Soviet, organized the local Tsentro-Pechat into an efficient operation which supplied the entire province with newspapers and literature.

When we were about to depart, I visited the Soviet to bid farewell to the Head Commissar. He informed me that all the previous organizers of the Tsentro-Pechat had sought permission to take with them a large stock of salt. Consequently, the Soviet had decided to give our group permission to take with us all the salt we wanted. Furthermore, a cable had been sent to Moscow commending our effort. The foregoing episode clarified for me the entire situation that had been discussed at the conference. Following that conference, I was invited to have dinner at the home of the Chief Commissar of the Tsentro-Pechat. His chief aides were also present. After the repast, the whole coterie tried to persuade me to undertake the extensive organizational tour which I had previously mentioned. They acknowledged that a large number of organizers had already been dispatched, but always with the same melancholy results that I had found in Stavropol.

I realized that I could not wriggle out of this situation easily and still maintain cordial relations with this leadership. I was also aware that the central committee of the party was putting enormous pressure on them. Hence, though against my better judgment, I was obliged to undertake this difficult four-month assignment. However, before accepting, I laid down certain conditions. First I must return to Krasnodar and find someone to take my place there. Second, I wished to

remove my family to Moscow and take a two week vacation. After that, I would take the tour as far as Odessa to effect an operational control. All my demands were met, and when my official duties were terminated, I set out to learn what was going on in our own circles.

The situation in our ranks in general was not a very happy one. The great majority of our comrades were scattered and dispersed throughout Russia, many of them languishing in the jails of Great Russia, particularly in the Moscow prisons. The general mood was one of depression. Of the former groups, only a few remained and these were conducting underground activity. The feeling in the air was that the Bolsheviks were preparing to liquidate the entire anarchist movement. There were also two or three clubs that had "declared their love" for the Bolsheviks and the latter gave them a reprieve of sentence, using them as a convenient facade for visitors from abroad.

The "Black Cross," with some help from the Red Cross in which Madame Peshkov, the former wife of Maxim Gorky, was active, did all in their power to extend aid to the political prisoners and this eased the situation somewhat. A portion of the salt we had picked up at Stavropol helped to obtain some foodstuffs for our comrades in the Moscow prisons, but on the whole the picture was depressing.

While I was in Moscow, I learned that our great teacher and guide, Peter Kropotkin, was seriously ill, yet he still would not have recourse to the government. His physician has prescribed some port wine for the patient, but Kropotkin had instructed his family to ask for no favors or aid from the Bolsheviks. Lunacharsky, Commissar of Education, who was a friend of the family, sent him a supply of that wine, but assurance had to be given to Kropotkin that the wine came from a friend and not from a government source.

When I returned to Moscow, I was in quite a depressed state of mind myself. It had become only too clear to me by now that the Bolsheviks were bent on exterminating everything and everyone that stood in the way of their dictatorship. Appraising the situation thus at the beginning of 1921, I assented to Bessie's feeling that we must find a way to get out of Russia. But there is a great gap between talking and doing. One thing was certain however; we were certainly resolved to escape from the fearful inferno which was growing more and more intolerable with every passing day. It was for this reason that I arranged for Bessie and our son Leon to move to Odessa, which was not too far removed from both the Rumanian and Polish borders, and through which a number of our comrades had gotten out of the country. My co-workers, and in particular some of our small group of comrades, expressed keen regret at our decision. Even several of the Bolsheviks tried to induce me to remain in Krasnodar.

More than two weeks elapsed before I was able to transfer my duties and prepare to leave Krasnodar. The night before our departure, our comrades arranged a get-together and we spent an enjoyable social evening. The following morning we were on our way to Moscow.

We had thought of stopping for a few days in Rostov-on-Don, but when we arrived there I met at the depot a certain Moisey, who was married to Olga Laich's middle sister. He was under suspicion of serving as an agent of the Cheka, had abandoned his wife and disappeared from Moscow. I was not terribly pleased to see him there, although with the official credentials in my possession, I had little to fear from him. He greeted me cordially and communicated to me the sad tidings that Comrade Kropotkin had passed away. I asked for more details, but under the pretext that he was in a hurry he vanished from the depot. I therefore decided to ride directly to Moscow so that we could attend the funeral of our honored leader and thinker.

I demanded that my coach should be promptly coupled to the first express train leaving for Moscow. Since the train was to leave late at night, we had a day free and I took advantage of the opportunity to visit our kinfolk where Bessie and Leon had stayed. I then went in search of our comrades. The local newspapers had not yet carried the news of Kropotkin's death, yet my informant knew all about it. This puzzled me and raised doubts in my mind about whether the fellow might not be a Cheka agent. Soon my comrades met and some of them presented sketches about the life and deeds of this great personality. Late that night our train lurched forward on its journey, the car wheels crunching our a dirge in honor of the departed noble figure, a fighter and a friend of man.

According to the train schedule, we should have arrived in Moscow on Saturday, the day before the funeral; however stormy weather delayed our arrival and we finally pulled in on Monday, the day after the funeral. Our only comfort was to find there a number of comrades who had flocked in from many distant cities for the funeral. One incident they reported is worth noting.

The anarchist committee which had been formed to arrange Peter Kropotkin's funeral appealed to the Bolsheviks to temporarily release all of our arrested comrades confined in the Moscow prisons so that they could attend the funeral of their departed leader and teacher. A process of bargaining then began. The Bolsheviks demanded a collective guarantee from the committee that all the released prisoners would return to their cells, with the committee to be held responsible for their return. The committee rejected this demand. It appeared that even in death, Peter Kropotkin wielded great moral power, even upon the Bolsheviks of that period, and they felt a certain moral pressure on them to accede to the committee's plea, so they countered with a proposal that every anarchist detainee should be released on his or her personal word of honor to return to the cells. Following the funeral, a group of comrades debated the question of whether or not they ought to keep their pledge, especially as prospects of being acquitted were very slender for many of them.

The general mood was one of dejection; however, the great majority of the released comrades maintained that the pledge must be kept and the outcome was that all of them went back to their prison cells, from which many of them were never to emerge alive. The mourning for the departed leader was profound; it was felt that the entire civilized world had sustained an irreparable loss in the passing of this scholarly champion of human rights and freedom. His resting place was still fresh in our memories, submerged beneath a mountain of floral offerings.

We were pleasantly surprised to come across our old time friend Semke Friedman in Moscow. We had been good friends in Chicago and had not seen him for some time. Short of stature, a garment worker by trade, Semke was the kind of person who could not endure any injustice, and he would relentlessly pursue anyone he judged guilty of a grave wrong. Despite this fixation, he had all the qualities of a devoted friend and we deeply appreciated his friendship with us. His devotion to our cause was equally intense, and he demanded a like attachment from others. Friedman had been among the first of our comrades to leave Chicago for Russia. For a brief period of time he served in Makhno's army. Following one major battle with the White Army, Makhno's staff was obliged to evacuate its positions and transfer to another locality. Only small detachments remained in the city and there was grave peril for anyone returning there. In spite of this, Friedman insisted on coming back, afraid some important materials had been left behind. He did find two large envelopes and when he arrived back at the new headquarters and they were opened, it was found that a very large portion of the partisan treasury had been recovered.

For the past two years, Semke had been living in Odessa, where he was married to Comrade Dora. In 1923, they succeeded in leaving the Soviet Union, and by merest chance we met in

Constantinople.From there they went to Paris, where they became active in the Jewish anarchist group. Throughout that time we maintained contact by correspondence. A girl was born to them but they never had a chance to enjoy her company. World War II came and the Nazi murderers arrested both Semke and Dora, while the child was hidden in the home of French comrades. As the couple were being led to their deaths, Semke wrote a message and succeeded in throwing it out of the train window; it bore a request that the letter be forwarded to our address. It eventually reached us and the contents were brief and heart-rending: "We are being led away; we do not know where. Take care of our child." That was the last we heard of Semke and Dora.

One of the odd things about Semke was that he was a vegetarian, so strict that it became something of an obsession with him. In 1919, a daring expropriation was pulled off in Moscow, and a huge sum of money seized. The Cheka proceeded to make arrests among the left-wing factions and a number of anarchists, including Semke, were seized. As a rigid vegetarian, he demanded a diet in prison of vegetables and fruits. He was clamorous in this demand, quite indifferent to the fact that he was imprisoned in the dreaded All-Russian "Vecheka," a name that produced a feeling of terror everywhere in those days. One day all of the imprisoned anarchists were summoned from their cells and lined up in a large hall. Before long the door opened and the terror of the All-Russian Cheka, Dzerzhinski, with his entire coterie, entered. Recklessly disregarding all risks, Semke went directly to this dreaded figure and demanded that, as a vegetarian, he be fed a vegetarian diet.

A week later, when he rode to Odessa with us, I managed to procure some foodstuffs en route, and among them was a slice or two of sausage. When we began to consume our humble meal, I noted that Friedman cut off a sliver of the sausage and began to eat it with great gusto. When I asked him what had become of his vegetarian philosophy, he justified his action on the grounds that he had gone hungry for many days, and felt that under the special stress and strain of a social revolution, one had to put aside his vegetarian faith and eat what he could get.

When we left Moscow, the general mood was still one of extreme dismay and depression among our comrades. The Moscow jails were filled to overflowing with our comrades and there was a feeling in the air that the Bolsheviks were about to begin liquidating all the revolutionary factions. This was manifest in their treatment of the political prisoners. We had a presentiment that a dire fate awaited all the non-Bolsheviks who had helped bring about the October revolution.

We encountered a similar mood of despair when we reached Odessa, where a large number of our comrades were being confined in local jails. However here the gathering political reaction was not felt quite so strongly. For instance, when we visited our imprisoned comrades, we observed that their guards treated them with some compassion and consideration. Apparently the guards remembered that the inmates had "only yesterday" joined with them in combatting the Kerensky regime.

It certainly sounded odd to hear the prison guards address the inmates as "comrade." I was unable to remain in Odessa, as I had promised my superiors in Moscow that I would return to that city immediately.

On my return to Moscow it required about a week to organize the tour which was to take more than three months and over the area from Moscow to Baku on the Caspian Sea and then the Caucasus region as far as Batum on the Black Sea. I was assigned three assistants for the organizational effort and an additional person to supervise and keep watch over the special railway car which had been fitted out somewhat like a bookmobile. For such a long trip and considering

the circumstances, it was a fairly comfortable way to travel. It is interesting to note how, even at that time, the new bureaucracy was beginning to build up, from top to bottom. Up until that time, I had operated largely by myself and taken along an aide only occasionally. This time however, I had three assistants with whom I was not personally acquainted. From a practical point of view I could not see why this undertaking called for so many participants and such an expenditure of money. And now a few words about my assistants:

During the first few days of our journey I learned that these people had little genuine interest in the success of our mission. They were former business managers and were animated by only two motives: first, the opportunity to get some nourishing food and to bring some groceries home and second, to engage in some profitable speculation. Apparently they had been briefed about me in Moscow. Shortly after our departure I sought to organize our project in such a way that each of us would be responsible for a role in our undertaking. They soon sensed that I was in earnest about my mission and that this was not to be a joyride. That was not altogether to their liking and they seemed to fear that the entire mission would end up a failure. I could also sense they were afraid of me and this created a tense atmosphere – regrettable, because we could not obtain any constructive results under such conditions.

However my three aides were also practical and astute business people and they cautiously began to search for devices to "soften me up" so that I would not interfere with their private business affairs. It was during the third week of our journey that things began to happen. We commenced our labors in Kharkov, where all three performed their tasks relatively well, though our relations were still strained to some extent. After the day's work, or while en route, the three of them would pass the time playing cards, with large sums of money at stake. They constantly urged me to join them, but I declined, having neither the inclination nor the monetary means. But one evening they began to reproach me for being aloof and seeming to ignore them.

I did not suspect right away that their tactic was to ingratiate themselves with me. By nature, they were not evil and they harbored no malicious intent toward me. They simply did not trust me and feared I would spoil their private dealings. They were aware of my ideological affiliation and the trap they laid for me was successful as long as they maintained friendly relations with me. But at that moment I did not want them to regard me as a snob, so I consented to play cards with them for an hour or two. I did remind them however, that my funds were limited and that they would have to reduce the stakes. The first evening everything proceeded smoothly and I came out the winner at our card game by a couple of rubles. The second evening this result was repeated and they expressed considerable satisfaction over my joining them. Before long however, I began to observe that it was their intent that I should win a large sum of money. Actually they were skillful players, yet they seemed to get "careless" occasionally and I ended up by winning a substantial sum. At first, I fancied this was mere "beginner's luck," but when my good fortune persisted for a week or more I began to feel uncomfortable. As a result I became careless in turn, in the expectation of losing to them the large amounts I had won.

However my strategy failed and I found myself with larger winnings than before. I then began to realize that all of this had been a maneuver, a little conspiracy to bribe me in the hope that I would not disturb their speculative machinations. The whole business went against my grain. To be sure, I was not a Cheka agent nor connected with the police, but I resolved to put an end to this little tragi-comedy. That same evening, before they started their card playing, I preached them this little "sermon":

"You know of course, that as an official representative of the Tsentro-Pechat, I have the authority to return all of you to Moscow at the next depot, as well as report your suspicious activities to the railway Cheka. I can assure you however, that I will do neither, as I am not associated with either the police or the Cheka. You yourselves are responsible for your activities on this tour, aside from your work for the Tsentro-Pechat. I have observed on several occasions that you carry out your official duties fairly well. We have three more months to spend together and in order to crown our mission with success, I demand of the three of you that you cease attempting to bribe me by deliberately losing money to me at cards. As long as you fulfill your obligations in our organizational effort, I shall completely ignore your other activities. You have two days to reflect on this matter – think it over and give me an answer."

All three were taken aback. That evening there was no card playing. Before retiring for the night, the three of them entered my compartment and one of them offered me an apology for their underhanded ruse. Their explanation was that they had heard in Moscow that I was extremely strict and this accounted for their actions. They assured me that they were not engaged in any counter-revolutionary activity, but also admitted that they were carrying with them a certain amount of manufactured goods, which they wanted to sell so as to purchase some provisions for their families. They assured me that if I forgave them, they would see to it that our mission was successfully completed. I accepted their apology, but insisted that they take back the money I had "won" from them. They declined, suggesting that this money should be used for spending money for our trip. They stood their ground and I finally yielded. As a matter of fact they turned out to be rather decent fellows and acquitted themselves quite creditably for the rest of the trip.

I have deliberately mentioned this incident so that the reader might gain at least some insight into that was going on at that time as the Bolshevik regime spread its bureaucratic tentacles of control over the entire Russian land. For here were three perfectly innocent men thrown into such fear and confusion by the bureaucratic monster that they were prepared to risk their freedom and their very lives in order to obtain some sustenance for themselves and their families. Tens of millions throughout Russia reacted in similar fashion.

While my three aides were engaged on the side in their private "business" of procuring some foodstuffs for their families I made it my purpose to acquaint my comrades with developments in Moscow with regard to our arrested friends. These included the ones arrested in Kharkov, the prisoners of the Kronstadt revolt, the Makhno followers and others who had been transferred to the Moscow jails. I also urged them to find means of extending help to all of our imprisoned comrades in various jails. As previously stated, the Bolsheviks had collected such a throng of political prisoners that there were not enough prison cells to hold them. This was especially true of the Butirky Prison.

In Kharkov, as well as in other localities where I encountered my comrades, I found a continuing atmosphere of gloom. The spirit of resistance and combat had to a great extent disappeared and on all sides there was the anticipation of more severe repressions against our comrades. We began to feel that our movement had lost the fight and now every individual must place himself in a defensive position. The disappearance of the powerful Makhno army, the mass arrests of the Nabat Confederation members throughout the Ukraine, the general arrests of our comrades – all this made us feel that the anarchist movement was facing its last moments in Russia.

I have commented that in the course of my three-month long tour I noted that the revolutionary mood was being wiped out everywhere. The first signs of the evolving new bureaucracy became visible and the Russian people began to sense that these new bureaucrats were emerging

in place of the old power structure. It was this journey that thoroughly awakened me from my sweet dream that the terror and repression had only been a transitional phase.

The high Commissars of the Tsentro-Pechat had for months been clamoring for me to take on this extensive organizing tour; but now that I and my three aides were in the midst of our labors, we began to receive reports that in many places a group of organizers had already made their appearance, spent a couple of days and moved on. This situation continued until we reached the city of Tiflis, deep in the heart of the Caucasus Mountains. Here we found an efficiently organized Tsentro-Pechat. It turned out that one of the staff in Moscow, a resident of Tiflis, had decided to return to his home city. He was a well-educated man descended from a well-to-do family of some prestige in the area. On arrival he decided to maintain the place in its previous state and immediately proceeded to organize the local Tsentro-Pechat there. When we learned of this situation I went to call on the manager and at once recognized him as a former employee of mine at the Moscow Tsentro-Pechat. When he first saw me his reaction was one of surprise at my being in his city. He then commented that apparently Moscow lacked confidence in him since they had already dispatched three different railroad coaches with special organizers and he had already accomplished the task personally.

His explanation took me by surprise. "The Head Commissar of the All-Russian Tsentro-Pechat had urged me to leave my still unfinished work in Moscow and undertake this organizational tour throughout the Caucasus and here I find two distinct, so-called organizational representatives sent out ahead of me." I asked who they were and was given their names which were not known to me. He also told me that their special coaches could be found at the depot. They had been in Tiflis for a couple of weeks by now.

While he was talking to us he picked up the phone and told someone on the line that there would be three additional guests for dinner. He then told me that he had already invited the other organizers for dinner at his home and he wanted us to come also to meet his wife and parents. When we arrived at his home that evening it was evident that it was one of the old, wealthy mansions, surrounded by an atmosphere of culture. The other organizers arrived presently. Since the atmosphere was quite congenial I refrained from questioning them at that time however I did propose that the following day we should gather at the local Tsentro-Pechat to discuss matters related to our work. My suggestion did not evoke much enthusiasm but on the other hand they could not very well decline. All in all we spent a very pleasant evening. There was no dearth of satisfying food and the beverages were all of the choicest.

When we gathered the following day with the other organizers I learned that they had been away from Moscow for four months now. When I asked why they had spent so much time in Tiflis when the manager had the project so well organized they replied that they had labored very hard on their tour and were now allowing themselves two weeks vacation. I promptly deduced that these fellows were engaged in some speculative manipulations and that they maintained contact with Moscow through the couriers who each day brought the periodicals and literature from the metropolis.

This episode impressed me with the fact that speculation on the black market and the bureaucracy were fashioning a new order. It was this above all that impelled me to abandon my entire effort and return to the United States. When my aides learned of my intention they sought to persuade me not to return as they had become entranced by the superb beauty of the Caucasus region. In particular they desired to take the trip from Tiflis to Batum in the shadow of the majestic Caucasus Mountains in the hope that this enchanting route would relax them from their

strenuous labors. They admitted that they had not exactly overworked themselves but tried to butter me up by stressing that I deserved a vacation myself after such extensive efforts and that we should therefore all ride to Batum.

As a matter of fact the idea did not displease me and when we met the next day I proposed to cable Moscow informing them there were three railroad coaches from Moscow cluttering things up and that they should decide which of the three should go on to Batum. This suggestion did not find favor with the two other organizers who informed me that they would leave for Moscow the next day and that I should go on to Batum. This was agreeable to me but to make certain that they would depart promptly for Moscow I added that I would dispatch a telegram to Moscow to that effect. There was no way for them to evade the issue any longer and they accepted my proposal.

The manager of the Tiflis Tsentro-Pechat was a left-wing Social Revolutionary somewhat in sympathy with the anarchist movement and well acquainted with our comrades in that city. He suggested that if it was agreeable to me he would invite our comrades so that we could spend an evening together. At the same time I could orient myself on the current situation in the country, particularly in Moscow. The evening passed pleasantly enough. The modest number of comrades located in Tiflis had no organized group; for the most part they were students along with a handful of workers. In general Tiflis was not highly industrialized so the entire activity of our comrades consisted in meeting occasionally for a discussion of live issues. The political situation in the city was not quite as tense as in other areas. To be sure the Bolsheviks had occupied all of Georgia but they realized that if they drew the reins too tightly a bloody revolt would ensue. Thus at the beginning of their occupation they were somewhat more moderate and this worked to the advantage of our comrades.

We remained there until late that night and the comrades were quite pleased to receive the information I had brought to them. They promised to raise a sum of money and some provisions for our imprisoned comrades. On our way back from Batum we met with a larger group and as they had promised they turned over to me a substantial amount of money and some foodstuffs and other products such as tea which were virtually unobtainable in Moscow.

We left Tiflis and set out for Batum where we spent a week effecting the organizational activities of the Tsentro-Pechat. But by this time my heart was no longer in this organizational effort. I began to realize that it was futile to expect constructive achievements in the social-political realm from the new Soviet bureaucracy. After the experience in Tiflis, with the "organizers" sent by the government involved in black market speculation in violation of government decree and in conflict with the spirit of the October revolution, my determination to leave Russia became more firm.

On our return from Batum we stopped for a couple of days in Tiflis, then went on from there to Stavropol where we wanted to procure more salt for our co-workers in the Tsentro-Pechat. Indeed, salt was the best medium of exchange for obtaining the various products by barter. When we arrived in Stavropol I went directly to the chairman of the Soviet and presented my request. Since we were well acquainted he promptly directed his secretary to issue a permit for us to receive a large quantity of salt for our Tsentro-Pechat co-workers. The convoluted bureaucratic apparatus was developing so rapidly by this time that even though Stavropol and its environs for a distance of many miles possessed sufficient salt to supply most of Russia no one seemed to be concerned that a large portion of the country's population was suffering from goiter, an organic malfunction usually resulting from a deficiency of salt or iodine in the body. I would have been

surprised if the Bolshevik politicians in Moscow, who were so intent on grabbing political power, even knew of the existence of these huge salt reserves.

In Batum, Tiflis and Baku, I proceeded to purchase produce for our imprisoned comrades in Moscow, having in my possession the precious salt, the "gold" to be used as an exchange commodity. In the evening, when we reached a major railway depot at Kursk, we went out to the waiting room and not far away there was a market alongside of which were a number of peasants with their wagons. These latter viewed anyone approaching their loads with some suspicion but one of them finally grudgingly agreed to answer me when I asked what they had for sale. He countered with a question as to what I had to offer in return. I knew quite well that he was not interested in currency but that the word "salt" would be the open sesame to many doors. I handed him a bag of salt and he tasted it, which caused a broad grin to spread across his face. He enquired how much salt I would trade for a sheep and before long, I was the owner of six sheep, tethered in our coach, besides three more acquired by my aides.

The following afternoon our train arrived in Moscow where we reported to the head office and told them that we had brought with us provisions for the employees of the Tsentro-Pechat. Soon a truck arrived and picked up all the produce we had bought. My personal possessions and three of the sheep were hauled to a hotel where a room had been provided for me. I immediately informed the Black Cross that I had brought provisions for the arrested comrades and before long several colleagues came and took away the foodstuffs and two of the sheep to distribute among our imprisoned comrades.

The following day I submitted my report on the organizing tour and, after my aides had extended to me their cordial thanks, my official duties were disposed of and I went in search of several of my comrades. When I arrived at the home of one of them he advised me that my colleagues were eagerly awaiting my return and that one comrade in particular, who I knew quite well, wanted to see me. He would not disclose her name but said that he would arrange a rendezvous with her and assured me that I would recognize her. I was to come to his home the next morning to obtain the address. He also told me that Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were in Moscow and gave me an address where I could find them.

I knew Emma Goldman well from the United States as the result of a famous lecture she gave in Philadelphia. At that time, in the spring of 1913, both she and Alexander Berkman had been forbidden by the authorities to lecture in Philadelphia. During that same period I was connected with the Radical Library, which maintained a large building with a library and meeting halls. In general, it was a cultural center where the Jewish-Russian radical emigrants met. Emma was determined to lecture in the city despite their ordinances and contacted the Radical Library asking us to arrange a large lecture for her on a Sunday.

This presented a problem as a really large hall was needed for the expected audience and no one in Philadelphia wanted to rent a hall to "Red Emma" Goldman. We were almost ready to give up when someone suggested we try the Brewery Workers' Union Hall. The membership of this union contained a large German socialist element and it turned out they were happy to rent the hall to us.

For two weeks the Philadelphia papers were full of stories about Emma's life and activities, which meant we had tremendous advance publicity. When the arrangements committee came to open the hall that Sunday they found waiting some five times as many people as the hall could possibly hold – plus about half the police force of Philadelphia. In no time at all the place was filled to overflowing and the police were all over the place looking for Emma but she was not

to be seen in the hall. The police were disappointed and angry that she was not to be found and finally one police captain made an announcement to the effect that there would be no lecture in the hall and asked everyone to leave.

We had expected such a maneuver and as soon as the announcement was made, one of the members of the arrangement committee took a cab direct to the Radical Library where Emma was waiting for news. When the news came, the second part of the arrangement committee swung into action. They had already a long, heavy chain and a pair of handcuffs and in a few minutes they had Emma securely chained to a large window at the Radical Library in such a way that anyone wishing to remove her would either have to saw through the chains or tear down a good chunk of the building itself.

In the meantime, at the Brewers' Union Hall, the arrangement committee passed the word to people that used to attend our lectures to go to the Radical Library. In a short time every seat in that hall was filled and all the free space packed with standees, besides a large crowd gathered outside in a yard. The police were totally nonplussed and Emma was able to speak successfully for two hours.

I had also met Emma a few times in New York at the offices of "Mother Earth," but I had only met Alexander Berkman once previously when he came to Chicago for a lecture, so when I went to their Moscow apartment and he answered the door, he didn't recognize me, but instead called back to Emma, "There's a comrade here to visit us." When she saw me she embraced me and asked jokingly if I'd brought along the long chain we'd used to in Philadelphia. Then she said, "We thought you were lost! I have been inquiring after you but none of the the comrades knew where you were and some of them had begun to worry that you hadn't returned from your trip. Since it's lunch time you must stay and eat with us and tell us your story – we've only had a short report so far about your activities."

In the meantime we started talking about mutual friends in the United States and Russia and, as we talked I noticed that Berkman seemed to be very tense and nervous. Suddenly he blurted out the following question: "Comrade Yelensky, do you know anything about how one can cross the Polish border or do you have any connections that can help with such a thing?"

I was quite surprised to hear such a question from him and asked him why he was asking me.

He calmed down a little and said, "Well, I know I can speak frankly to you and I tell you there is no free air left to breathe in Russia. The whole atmosphere seems poisoned to me and I want to run away from this poisoned paradise as fast as I can. I've decided to try the Polish border, event though Emma is against such a plan and tells me that I will be risking my life – maybe she's right, but after what I have seen in Leningrad, Moscow and my travels collecting historical material, I feel it's imperative to get away from here as quickly as possible."

Emma broke in at this point and said, "So how do you like this illogical talk? Sasha has got himself into such a mood lately that all he thinks about is how to get away from here. I agree with him that we must look for opportunities to leave Russia, but to simply run wildly away without any plan is not at all logical. We are too well-known and it would mean risking our lives. But no matter how much I argue with him he simply won't change his mind – he's like a stubborn mule!

"I know quite well where we are and what is going on all over Russia and the situation our movement is in, but tragic as it is, I still say we must not lose our heads and simply run but instead look for some really possible way to leave Russia."

As I listened to them I could see how deeply disturbed they both were. Here were these two courageous fighters who had been through so many dangers in their lives already and now, in the midst of this so-called socialist state, they were facing even greater dangers. It reminded me that my wife and son and myself were in the same predicament.

Emma suggested we have some lunch first then she would like to hear my opinion of Sasha's plans.

After we were through eating I said, " It seems to me that those of us who came back to Russian in 1917 have come only gradually into this situation. We know now the dangers that are all around us but perhaps our nerves are not so sharp any more. Many of our comrades now wish to leave Russia, but we also know what a difficult job this is and how dangerous it can be, so we are looking continually for the least dangerous and most practical methods.

"Besides the problem of simply getting out of Russia, there is the question of what you can expect on the other side of the border. We have to keep in mind that all of the countries that encircle Russia are afraid of those who cross the border. I know something of the situation in Poland. In 1918 and 1919 many of our comrades, with great difficulty, managed to get to Poland but in order to secure admittance, all of them had to have papers proving that they had originally come from there. And of course, after the Bolshevik invasion of Poland, one could only cross at the literal risk of one's life. I myself have no connections who could assist you in crossing this border.

"But what I do have is some good connections that might make possible getting out through Turkey. I must warn you however, that these connections are through military intelligence and there is also some risk of being arrested by French, English or American intelligence once you get out, as you still have to pass through Constantinople, which has very strict controls. I have some good connections – childhood friends who are in high positions with the Bolsheviks and are willing to help us with everything, including passports – but the problems in Turkey are still holding us back for the time being.

"It isn't easy to give advice in such a situation, but I would definitely advise you to forget Poland and to look for someone who can be of help to you both in some other direction. I know this isn't much help but I am sure it is the more logical way to do it, considering the circumstances we are all in."

"I agree with you," Emma said, "and I do hope Sasha will also see your point of view."

"Oh, I understand all right," replied Sasha, "but I don't really think either of you fully understand what I am going through, both physically and mentally, every day that we remain here. But enough of this as I want to hear what Comrade Yelensky has to tell us about his experiences."

Both of them were fascinated by the story of our experiment in Novorossiyisk and Sasha particularly became quite excited. When I had finished my story he leaped to his feet and began firing questions at me one after the other. He wanted to know all the details about what kind of people these were, what their backgrounds had been, how the organizational work had been accomplished – the questions poured forth almost faster than I could answer them. I filled in the details as best I could but one question would lead inevitably to another and finally we took a break and had some tea and then continued.

It was most rewarding to me to see the interest and excitement in their faces at my story. Sasha particularly seemed to lose some of the nervous, brooding fear that was hanging over him for a time as he became engrossed in the details of our experiment.

When I was through, Sasha sat back with a sigh and said, "I think it was worthwhile coming to Russia just to hear that story. It's the first news I have had of some really constructive work by our movement and I can say for Emma and myself that we are only sorry we were not here when you were taking part in this for it really created something new in our movement."

It was late at night by this time and before I left Sasha again reminded me of his urgent desire to get out of Russia and asked me to be sure to let him know if I came across any good connections that could aid such a venture.

After my first visit, I had the opportunity to visit the apartment several more times and often met there two young ladies who had been deported along with Emma: Mollie Shteimer and Ethel Borenstein. I often met old-time acquaintances from the states there and, to some extent, became a provider of edibles for the couple. I had the luck to be there when the request came for them to attend the Anarcho-Syndicalist Congress, and in a few days they had the passports which opened the doors for them to finally leave Russia.

When I came to say goodbye to them, they were both very happy, especially Berkman, and Emma said to me, "Well, Comrade Yelensky, you were right to advise Sasha not to go to Poland and I want to thank you for your hospitality and I do hope that very soon you and your family will be able to leave Russia."

The morning after that first visit with Emma and Sasha, I went to my comrade's home and he directed me to go to the part located near a famous large cathedral, where I would find the mysterious comrade. I was not to approach her immediately, but was to circle around a few times to make sure no one was following me. I could then go over to her, but even then I was not to indulge in any demonstrative gestures or actions that might arouse any attention. When I reached the park I immediately spotted my old-time comrade from Chicago, Fanny Baron, sitting on a bench and reading a book. When I was sure I was not being followed, I sat quietly down beside her. Without raising her head, she whispered to me to follow her at a distance to a house she would enter. Ten minutes later we were in the home of Aron Baron's brother, who was a Bolshevik.

I already knew that she, along with a group of other comrades, had escaped from prison and that the Cheka was staging a nationwide search for them. After we had exchanged a few personal reminiscences, Fanny related all of her experiences since the time they had all been arrested in Kharkov at the time the All-Russian Anarchist Conference was to take place. Those whom the Bolsheviks had not executed on the spot had been directly removed to the Moscow prisons.

Such a huge number of political prisoners were assembled that the ancient prison fortress was jammed tight. This provoked bitter protests from the accused but to no avail. Violent clashes occurred between the prisoners and both the prison officials and the Cheka, which maintained supervision over all political prisoners, but nothing was done to improve their situation. The mood among the political inmates was severely strained and it was expected that some drastic decision would soon be made. Then the following incident occurred.

In the middle of the night, a detachment of special military forces, along with a large number of Cheka members arrived. They went from cell to cell and tried to remove a number of the inmates. Within minutes, the huge Butirky prison became animated and fierce cries rang through the windows, protesting against this midnight raid. This infuriated the Chekists and they began to drag out the political prisoners by force. Viciously beaten and bleeding, they were led away to the depot and transported to Razan.

In the latter prison all the detainees were placed under the strictest guard and the Cheka was instructed that they could use their weapons if their orders were disobeyed or if any vehement protests occurred.

After languishing for some time in this prison, a group of comrades in one of the blocks managed to make contact with comrades on the outside who were still at large, with the idea of planning a mass escape. The plot succeeded and ten comrades managed to escape, including Fanny. When Fanny arrived in Moscow, all of our comrades became frightened. Emma and Sasha demanded that she remove herself to some spot where she would be in less imminent danger than in Moscow, where the Cheka followed us all so doggedly. However, Fanny would have none of this. She had come to Moscow for the purpose of plotting an escape for her husband, Aron, who was in the Ural Prison. Her plant was to have Aron's brother, who was a Bolshevik, ride with her to Oriol to impart to Aron all the details of the flight. The brother, who was a family man and a party member, at first refused to have anything to do with the adventure. In time however, Fanny won him over and he agreed to accompany her. Train travel was extremely difficult even under normal circumstances and for Fanny it meant risking her live to travel in ordinary railroad coaches. She was aware of the fact that I had previously helped some of our comrades get out of Moscow and hoped I could facilitate her own departure.

In a few days they were ready for their journey. I escorted them to the depot, led them through a side entrance and took them directly to the Tsentro-Pechat coach, which was, as usual, transporting periodicals and literature. The courier on the coach was an acquaintance of mine and I had no problem getting them in the coach and on their way to Oriol.

Meanwhile the political situation was becoming more aggravated with each passing day. The Civil War was over and the Bolsheviks had succeeded in liquidating most of their opposition, including the revolt in Kronstadt. They now began to feel that they were the masters of all Russia. The only task remaining for them was to liquidate – physically and morally – all the socialist ideologies opposed to Bolshevism who continually raised their voices in protest.

The Moscow jails were now packed with political prisoners. Numerous arrests were also taking place in the provinces; indeed, anyone who disagreed with the Bolshevik ideology was in imminent danger of being apprehended. For example, the notorious Taganka prison contained, among others, Voline, Maximoff, Yarchuk, Mark Mrochny and a number of other comrades. At that time an international congress was being scheduled at which delegates from the various anarcho-syndicalist groups in several European countries were expected. The comrades confined in the Taganka prison decided to take advantage of this opportunity to draw attention the attention of the foreign delegates to their plight by declaring a hunger strike. The entire situation had a depressing effect on the comrades still at large.

When I returned to Moscow, I conferred with the Head Commissar of the Tsentro-Pechat, with whom I maintained friendly relations. After I had submitted a full report on my tour, which greatly pleased him, he informed me that he had a very serious matter to report to me. It appeared that several days previously a representative of the Cheka had come to him and made detailed enquires about me. The Commissar declined to tell me what the source or reasons for the inquiry were. He did assure me, however, that he had given me a very flattering testimonial to the effect that I was not a counter-revolutionary and he had also informed the visitor about the highly efficient organizational effort I had carried out for the Tsentro-Pechat. The Commissar himself was a former left-wing social revolutionary and maintained a very friendly attitude toward me. He stated that he had no idea what the Cheka agent had decided to do but in any case

he advised me to undertake a lengthy journey through the Caucasus to inspect the newly-created Tsentro-Pechat branches there. He added that if I did this I would be far from Moscow should their inquisitors appear again.

By this time I had fully made up my mind to attempt to find a way to escape from Russia and this project didn't really suit my plans, but logical reasoning counselled me to adhere to the advice of the Commissar and to undertake this lengthy journey. When I contacted our comrades, I soon learned why the Cheka agenda had been around. Fanny Baron and her brother-in-law had been arrested in Oriol and were being returned to the Cheka bureau in Moscow. Fanny's brother-in-law, as a Bolshevik, was shot immediately, while Fanny was detained for inquisition.

I do not know for sure if Fanny's brother-in-law betrayed anyone but I rather suspect this was the case. The only charge against Fanny was her escape from the Razan prison; however the Cheka was trying to hang additional charges on her. They already had so many so-called anarchists spying for them that they decided to forego espionage this time and resort to the technique of provocation instead. They got hold of a couple of miserable characters and sent them to an elderly comrade of ours, Lev Cherney. Comrade Cherney was a poet and author, a man who lived in a realm of fantasy, a person who cherished unbounded confidence in all human beings and who was widely know in Moscow, even among the Bolsheviks. These two wretches approached Cherney, gradually won his confidence, and told him that they owned a small printing press and all the necessary materials for printing money. Obviously, such counterfeit money could greatly help the anarchist movement.

The Moscow comrades were certain that Cherney did not clearly understand what these two rogues wanted from him; but since they pretended they had no place to store their press, he gave them permission to bring it to his home, and they did so a few days later. That same night the Cheka staged a raid on Cherney's home and naturally discovered the press which had been planted by the agents-provocateur. Lev maintained that two of his comrades had brought the press to him and that that was all he knew of it. As might be expected, the two provocateurs had disappeared with the aid of the Cheka. Comrade Cherney was arrested and charged with counter-revolutionary activity and printing counterfeit money. Without even a pretense of a trial, he was convicted and executed.

Having succeeded so well with this piece of provocation, the Cheka decided to entangle Fanny Baron in their miserable scheme. We learned that the security police had come to her cell late one night with the intention of questioning her again. She refused to leave her room, contending that she would not subject herself to an inquisition at night. We never did learn if this was meant to be a regular interrogation or if she was going to be dragged away to the notorious cellars of the Cheka, where innocent detainees were being put to death. Though she realized that she could not resist a squad of Chekists, she nevertheless protested vehemently and loudly, awakening the entire population of the prison as she was forced along. Whether deliberately or reluctantly, the Cheka police strangled her and thus a dynamic and beloved comrade tragically ended her career in the filthy cellars of the Cheka.

This tragic event deepened the mood of melancholy among our comrades who were still free. Some of the weaker ones began to abandon our ranks and joined up with the Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik press would then flaunt before their readers the defection of these weaklings, who of course loudly proclaimed their "guilt" at having been active in the anarchist movement. On top of this, our comrades confined in the Taganka prison at this point proclaimed their hunger strike to the death, demanding that they either be liberated or that specific charges be brought

against them. As I mentioned previously, an international congress was being held at that time in Moscow and among the delegates were a number of affiliated anarcho-syndicalists, such as Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Alexander Shapiro and Olga, the wife of G.P. Maximoff. These comrades kept our foreign comrades informed about the dreadful events in the Taganka prison. They passed along information each day about what was going on in the Taganka prison, where a tragic scene was unfolding. The comrades there had been without food for more than a week and some were so weakened that their very lives were in danger. Finally the issue of the hunger strike was taken up for discussion at the International Congress. The Bolsheviks contended that it was not really anarchists as such that they were arresting, but bandits. Persuaded that they could accomplish nothing at the congress itself, the delegates decided to dispatch a special committee to call on Lenin.

When the Committee reached the gates of the Kremlin they were stopped cold and prohibited from seeing Lenin. They then sent in a note to him to the effect that they would maintain a vigil at the Kremlin gates until he agreed to receive them. Lenin was placed on the horns of a dilemma; he was seeking aid and sympathy from the international proletariat, and here he was refusing to receive spokesmen from the working masses. After some inner debate he finally admitted the delegation. There was lengthy discussion and heated arguments and the Bolsheviks finally gave assurances that the anarchists would be set free if they called off their hunger strike, but only on condition that they accept deportation from Russia. Following extensive deliberations by the comrades in the prison, they accepted the offer and suspended the hunger strike. Thus the Soviet regime tacitly acknowledged that they were persecuting the anarchist movement, but still the atmosphere in our ranks became more and more disconsolate. All notions of propaganda activity were abandoned and the main concern now was to avoid falling into the hands of the Cheka.

Since I had decided to make the tour, in keeping with the advice of the Head Commissar, I made up my mind to make the trip as carefree as possible, and to take advantage of the opportunity to visit all the attractive spots in the Caucasus which the poet Lermontov had described so beautifully. The majesty and natural glory of the towering Caucasus Mountains and the contrast with the breathtaking valleys combined to form a solid picture of glorious nature which seemed quite indifferent to the misdeeds of the puny human beings around them, who seemed so intent on defacing this glorious spectacle.

Meanwhile the new bureaucracy was spreading and growing like weeds in a garden. It multiplied and threatened to annihilate all the noble things which had come out of the revolution. A contributing factor, of course, was the overpowering hunger which aided in smothering the creative spirit of the Russian people. The “New Economic Policy” which the Bolsheviks introduced in 1921did not aid in any way or help to offset the moral decline that had set in, and the Bolsheviks took full advantage of the lethargy of the masses. To be sure, under N.E.P., it was possible in the larger cities to obtain a few products, but the vast majority of the people lacked the material means to purchase anything, because industry was shattered, transportation was crippled, and above all, the huge mass of peasants in the villages had no confidence in the great cities, particularly Moscow. It could truly be asserted that the Bolsheviks had attained their goal in one sense: that the people should forget the great aspirations of the October revolution. This same apathy afflicted the ranks of our comrades. Everywhere I visited I found the people afraid to talk out loud. A mood of terror prevailed and the question arose in my mind: Is the fault exclusively the Bolsheviks, because they had wrecked the lofty ideals of the great Russian social revolution and reduced the Russian people to such depths of disillusion and resignation; or should we place

some of the blame on the anarchist movement itself, for not emancipating itself from its chronic addiction to romanticism in its approach to the problems of the day?

This state of moral depression inevitably affected my own mood, and the yearning to flee from this vast material and intellectual inferno grew ever stronger in me. But it was no easy task to fulfill this desire and the task was complicated further by the fact that I was not alone. It was in this state of mind that I completed my Caucasus tour and made my way back to Moscow. When I arrived, even before reporting to my "boss", I called on several of my comrades and learned that the group that had been released from prison had been deported. My visits to Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were made in a strained atmosphere as they too were at that time still seeking a way out of Russia. Of all the anarchist groups formerly active in Moscow, only one remained and that was, of course, the one that had ingratiated itself with the Bolshevik regime. This group included the Gordin brothers who had adopted the Bolshevik slogan that the end justifies the means. There were a few others also who were not affiliated with any particular group and who remained more or less in isolation. During 1922 and 1923, a number of these latter became "converts" to Bolshevism in order to avoid being shipped off to Siberia or the internment camps. Terror and resignation reigned everywhere.

On my way to report to my supervisor, I resolved to submit my resignation and return to Novorossiysk, since there were several Bolshevik officials in nearby Krasnodar who were old-time friends of mine who I could count on for help and protection. When I got to the Tsentro-Pechat and reported on my tour, I got the feeling from the Commissar's attitude that I could frankly reveal my intentions to him. He readily agreed to relieve me of my duties, but only under the condition that I make a tour of Odessa. He also told me that someone from the Cheka had again come around to make inquiries about me. I was loathe to refuse his request as I did not want to mar our friendly relations. However, I accepted his world of honor that, upon my return, he would relieve me of all duties and enable me to return to Novorossiysk.

Two days later, I set out from Moscow with two of my aides. We labored zealously as I wanted to dispose of my mission as quickly as possible. All proceeded smoothly as far as Kiev. After leaving Kiev late one night, we did not pass any other stations of any size until morning, when we were expected to make a check on how the work was proceeding with distribution of the newspapers and literature and this task was accomplished by my aides in a few minutes. At this point there was a loud knock on the door of the coach and when I opened the door I was confronted by a group of Cheka police, two of them in civilian garb. The senior among them informed me that he had received an order by telegraph to make a complete inspection of our car. He inquired about the identity of the passengers in my coach. I protested, but all my official documents were of no avail.

It took them two hours to complete their search of the coach. They also searched all of us, including our clothes and suitcases but found nothing incriminating except for some provisions I was carrying for my family in Odessa. After their futile search was completed, the leader of the security police apologized for the inconvenience, explaining that he was merely obeying orders from Moscow. When I returned to Moscow I received the same reply, to the effect that the Cheka, upon learning of my destination, had issued orders for the investigation. We finally reached Odessa, where a week's work awaited us.

As usual, Bessie and our son were delighted to welcome me, having seen very little of me in the past two years. After I had rested for a few days several of our acquaintances were informed of my arrival. A group of our comrades was still functioning in Odessa and I went to attend one of their

meetings. A discussion was in progress about their suspicion that a Cheka spy had infiltrated their ranks and they identified one man they were particularly suspicious of. You can imagine my surprise when, the following day, this same man came to visit us. Naturally we provided him with no information and he left somewhat disgruntled.

The following morning someone rapped at the door and when Bessie's sister opened it, she faced a young man who produced a warrant and stated that he was a member of the criminal police and wanted to see me. Bessie woke up about this time and told me what was happening. I could scarcely believe the man was an agent of the criminal police. It occurred to me that he was more likely a Cheka agent and I thought there must be a mistake somewhere. When we left the house, I started out on the route to the offices of the criminal police, but he directed me to go in another direction. I then realized that he must indeed be a Cheka agent and that we were headed for the Cheka bureau. On our arrival there I was led into an empty hall and told that the Commissar would arrive to talk to me. My protests to the Cheka policemen finally induced them to take me to the Commissar. He, without uttering a word, scrutinized me from head to toe. Finally he "disclosed" to me the sensational news that it had taken nearly four years to apprehend me and that they had evidence that I had taken part in the expropriation perpetrated in Saratov in 1917. I at once understood that either they were purposely attempting to entangle me in the Saratov incident or else had been fed false information, as I had never been in Saratov.

I decided at once to put on as convincing an act as possible and try to bluff them by persuading them that my connections in Moscow were so formidable that they might soon have cause to regret the whole incident. I produced my official credentials, showed them to the Commissar and demanded the right to telegraph immediately to the main office of the Tsentro-Pechat to report my arrest to the Head Commissar there, who I assured him would tell him that there was no foundation for this business, as I had never been in or anywhere near Saratov.

My act of righteous indignation took the accusing Commissar somewhat aback and became confused. "You don't have to telegraph right away," he hemmed and hawed, "but I must tell you that I have evidence against you." I retorted sharply, "You can have a thousand 'proofs' against me, but they are all false." I again demanded the right to telegraph Moscow. He then asked me, "How long do you intend to remain in Odessa?" "About a week," I replied. He then asked me to step into the adjacent room and promised to inform me promptly what disposition would be made of my case. More than an hour elapsed before I was again summoned into his office. This time he spoke in a much softer tone. I was told that I could go home, but that I must sign a pledge that I would not leave Odessa without the permission of the Cheka. I reminded him that my official orders gave me the specific right to travel, to arrive and depart whenever I chose in connection with my work. I informed him that if he had any valid cause, he should arrest me and so inform the Tsentro-Pechat. I acknowledged that he knew where I lived and the location of my railroad coach at the station. He finally asked me to give him my word of honor that I had never been in Saratov. I did so and was permitted to return home.

When I arrived home that evening, I found that Bessie, her sister Ethel and brother-in-law, Naumke, had been gravely worried about my fate. They had rushed to the headquarters of the criminal police and clamored to be told why I had been placed under arrest, demanding the right to see me. The Head Commissar there sought to calm them down, assured them I was not in his custody and had finally even offered to let them inspect the cells to assure themselves of this fact. It had never occurred to them that I had been seized by the Cheka. When I related my experiences, it became evident to all of us that this was some of the handiwork of the rogue who

had been suspected of infiltrating the local group and who, seeking to impress his masters, had fabricated the accusation of the Saratov expropriation against me.

Following supper, we held a family council and I proposed that we move to Novorossiysk where perhaps my close friends among the Bolsheviks would be able to help us leave for Turkey and thence for the United States.

My brother-in-law voiced the opinion that, while the situation was indeed fraught with great danger and difficulty, he and Ethel still had no desire to abandon Russia. He had not forgotten the ordeal of scurrying from factory to factory in New York in search of work. No, he would have no more of that but would remain in Russia. If we were resolved to leave, then he wished us "bon voyage."

Bessie and I were in accord that in about two weeks' time she and our son would leave for Novorossiysk and await my arrival there. A few days later, we completed our labors and left for Moscow, without stopping off in any major cities on the way back. On our arrival in Moscow, I reported on our tour and sensed, at that time, a certain coolness on the part of the Head Commissar and subordinates. I had a feeling that the repeated visits and inquiries by the Cheka had thrown a scare into my co-workers, who had quite recently been so chummy with me and had partaken so lavishly of my provisions. Indeed, the dread of the Cheka so prevalent in Russia then was such that it would have taken a very firm character indeed to act otherwise. Despite all this, the Head Commissar paid my salary for a half year in advance and directed that the requisite documents be issued to me for my journey to Novorossiysk. He even added that I should turn to him without hesitation if I needed any urgent aid.

Thus it was that after two years and after traversing some three-fourths of Russia, I was suddenly again out of work. A strange longing came over me for the time when I had first begun work as a plain employee for the Tsentro-Pechat in Ekaterinburg from whence I had climbed to the post of special representative and organizer for the central Tsentro-Pechat, with credentials a yard long that could open for me all the doors of the bureaucracy. Furthermore, despite all the manifestations of reaction among the Bolsheviks, I still had traces of a lingering faith that in time the mighty Russian social revolution would spread its giant wings and soar to a new just order that would embrace the whole world, while the old, corrupt regime would disappear.

Standing there bemused near the Tsentro-Pechat offices, I might have remained lost in thought indefinitely had not someone behind me laid a hand on my shoulder. When I turned, I recognized an emigre from the United States with whom I was well acquainted. He was not personally active in the anarchist movement but helped whenever he could. He was, I knew, occupying a high post with the Bolsheviks, though I did not know the precise nature of his work.

He told me that he had been watching for me for some days and that he had learned at the Tsentro-Pechat of my return to Moscow. He now invited me to his home for dinner, where he would disclose the reason for his search. Since there was some free time before this engagement, I went to the club where I found some of my comrades. Their mood of depression was still only too evident. The whole scene was quite curious. A variety of topics were being discussed, yet there was not a word of criticism being spoken about what was going on in Moscow and elsewhere – not even of the political detainees still imprisoned in the Moscow jails. After a short stay, I called on a comrade who told me of rumors that the political prisoners would be sent to Arkhangelsk, where the ancient Solovetsky Monastery was located. It was apparently the intention to set up a concentration camp there. Should this prove true, many of our comrades would be totally unprepared for it, if only because of the bitter cold that prevailed so far north, aside from its almost

total alienation from the rest of the world. The few comrades now still at liberty must now bestir themselves to collect warm garments in case the deportations to Arkhangelsk should begin.

I undertook to meet with those through whom I might be able to procure warm clothes for the prisoners. When I arrived at the home of my friend for dinner that night, I was surprised to find myself in a luxurious and well-appointed apartment, such as few family groups in Moscow enjoyed at that time. The food also was more ample and varied than was generally obtainable then. My friend told me that the Bolshevik regime planned to send him to Germany to purchase certain canvas materials for the army. Since he would need assistants, he was authorized to select persons with whom he was personally acquainted and whom he deemed competent. He therefore counseled me to give up my post at the Tsentro-Pechat and work with him instead. I assented tentatively but inquired whether it would be permissible to bring my family along. To this he replied that, while on the first journey only men would go, it was probable that, after contact had been established, some of them would have to remain for a considerable time and it would then be possible to bring along one's family.

The proposition had much to recommend it to me. What I had hoped to find had presented itself unexpectedly. I promised to try to obtain release from the Tsentro-Pechat, deeming it imprudent to mention at that time that I had already resigned, and promised to give him an answer in a day or two. From there, I went to the Literary Club, a rendezvous for authors, poets, painters and artists in general. Thanks to the Tsentro-Pechat, I had a permanent card of admission. One could always count on a glass of tea and modest refreshments there. In addition, the artists present would generally stage a skit or two or there would be singing or instrumental music. The Club was constantly packed and the Muses always found a warm welcome there.

On entering, I ran into several acquaintances, among them a Bolshevik whom I had known in Chicago and with whom I maintained friendly relations which continued when we both came to the Soviet Union. When I sat down at his table, he told me he had looked for me at the Tsentro-Pechat and wanted me to guess who had come back to Moscow and was anxious to see me. I declined to play guessing games and he finally told me it was Krasnachakov, who had returned this week before from Siberia. I had known krasnachakov in Chicago and, if memory serves me correctly, he had originally been active in the anarchist movement in Bialystok. When he came to the United States, he completed a law course and had participated actively in the socialist movement. In 1915 or 1916, Alexander Berkman came to Chicago and the local group organized a welcome for him. Since a large attendance was expected, the Jewish Institute, a philanthropic agency, was engaged for the event. However, only two days before the event, we were told that we could not have the Institute. Although all arrangements had been made and announcements sent out, the committee was obligated to find a new place and send out new notices. When the audience – quite a large crowd – assembled, it was informed what had happened and as a result, a protest resolution was adopted, calling on the Socialist and radical Jewish elements to boycott the Jewish Institute. With this resolution was coupled a decision for us to construct our own Labor Institute. It was in this effort that Krasnachakov-Tabunson (his adopted name in the United States) distinguished himself.

He had returned to Russia immediately after the October revolution and had at once become a Bolshevik. When Lenin, Trotsky and the other Communist leaders wanted to check the impending drive of the Japanese to seize a portion of Siberia, Lenin organized a "Siberian Free Republic," which was supposed to demonstrate to the United States and the world at large that this new "republic" was free of Bolshevik domination. The effort succeeded to some extent and the Japanese

attempt was checkmated. It is something of a mystery to me how Krasnachakov became the President of this Siberian Republic. At any rate, when I went to call on him at his hotel the following day, his secretary advised me that his superior could not be disturbed for a couple of hours and locked the door.

When I was finally admitted to his office, he brought out a bottle of excellent whiskey and some cookies to go with it.. After we had had a sip or two, Krasnachakov expressed his interest in the fate of our comrades and in how the Bolsheviks were treating them. He had been in Siberia for most of his time since coming to Russia and was not abreast of the latest developments. For a time I was at a loss as to what to say. After all he was President of the "Siberian Republic," though in reality he was a subordinate of the Moscow Bolsheviks. On the other hand, I knew him to be an honorable comrade and finally decided to relate to him the whole bitter truth about our comrades held in the Moscow prisons and about the rumors of plans to remove them to the Solovesky Islands.

We conversed until late into the night and when I was about to leave, he informed me that he had brought with him a carload of provisions and told me that if I came the next day with a few of my comrades, he would dictate an order for us to receive a generous supply of produce for our imprisoned comrades. I called on him several times and he finally also agreed to procure some warm garments for the prisoners. It goes without saying that the day following my first visit we were in possession of a wagon loaded with all kinds of edibles for the prisoners and, shortly afterwards, a good supply of heavy winter garments.

I hesitated to ask him whether he knew that he was about to be deposed from his post as President, but that is exactly what happened. The old-time, entrenched Bolsheviks resented the fact that a "parvenu"Bolshevik was occupying such a high post. Intrigues and slanders reaching the ears of higher-ups, finally induced Lenin to dismiss Krasnachakov. Shortly thereafter he was executed, liquidated as a "counter-revolutionary," because he had the effrontery to occupy a post that should more "properly" have been filled by a veteran Bolshevik!

I went back to my friend's home two days later, as promised, and informed him that I had resigned my post at the Tsentro-Pechat and was prepared to accept his offer of a position, which pleased him. He immediately telephoned the hotel reserved for foreign guests to set aside a room for me, and, as if by magic, a room was mine in a matter of two hours. Thus I again seemed to find myself outside of the grim economic situation of the Soviet regime. This was a European-style luxury hotel and porters readily carried my luggage to the room, which was amazingly clean. For dinner I enjoyed the thrill of entering a regular dining room at which each table was attended by two waiters. The food was so ample and satisfying that it was difficult to believe that outside of this hotel the huge mass of the Russian people were suffering from dire hunger.

The following day, my friend called on me at the hotel and took me to a nationalized store where I was outfitted in new clothes from head to foot, even being treated to two new suitcases. Overnight I had become something of a "dude." But one thought still continued to haunt me: would I succeed in freeing my family from this nightmare where time and circumstances had created such an intolerable situation?

Two days later I was informed that we were leaving for Leningrad and from there we would go on to Germany. Two other assistants accompanied us. An automobile came to take us to the station, where we met our friend, who distributed the tickets, with a pass for a compartment for each two persons. When we reached Leningrad, two autos were waiting to conduct us to the "International House." This was a hotel similar to the one I had been staying at in Moscow. After

we had settled down in our rooms, my friend told us it would require about two weeks before all arrangements could be completed for our trip to Germany and meanwhile I was to rest and have no worries. He did not suspect how desperately anxious I was to get away from Russia with my family; to leave the land where the bright light of a just social order had flickered and died out.

In Leningrad, following the Kronstadt uprising, there were a number of comrades who were living there in a semi-legal status. I had with me several of their addresses and decided to pay them a visit. A meeting of the entire Leningrad group was to be called, but it had to be clandestine, since as a result of the Kronstadt mutiny no public assemblies were permitted. It was thus that a substantial number of our comrades congregated one sunny Sunday afternoon. I reported on the situation in the cities I had visited and particularly on the situation of our imprisoned comrades. Here the members of our movement were looking for an answer to the question of why so widespread a movement as ours was so lacking in fundamental literature to satisfy the demands of the working masses. It was sadly recalled how we had formerly boasted numerous branches in many cities, besides the formidable partisan armies of Makhno, and now all this was being deliberately ground to dust by the Bolshevik regime which did not have the support of the great majority of the masses. The quest for an answer to this question absorbed our deliberations until late that night. The heated discussions again reinforced my conviction that, while the anarchist movement possessed a great potential, physically and intellectually, for charting the course of the Russian social revolution, it was still steeped in the illusions of ideological romanticism. Here, among these troubled comrades, I dared raise the issue of whether anarchism was doomed to remain a romantic mirage, or whether it was possible for the anarchist ideal to be coupled with constructive realism, as was the case with our experiment in Novorossiysk, and with Makhno's partisan army.

My challenge gave pause to the assembled comrades, and I became more convinced than ever that the international anarchist movement must find an answer and begin to tread new paths. In the course of two gatherings my comrades conducted during my stay in Leningrad, a number of comrades perceived the implications of my challenge and many openly acknowledged the grievous error which the anarchist movement in Russian had committed.

But at this point my dream that we might be able to get out of Russian easily came to an end. One day, during the third week of our stay in Leningrad, my sponsor entered my room and I immediately saw, from the expression on his face, that something was amiss. There was indeed, for he informed me that our mission had been cancelled. We would receive a month's pay and our return trip to Moscow would be paid. The following day I was on my way back to the metropolis. A few days later, I visited our comrades, then assembled my personal effects and set out for Novorossiysk, not knowing what might await me there.

The two assemblies in Leningrad and the problem of the vast number of our comrades languishing in Moscow prisons combined to produce a heavy, almost melancholy effect on me, since I could see no light at the end of the tunnel. It was in this state of mental depression that I arrived again in the city which not so long ago had been so ripe with hope and expectations.

In Novorossiysk, I was happy to find Bessie and our son, Leon, safe and sound. Having no position of any kind, despite the fact that I was well known among the "masters" of the city and had some friends among them, I was unable to find suitable lodgings and had to burden some of our personal friends. Before long however, "party people" who harbored human feelings toward us helped us obtain an apartment, furniture and the essential household appliances necessary to make our existence livable.

There was now the problem of finding employment. A friend of ours passed on the information that the local transportation agency needed someone to work as agent and organizer. I went there to talk to the Commissar, and when he came out to talk to me, I was astonished to find myself face to face with the same sailor who had once come to Abrav-Durso to try to procure some wine. But before he could open his mouth I told him that Comrade Tolmachov had referred me to him for a possible position. Tolmachov was at that time Governor-General. Bessie and I were close friends of his family and I was certain that he would not object to my use of his name for this purpose.

When he heard the Governor-General's name, the Commissar relented and softened considerably. He called me into his private office, inquired about my experience and abilities and, when I had related my experiences with the Tsentro-Pechat and showed him my official credentials, he spoke as follows: "You know you treated me badly that time in Abrav-Durso, but let us forget that." He brought out a bottle of whiskey and we drank a toast. Then he told me that he was turning the entire job over to me and, if I succeeded, I would receive the highest pay and would have no cause for complaint with working with him.

I dug earnestly into the work, which had been sadly neglected. In addition to the transportation workers, the harbor workers were also affiliated with this agency. The majority of them had known me from years before. I called a meeting of all the port laborers and informed them that I had taken over the post of Agent. I called on them to cooperate with me and assured them that I would do all in my power to improve their lot, but that I did not want to create any commotion. The assembly readily accepted my proposal and decided to choose a committee to adjust grievances and to submit demands in the name of the harbor workers.

Even with the help of my wide number of acquaintances among the residents and Bolshevik authorities, it required several weeks for me to successfully organize the undertaking in my sector and to establish normal relations with the workers, most of whom knew me from my activities in 1917 and 1918. My Commissar-boss, observing how smoothly things were going, dropped his old grudge and we became the best of friends. Being a one-time sailor the Commissar was partial to alcohol. He was able to hold on to his post largely because he was a member of the Communist party and he was not too much concerned or interested in the progress of the transportation agency. He was quite happy to let me run things as long as the work proceeded smoothly under my direction.

In addition to the privilege of having an apartment I enjoyed a certain degree of independence in my work which helped me considerably with the working masses – not only among those engaged in transport, but also with those employed in the cement factories, who were victims of an inept bureaucratic administration.

It finally came to the point where, when several workers from the cement factories met me on the street, they complained about their difficult situation. We studied their report and, before taking leave of each other, one of them revealed to me that a conspiratorial group existed in the two factories, and that they would like to discuss the matter with me, if I was agreeable, at a secret rendezvous in the mountains. They suggested Sunday for the meeting, at which time they would discuss their problem while I would report to them on conditions in the country at large. Actually, I was a bit reluctant to become involved in such illicit activities since the main purpose of my return to Novorossiysk was to explore possibilities for leaving the country.

Still, I could not reject outright the request of these workers, who still bore the imprint of the great experiment we successfully carried through in 1917-1918. Consequently, on Sunday morn-

ing one of the workers took me to a spot in the mountains. To allay suspicion of a policeman or spy should discover us, the workers brought along their families and the affair was made to look like a picnic. In the afternoon the men got together separately; there was a total of more than twenty present when the meeting was opened. The speakers presented details about their economic situation and emphasized the brutality of the regime in power. They spoke with bitterness of how the Bolshevik bureaucracy dominated the operations in the factories where no protests or demands of any kind were of any avail and were likely to lead to arrest. Some of the participants advocated preparations and agitation for a general strike among all the workers of the city and the mood of desperation prevalent became more obvious from the speeches delivered.

When I "took the floor," I stated that it was difficult for me to express an opinion or to give advice since I had only recently returned to the scene and was not intimately acquainted with the local situation. For that reason I would content myself with informing them about the political situation in the rest of the country. I did so, describing the brutal behavior of the Bolsheviks toward even the slightest opposition and I told how the prisons were jammed with political prisoners who were being deported to the farthest corners of the land. Toward the end I remarked that I would render whatever assistance to them that was within my power; however, I cautioned them that at the present moment, when the Bolsheviks were acting like scared rabbits, any attempt to organize a general strike might goad them into staging a blood bath. I therefore expressed the view that they should proceed with caution for the time being in conducting any propaganda activities, but to keep up their aggressive attitude toward the Bolshevik bureaucracy.

At this point I would like to state that the very thing we discussed at the picnic in 1922 actually occurred – in 1930. In the June and July issues of the Russian anarchist journal, Dyelo Trudah Probuzhdeniye, there is an article entitled, "A General Strike in Novorossiysk," under the byline "A.N.," a woman who lived in Novorossiysk as a war refugee. She related that the workers in the cement factories and the port workers went out in a general strike, one of their demands being that more foodstuffs be made available for the population, especially for the children. As was customary, the Soviet rulers ruthlessly suppressed this walkout. It is interesting in this connection to note that our group had implanted among the workers in Novorossiysk the spirit of protest and a keen desire for social cooperation. These seeds that we planted sprouted some twelve years later in this strike action, even though the workers must have known that their protest would be brutally suppressed. It should also be noted that at the time of this general strike the brutal reign of Joseph Stalin was in full sway, so that it required unusual courage for the workers to defy the government powers in that fashion.

At the time of our story, in 1922, a few of our comrades were still in Novorossiysk. We made an effort to revive our group by arranging informal fraternal discussions from time to time. Later we began to discuss ways and means of aiding our arrested Moscow comrades. About that time I received word from Moscow that the Cheka was transferring our comrades to the Solovesky Islands. This intensified the relief effort so that, all in all, life was far from monotonous. Despite the strained political situation, our diminished group acquitted itself with credit and in part this helped us forget the "red reaction."

In 1922 – I do not recall the month – the newspapers carried an item to the effect that the Soviet regime had published a decree permitting anyone who wished to go abroad to obtain a passport. However, to obtain this privilege, two citizens would have to testify that the applicant was not a counter-revolutionary and would not agitate against the Soviet Union when abroad. This news thrilled me, as I was one of those in our movement who openly opposed recourse to

violence against the Soviet authority, and was a still more vigorous opponent by any attempt to foreign powers to "liberate" the Russian people.

It was my conviction, and still is, that the so-called "liberators" do not really have the welfare of the Russian people at heart, but rather their own economic interests. Still, despite all this, I could see realistically that as soon as my application for a foreign passport reached the Vecheka in Moscow (since without its approval, no such permission would be granted) it would either be rejected or I would be placed under arrest, as they knew full well of my activities in the anarchist movement. Bessie and I pondered over the matter and finally decided that only our old friend Tolmachov, Chief Commissar of the Kubansky and Chernomorsky areas, could help us in this regard. He was a veteran Bolshevik, to be sure, but an honorable and decent man notwithstanding and furthermore we knew that he harbored some sympathy for the workers' opposition which still existed then in the ranks of the Bolshevik party. Added to this was our long and deep friendship.

We decided that I should go to Krasnodar where he lived and talk the matter over with him with the utmost frankness. Several days later I told my Commissar that I needed to confer with Tolmachov on some personal matters and requested permission to do so. Tolmachov was a veritable demigod to this man and he readily assented to my request and, to boot, directed that an order be issued to the effect that I was on an official journey on behalf of the Transport Entity to Krasnodar, so that my trip would entail no transportation expense. In the past it had been our custom when visiting Krasnodar to stay at the Tolmachov's home and our friend would remark humorously that his house was the headquarters for the anarchists in the city. The truth is that, during the brief periods of time we spent in Krasnodar, our small group of comrades there became acquainted through us with the Tolmachovs and became warm friends. His wife was a gracious, congenial hostess, highly educated, a teacher by profession. She had come from the far reaches of Siberia and radiated the hospitality associated with that region.

Tolmachov himself had spent considerable time as a deportee in Siberia, and the rigorous life there had tempered his humane qualities. You might almost say that he had fallen by error into the ranks of the Bolshevik party. The following episode will illustrate my point. On one occasion, when I was visiting them in Krasnodar, Tolmachov arrived home rather late at night from a meeting so that he arose late the next day, when his family and I were preparing to have lunch. As we sat about the table, he remarked to me, "You know, Boris, I can scarcely recognize myself anymore. This environment creates conditions under which my co-workers and myself become 'aristocrats.' For instance, you folks are already having your lunch, while I am just having my breakfast. This sort of thing is bringing about a fundamental change in us. It disturbs me and I am waging a vigorous struggle against that transformation."

Tolmachov did not need to wage that struggle very long, for Stalin liquidated him during the era when he was launching his campaign against Trotsky's followers. I was no longer on the scene of course, but I am certain that Tolmachov was never an adherent of Leon Trotsky. Stalin did away with him simply because he harbored humanitarian sentiments and was a "friend of man."

On that occasion, when I went to visit them, I asked him not to come home late that night, if possible, as I was seeking his advice. He arrived around ten and, after partaking of the evening meal, he approached me with, "And now say what you wish!"

I told him I felt it would be superfluous to remind him of what was taking place in the larger cities and particularly in Moscow. "Bessie and I, while we are in your home," I said, "have no fear

of being arrested. But in other cities the peril is great. I therefore see no purpose in remaining in Russia – we might end up one of these days in that same Siberian exile you yourself once experienced. I have come to you therefore to call on your help to obtain an emigration passport for Bessie and myself so that we can leave Novorossiysk for abroad."

His reply was, "So, you are anxious to escape from Russia?" and then he added, with a serious mien: "You know Boris, I have often reflected about the general situation and how it affects your family, and now that you have come to me with an earnest plea for help, I shall do all that is in my power to procure a passport for you." Since two signatures were required for that purpose, Tolmachov immediately telephoned the Head Commissar of the professional association and requested him to present himself at ten the next morning at the Commissariat office.

When we arrived there the next day it required only about an hour to prepare the documents and the two Commissars legalized the papers. However, I still needed the rubber stamp of the local Cheka. When I appeared there, the local bureau chief demanded to know the reason for our departure. It would not have been prudent to go into personal details with him, so I suggested he communicate directly with Tolmachov who would explain the reasons. He did so, but I never did ascertain just what Tolmachov told him. What mattered to me was that he immediately affixed the Cheka rubber stamp and apologized for the delay. A half hour later all the essential papers were in the mail to Moscow.

Six long months went by before we obtained our passports. We immediately notified our relatives in America, but letters seldom arrived in those days and there was no certainty that they would receive our messages. However, fate bestowed a small favor on us. A small American war vessel arrived in Novorossiysk. In those days, American ships frequently docked with food provided by United States relief agencies, headed by Herbert Hoover, later to become president. It was customary for the crews of these ships to visit the city. The very first evening, a group of these sailors came into one of the coffee shops, but the proprietor knew no English. As I chanced to be there with some friends, I approached the sailors and asked them in English what they wanted. "Whiskey," they said, but I informed them that no vodka was served there, only coffee – excellent Turkish coffee. The sailors were delighted to find someone who spoke their language and invited me to be their guest. They wanted to know how I had learned to speak English, and when I told them that I had come from Chicago, where our son had been born, they promptly adopted me as one of their own.

During the next week, a gang of these sailors would come to the coffee shop daily and invariably bring me some edibles. Shortly before their departure, I spoke to one of the sailors, who seemed to be a bit more serious-minded than the others, and asked him whether he would take along a letter to my relatives, since we had serious doubts that any mail would reach them otherwise. He readily agreed and promised to mail the letter immediately upon reaching Turkey. He evidently kept his promise, because our relatives did receive the letter in time.

Meanwhile time dragged on and we were anxiously counting the days of the delay. During this tense period, we received valued moral support from our beloved comrade, Vanya Tarasyuk-Karas. He had escaped the giant prison of Russia more than a year ago. The Cheka searched for him throughout Russia but he managed to elude capture. When I had been in Moscow, I had spent several hours with him. Now, when he learned of my plans to leave for abroad, he risked his life to come to Novorossiysk and bid us farewell and to arrange for a coded correspondence with me. During the several weeks he stayed with us he would remain in our home the entire day, but when it grew dark, we would go out to the shore of the Black Sea, hire a rowboat and

paddle around until late into the night. When he came to Novorossiysk, in order to evade the horde of Chekists who swarmed about the railway depot, he got off some ten miles outside of the city and walked the rest of the distance to our home. This time, when he prepared to leave, I procured the use of an automobile at my place of work, giving the excuse that I had an important errand to perform. Thus I was able to accompany him on his trip to Moscow. We took leave of each other under great emotional strain, not knowing if we would ever meet again.

In the last minutes of our conversation, Vanya intimated that I should give him my word of honor that as soon as we had escaped this inferno and returned to the United States, we would mobilize our comrades there to extend all possible assistance to our imprisoned comrades in the Soviet Union. When the train began to lurch forward, Comrade Vanya, standing on the step of his coach, shouted to me: "DO NOT FORGET…DO NOT FORGET!" Those last words of his to me ring in my ears to this day. It seems that whatever star of destiny which had chosen me for a mission back in the year 1910 was again guiding me on this urgent errand – the task of organizing help for our comrades, not alone in the Soviet Union, but, one might say, in nearly two-thirds of the world.*

Meanwhile, the political situation worsened with each passing day. Ever since the attempt on his life by Dora

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*See my book, "In the Struggle for Equality," issued by the Alexander Berkman Aid Fund, Chicago, 1958

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Kaplan, Lenin had grown constantly weaker and, with his diminishing physical vigor, his control of the Communist party lessened. The first signs appeared of the vicious struggle for power between Stalin and Trotsky, which presaged the ultimate tragic events for the Soviet Union. At the same time I was absorbed in my job which, in addition to my local activities, required frequent trips to Rostov-on-Don,to Kharkov and, on two occasions, to Moscow to purchase certain items for our transport agency. Though this kept me busy, my impatience kept growing over this unseemly delay with the passports and when six months had passed, we were nearly overcome with despair.

Relief finally came in the eighth month, when I received a notice to present myself at one of the Soviet bureaus. I lost no time in going there (it was located in the same building as our transport agency) and, despite the fact that I was well known to them, the bureaucrats began to pepper me with a barrage of childish questions. After I had voiced an indignant protest over this new inquisition, the Chief Clerk and Commissar finally disclosed that he had obtained the two passports for us and had me sign a paper before releasing them. Within an hour's time, all the occupants of our building knew that the Yelenskys were leaving for abroad.

When I got around to examining the passports at home, I noticed one statement to the effect that if one does not emigrate within six months the document must be returned to Moscow for an extension. That same day I went to the Turkish consulate to obtain a visa for that country. Here I was doomed to severe disappointment. When, after quite a delay, I was finally admitted to the Consul's office, he calmly informed me that he had received instructions from his government not to issue any visas. My remonstrances that this was only to be a transit visa fell on deaf ears. In spite of this rebuff, I began to make preparations for our journey while seeking the intercession of some person who could influence the Turkish Consul, but my efforts were fruitless. I besieged the Consulate again and again with my pleas, but all in vain. Meanwhile our passports expired

and I was obliged to return them to Moscow for an extension. Then a diverse group, with some of whom I was acquainted, arrived in the city with the hope of sailing from there to Turkey. We held a conference and decided to dispatch a telegram to the Turkish foreign minister, but after a wait of two weeks we still had no reply. We then thought to appeal for help to HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) but were unable to locate a branch of that world-wide organization in Constantinople.

Our next recourse was to send a letter through one of the smaller vessels which plied between Novorossiysk and Turkey each week. In this we succeeded, receiving a brief but very pointed message from HAIS to proceed to Turkey, with or without a visa. We received this advice joyously, but there was an obstacle in that not all of the prospective immigrants possessed passports and, in addition we had to be inoculated against smallpox. We learned that a medium-sized ship would leave Novorossiysk for Constantinople on July 18, 1923 and agreed among ourselves to book passage on that ship, hoping to be in possession of the requisite documentation by that time.

Another episode is worth recounting. Shortly after receiving our passports, Bessie and I noticed suspicious-looking individuals prowling around our home day and night. Some of them I knew to be Cheka police who were keeping an eye on us. Then a close acquaintance of ours, a typist, came to our home to warn us that a report had arrived – the source was unknown – to the Novorossiysk Cheka about our intention to leave for abroad, with instructions to exercise surveillance over us day and night. In this way we were at least assured that no thieves or burglars would invade our home at night. Seemingly the right hand did not know what the left was doing. Fearing that something untoward might happen under these circumstances, we went to our friend and protector, Tolmachov, to consult with him. He reassured us that we need have no worry about, as he put it, "those idiots who are picketing you." He simply picked up the telephone and issued a directive to the Chief Commissar of the Novorossiysk Cheka to expedite our departure for abroad. He also dictated a letter for us to deliver to the Commissar, instructing him to see to it that there should be no interference with our plans on the part of the immigration officials or others.

Returning to Novorossiysk, I soon called on the Chief Commissar of the Cheka and showed him the letter. He wrote an order to the effect that all officials concerned with passenger control should help the Yelensky family in every possible way, and that our personal effects should not be inspected. He signed it himself and affixed his seal. We told him we still had a wait of about two months for our passports, and he offered to help us at any time we needed assistance.

Thus fortified with orders from the Governor-General and the Chief Commissar of the local Cheka, I felt confident we would not encounter any further hindrances and I even hoped that the Cheka guard would be removed. Apparently someone down the line was not apprised of these orders and the sentries remained until the very moment of our departure. About a week later we finally had the passports in our possession and were able to make final arrangements for our journey. Many of our acquaintances and friends were envious of our good fortune in leaving Russia. This was true also of the diminishing number of our ideological comrades with whom I still met several times a week. Even the workers with whom I had collaborated in the course of our memorable experiment in building a segment of the "free society" keenly regretted our departure; still, they perceived that I was doing the logical thing and that from my vantage point abroad I would probably be of some help to them.

As for my co-workers at the local transport agency they saw fit to arrange a farewell party on Saturday, July 17, the day preceding our departure. An incident occurred here which is worth mentioning. On our way to the party, which was to be held in the building housing our agency, I

noticed an auto parked nearby which was surrounded by all the high ranking commissars of the city. The man sitting inside gave an immediate impression of one living in considerable luxury, particularly his bulk – he must have weighed at least 250 pounds. When I approached the auto, I was not too surprised to find that this "weighty person" was none other than my one-time comrade, Bill Shatov, who was then occupying the post of Chief Commissar of the North Caucasus Banks.

It was quite evident from his manner that our meeting this time was not much to his liking. It annoyed me a bit and I felt like reminding him who he had been at one time, so as to show the commissars that so far as I was concerned, Shatov was just an ordinary mortal and did not warrant the bowing and scraping they were tendering him. I walked over, addressed him in English and inquired about his family and his other activities. Sensing however that he was becoming impatient, as well as the commissars, I suggested that if he wished he could join me for a toast in the local transport agency. He begged off, saying he had no time. I left him without saying goodbye and learned some years later that he had been liquidated in the purge by the Soviets.

Sunday, July 18, 1923 was a memorable anniversary for us since it was precisely six years before that we had arrived in Novorossiysk. We did not want our comrades, friends and certain of the friendly harbor workers and close acquaintances to accompany us to the ship as we feared the Cheka security police might use this later as a pretext for springing a surprise on them. But for this reason our house was packed with guests that Saturday until late at night. In spite of my expressed wishes, a number of our comrades and friends did eventually show up at the pier to wish us bon voyage.

On Sunday morning when I arose I observed that there were now two Chekists keeping watch instead of the usual one. Toward eleven in the morning a cab arrived in front of our home driven by a close acquaintance of ours who helped us load our luggage. We bade farewell to our neighbors and headed for the pier. When we reached the wharf I discerned at a distance that all the VIPs of the harbor Cheka were aboard the ship among them in particular the Head Commissar – a young Jewish man with whom I had grown up, both of us having joined the Maximalist faction. At the time of the October revolution he ad become a fervent Bolshevik as a result of which we engaged in some heated arguments and our relations had grown strained. Apparently now that he had been elevated to the position of Chief Commissar of the port he was going to get even with me. As we boarded the ship he and his entire coterie approached me and inquired what I was doing there. I replied that my family and I were leaving for Turkey and showed him my passports. He scrutinized them and found a "flaw" – the passport failed to carry information about our son. I refrained from showing him the letter from Tolmachov with the official directive and the one from the Cheka Chief Commissar. Instead, I chose to become a bit "fresh" with him telling him not to make a fool of himself; that Moscow had not required such documentation and asked him why he was molesting us. He turned red in the face and issued orders to have all of our luggage and personal effects inspected.

Our baggage was removed to another room while Bessie and our son were conducted to still another room where two female Cheka officers seemed bent on searching them from head to toe. When I entered the special room with three Cheka police I inquired which of them was senior and addressed myself to him. It was then that I decided to make use of the directive I had in my pocket and I asked them whether they would rather read it first or conduct the search first. When the senior guard read the letter-order he immediately apologized and asked me why I had

not shown him the letter right away. He at once sent a member of his group to direct the women Chekists to forego the inspection of my wife and son. The Chief Commissar then rushed in like a scalded cat demanding to know why I had not shown him the letter right away. I replied that such directives were not exhibited publicly. He softened appreciably, ordered our luggage to be brought out and wished me a happy journey. Bessie then came out and told me she had already been half-stripped. They quickly apologized to her and helped her dress again.

It required another two hours or so for the Cheka to complete their inspection of the baggage and passports of all the passengers after which the head port-commissar gave orders for the ship to sail. Since it was Sunday a number of the city's residents had come to the shore to see the ship take off for abroad and among them I saw for the last time the familiar faces of friends and comrades. As we pulled away from shore I felt a pang of pain and regret at the thought of leaving these scenes of my childhood, my youth and some stirring adult experiences. It was here I had lived through two revolutions and now I was again venturing out into the wide world not knowing what awaited me. Thus submerged in thought and reminiscences of my past I was scarcely aware that the ship had emerged onto the high seas where the waves roared and swirled, as if in protest against all the disillusionments we had experienced during those six years in the "new Russia." I began to look for Bessie and our son and soon found them cozily ensconced in our cabin.

The waves rocked our ship like a cradle but it was impossible for me to sleep after the hectic events of that day. Images turned in my head like a high speed movie reel and an inner voice kept hurling questions at me. But the tossing and pitching of our frail boat was not conducive to lucid answers. Perhaps on the morrow when the black clouds would surely break and the healing sun shine again, I could find an answer to the prodding, taunting questions. Or at least perhaps some future historians would provide adequate reasons and explanations for the factors that halted the march of the great Russian social revolution; perhaps history would explain who was responsible for the dreadful catastrophe which had overwhelmed the country. Thus, in a state of semi-somnolence, I had a vision of the mighty Russian people and of the all-too-brief honeymoon of several months when one could feel all around a spirit of brotherly love, of the readiness of so many to sacrifice themselves for a new and emancipated Russia.

Then the Bolshevik politicians arrived on the scene and their sole concern was to create a new political state with themselves in full control. When technically in power, but still actually relatively powerless, they sought to check the giant forces thrusting Mother Russia toward a new and just regime. The Bolshevik bureaucrats foresaw that they might suffer the same fate that had befallen their competitors, the Mencheviks and the right-wing Social-Revolutionaries. Throughout Russia, the rich, landed estates and mansions were being put to the torch ("the red rooster held sway"), so that the Bolsheviks felt obliged to plagiarize anarchist slogans in order not to be crushed by the terrifying power generated by the great Russian social revolution.

The anarchist movement had flourished like mushrooms after a rain. Local groups and cells, newspapers, magazines, books, clubs – all proliferated throughout Russia. The populace listened respectively and became interested in anarchist literature as well as in the living word. Then what did the anarchists – both individually and collectively – do? Like a man blinded from looking too long into the blazing sun they allowed themselves to be weighted down with the romantic spirit of the Nineteenth century. They sat around in their clubrooms, engaged in theoretical hair-splitting, debating about the proper path for the movement to take. Yet theirs was the only movement

that possessed the moral and physical strength to prevent the complete political and economic takeover by the Bolshevik party that followed.

But this was apparently the farthest thing from their minds as they allowed themselves to be lulled into a romantic stupor. And now, as I struggled to fall asleep in my cabin, the burning question bobbed again into my mind: Is anarchism only a soothing dream or does it really mean constructive realism? And this was my answer:

Anarchism as a philosophy is a sound and constructive idea. The successful experiment in Novorossiysk and the triumph scored by Nestor Makhno's partisan army have demonstrated clearly and concretely that when man, the builder and creator, is guided into an environment where he alone is the molder and architect of his social and economic life, then the worker becomes emancipated in his creativity and only under such conditions as these can humanity expect a cooperative society based on social and economic justice to come about. Anarchist thinkers of the future must take into account these facts so that when the next great social revolution occurs their cadres will be prepared – not to daydream, but to unite with their fellow men in constructive endeavors.

It is my reasoned conviction that these two significant examples and experience – the Novorossiysk project and Nestor Makhno's army – will in time be recognized as basic elements in charting the course of a new and better social order.

Boris Yelensky
In the Social Storm
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