

which we sew the gloves is dusty with glass powder. The work is oppressive with its monotony, and frequent mechanical defects add to this – patience is needed. The mechanic does not come every day and one often has to wait until he does his repairs, but the norm does not wait for us ... [It is necessary to produce 70 pairs of gloves in a day. Ed.]

[..]

I came back from hospital on 3 March. Finally, it seems, I shall be well and on my feet again. Your diagnosis is the most accurate – a great loss of strength. My “holiday” lasted a longish time: from 18 October when I began it. I only worked six days in November, spent the whole of December in the hospital and only at its end did I sew for four days. I divided January into two – I worked one half and not the other. For February and the first three days of March, I was in hospital. I now sew a little, at intervals; whenever I feel weak, I go into the yard to enjoy the fresh air and sun. I complete my norm because we work a single shift. I can begin sewing at 6 a.m. and finish at 10 p.m. In this way everything is going excellently at present. Everyone likes me

and I try to return this. I am fortunate and content.

[..]

We have a lot of old women and sick people and I, therefore, rejoice that I have been brought here in accordance with my calling – to nurse and love. And although I long greatly to see you all, it will be hard for me to leave here. It will be distressing to leave people who have become so near and dear to me, but the good Lord does indeed care for us most of all [...]

[..]

I receive letters not only from acquaintances but also from those whom I have never met. I am so moved by people's desire to help in any way possible. How much feeling and sincerity there is in people's hearts. How encouraging this all is, how it raises one's spirit and stimulates one to be better, to be worthy of that great love.

[..]

Ten girls from Kaunas write: “We are with you and intercede for you with God. Do not give way! All that is earthly can be borne by people of great spirit. Best wishes from our nation!”

Russian Orthodox Prisoners: Camp Conditions

Many samizdat documents describing the treatment of Russian Baptists in prison have been received in the West. It is unusual to receive a document dealing with some of the problems facing Russian Orthodox believers in the camps. Below we print extracts from such a document entitled, “The story of Ye. I. Pashnin-Speransky”.

I find it very painful to write about what has been the theme of my earthly life, but seeing how those of my faith suffer torment in prisons and camps, I cannot remain silent. Between 1972 and 1975 officials of the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) in camp No. ZhKh 385/19, in the Mordovian Republic, repeatedly confiscated from me a prayer-book, an Orthodox Calendar, the four Gospels (according to John, Luke,

Matthew and Mark), and Metropolitan Makari's *Extracts from Orthodox Dogma*. When I asked why they continually confiscated the above-mentioned religious literature, and forbade the holding of services, an official at camp No. ZhKh 385/19, Vorobyev, replied at the end of May 1975, “Prisoners are forbidden to possess literature of this type, even if it is handwritten”. He made no reference to any article of the law to substantiate his prohibition. On 10 June 1975 I felt compelled to begin a hunger-strike to demand the return of a handwritten prayer-book, so that I could say prayers at the appropriate times. On 12 June 1975, the second day of the hunger-strike, a senior official of the camp, Kiselev, gave me back my prayer-book and I broke off the fast. [...]

Two months after the first confiscation of my "prohibited" Orthodox religious literature, in May 1973, my prayer-book was again confiscated by the chief warder, Karkash. On my return from work I noticed that a handwritten Orthodox Calendar was missing from my belongings. It appeared that my possessions had been secretly searched and the Calendar had been taken by the chief warder. Secret searches of Christian prisoners in camp No. ZhKh 385/19 were a frequent occurrence, so that essential religious literature published by the Moscow Patriarchate had always to be hidden somewhere, or buried in the ground, so that the warders could not take it as often happened to me. [...]

At the end of November 1974, after I had suffered more privation than a weakened physical body can stand, the warder took my handwritten prayer-book. As a result my health deteriorated. In the end the warder grew tired of confiscating my handwritten prayers. However, in practice it is impossible for a believer in a Soviet prison to make use of a prayer-book, since the internal daily routine is so arranged that a believer cannot say the appropriate prayers without conflicting with the routine. I began by getting up at 6 a.m. (before reveille) so as to find a quiet corner where I could pray, away from the snores and groans of my fellow-prisoners. But in February 1973 I was punished for rising early and for being in the area of another barracks. My right to buy goods at the camp shop was withdrawn, along with my right to receive parcels, during March 1973. [...]

V. V. Kalinin used to pray in his brigade's storeroom just after reveille. But in October 1974 he was given 12 days in the cells "for not attending physical exercises". Kalinin is a classified invalid of the third group: his legs are swollen and ulcerated. On 13 October 1974 the door of the storeroom was padlocked by order of the camp administration, and Kalinin and I had to say our evening prayers out on the frozen autumn ground (on other days it would be damp), beneath the open sky and amid the dank irksome wailing of the wind; the stench from the latrines (three metres away from where we prayed) filled our noses so that we

could hardly breathe. To avoid this unpleasantness we moved nearer to the bath-house, where Kalinin laid a sheet of plywood on the ground and used another as a shield from the wind and from the prying eyes of vigilant informers. And there we began to read our prayers.

Orthodox believers tried to pray behind the barracks in the angle of the wall, but warders found them and forbade them to meet together on the basis of Order No. 20 of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs. They were made to disperse to the living quarters: "Otherwise you will be punished". That would mean losing shop privileges, parcels, visits, — or the cells. But how could they disperse, when Orthodox prayers are in fact intended for corporate use, for reading together; do they not begin, "Our Father ... forgive us our trespasses ..." and so on. We had to divide into groups of two or three and slip behind the barracks, pretending to have a conversation but in fact to say prayers in an undertone so that watching informers would not realize that we were praying and report to the administration, who, in such circumstances, would immediately drive the believers away. On the decision of a priest, we began praying with heads covered, only removing the covering at the moment of making the sign of the cross. Orthodoxy forbids prayer with covered heads, but the administration of camp ZhKh 385/19 created conditions for believers such that one or the other had to go: either prayer, or conformity with this outward form. The situation remains so to this day. [...]

Several times I tried to take a little time off during work time in order to devote it to prayer, but I was severely punished for absence from my place of work.

How overjoyed I was when in January 1975 A. A. Petrov, A. I. Romanov and I succeeded in entering unobserved an empty refrigerated truck, which stood by a warehouse ready to be loaded. We threw ourselves on our knees on the icy floor and gave praise to Jesus Christ. But such moments of joy were few and far between during our life in captivity. They are imprinted on our memories, as one remembers the sight of a living flower in

a patch of melted snow, if one has ever seen such a thing. Such a flower in the melting snow of my life was A. A. Petrov – a man who bore on his shoulders much human wileness. Praise be to Jesus Christ, who has in his flock such Christians as A. A. Petrov. [..]

Believers are not allowed to come together for festive meals. When we do gather nevertheless, as we did on Easter Sunday, 4 May 1975, warders arrived demanding that we disperse immediately. On 4 May 1975 the commandant of camp ZhKh 385/19, R. K. Akmaev, the programme administrator, Shein, and the head of ITK (Corrective Labour Colony) 17, Zinenko, summoned me to the office and there, among other humiliations, Akmaev called me “scum” in the presence of the other officers named; and then, alarmed at my complaints, he sent me to the cells for 14 days on bread and water, where once in two days they gave me half a basin of watery soup and a small ladle of watery porridge, which in the language of the MVD is called hot food. So, by order of the servants of the MVD, our holy days are turned into humiliation and suffering.

If by any chance a holy day falls on a rest day, the camp administration declares that day a working day, and believers are punished if they fail to go to work that day. [..]

It was impossible to obtain official Orthodox literature, and that which arrived by unofficial means was rapidly confiscated by the administration.

Thus, on 20 February 1975, the *Acts of the Apostles* was taken from me. In 1971 Yu. Khrantsov was sent to Vladimir prison for three years for resisting the confiscation of a Gospel. We were forbidden to receive even the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* because “the Church is separated from the State”. Decree No. 20 of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs, which allows prisoners to obtain and possess literature published in the USSR, does not extend to believers because the Church is a “private organization”. Moreover, religious literature published by the Moscow Patriarchate in the Soviet period is immediately confis-

cated from believers. Thus the believer, G. G. Superfin, was put in solitary confinement by the administration of the Vladimir prison on 22 January 1976 because he did not want to give up his Bible, prayer-book and three copies of the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate*, published in 1970 by the Moscow Patriarchate under the supervision of the USSR Council of Ministers. When Superfin was out exercising, the prison administration took the forbidden literature from among his belongings without provocation. This led Superfin to go on a prolonged hunger-strike. On the third day of his fast he weighed 45 kilograms. He continued to fast for 35 days – from 22 January until 26 February. To the numerous protests and complaints made by political prisoners in the prison about this matter, the Assistant Procurator for the Vladimir district, I. F. Sychugov, replied (No. 4/53 of 13 February 1976, 17 February 1976 and 25 February 1976): “the action of the prison administration is lawful”. An identical reply was received from the head of the UITU (Administration of Corrective Labour Establishments) of the Vladimir district Soviet’s executive committee, I. P. Kapkanov (No. 9/12-11-259, 261 of 13 February 1976).

The legal adviser to the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the USSR Council of Ministers, V. A. Vorobyev, replied on 22 March 1976 (No. 636a): “Please tell prisoner Pashnin that his *thirteenth complaint* has been sent to the appropriate department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR”. The words “thirteenth complaint” were underlined with a black wax crayon. It is not possible to complain about the lawlessness of the MVD men and of the procurators to the church hierarchy, since such complaints would immediately be confiscated. To use one of the limited private letters allowed (as the commandant of camp OD-1/st.2, Zavyalkin, explained to me on 4 February 1976) is not allowed, since it is forbidden to mention anything about conditions in personal letters. Again, letters on religious subjects are often confiscated for a trumped-up reason – “suspicious content”. [..]