

hide the manuscripts. I have learned that the waste container, which is always full of paper that is unsuitable for the weavestool, is a safe hiding place. It is never examined by the guards, but is emptied by the prisoners every afternoon.

One day the "kalfaktor" skipped the usual routine and emptied the wastepaper container while we were out for air! About eighty of my toilet paper sheets went up in smoke! To whom should I complain? Greater authors that I have rewritten their manuscripts over again...by their own choice....At the moment I take comfort in knowing that Selma Langerløf, rewrote the introduction to "Jerusalem" seven times. The manuscript that I "fool around with" has eventually become my best and closest companion. In this lonesomeness and concentrated existence my memory is so well trained that I can rewrite the whole manuscript in the original form. But from now on, the complete manuscript will be carefully tied around my legs. This manuscript is not about to land in the wastepaper container, at least not right away!

What will happen to it later is at this time of little interest. What counts is the happiness of being able to formulate one's impressions and write them out on paper....

PERIODS OF LONESOMENESS

Days go by, weeks go by and months....It becomes fall and winter. But it is not easy to keep track of the almanac. The war is probably as fiery as ever but the news is very scarce. The old prison newspaper "The Light House" has folded. Occasionally we have an opportunity to exchange words while in the yard for airing, but it is with people that do not know anymore about it than we do. A "kalfaktor" picks up a little news that he passes along when he empties the wastepaper container.

We never see any soldiers, nor do we hear any planes or bombs. Once in a while, when I receive a letter from home, I am reminded that I have a family. The visit of the ministers continues to be a big event...it brings us away from our daily lonesomeness. We meet people from the outside, listen to the news and are reminded of the struggle for life and death outside. It is a war we are a part of and yet a war we are not a part of!

Suddenly one remembers clearly an incident that took place way back in the past. It could be a minor bagatelle that happened in early youth or a minor question that at one time seemed important. The mind is struggling to determine all angles and details. For days, perhaps for weeks a minute detail will occupy the mind in a way that helps to make the time go faster. Is this a beginning of what is called senility? Or is it self exercise of the brain until it will be required to perform more difficult tasks? One day my mind began to review the first time I ever heard a May 1 speech that I partially understood. It seemed to be either in 1923 or 1924. It took several days before I was sure it was in 1924....I was twelve years old at the time. Egelunden in Kristiansand stands crystal clear before me. The Chief of Police Wolnick with thunderous voice at the podium. I remember his opening words: "May First is Dead," the Italian Mussolini said. "No, May First is not dead, comrades!"

This is perhaps "association thinking"! Perhaps I am reminded about the incident now because I know that the days of Mussolini are numbered?

When I get home I will check to see if my memory was correct. It means of course very little. It has given me a little diversion in my loneliness; it helps to dull the feeling of hunger. That counts.

I have read in a book about Russian Revolutionists that it takes at least two years of solitary confinement before they are considered to have a complete education as a revolutionary.

There is hope!

FREDRIK AND BJORN

The pastor has related that Fredrik and Bjorn are free and will be sent home. Both of them have tuberculosis. Both the pastor and Hiltgunt have worked hard to get this approved. The Germans, thank God, are frightened to death of the "lungpest". "Pestinfected" prisoners are unwanted in prison. This illness was called "Taering" (T.B.) in Norway in the old days. The body is especially vulnerable for lack of proper nutrition. The prison has become a "greenhouse" in developing this illness.

Fredrik never made it home....His life expired during transport. He died in Odense (Denmark). The pastor told us about the magnificent funeral in Copenhagen; the Danish people demonstrated.

Fredrik Ramm was arrested and convicted when Oslo was first occupied. It was no wonder that the Germans wanted to take this "ramrod" man. With him came the editor, Olav Gjerlow, in the same newspaper, "Morgenbladet", just as ramrod as his fellow workers. The most peculiar thing happened that these two ultra conservatives were sentenced together with the high officers in the Norwegian Labor Union. (More like a Craftsmen's Guild) Looking at the friendship that developed between these people, it does not seem strange at all anymore.

I had known Fredrik by name for several years. He was one of our top journalists. He became known all over Norway when he flew over the North Pole with Roald Amundsen. It was quite a sensation when he completely changed his lifestyle and became a member of the Oxford movement.

Right now I have the feeling he has been a personal friend through a lifetime. In reality we have only had a few days working together and had an opportunity to communicate a few days in "centralen" in Hamburg and a few weeks at "Kjettingverket" (the ammunition factory). He had been able to smuggle in a small book, Pascal's "Thoughts". It became a dear friend to Fredrik...but he gave it to me. It was strange to read all the comments Fredrik had written while he sat in solitary confinement.

Fredrik occupied his mind with the idea of starting a new newspaper when we were free again. It would be a completely different paper. It would be both Conservative and Liberal. It would present the business men's as well as the workers' point of view. Tolerance would be the motto....He would present the Conservative, Christian would head the Liberals and I would represent the Social Democrats.

There will be other thoughts and other times. Nobody will know what our lifestyle will be whenever the old world again will be new. We exchanged these ideas at one time while smoking "priemtüte" at the "John"!

"I thought you had quit smoking when you joined the Oxford Group?"

"That is correct. At the time I thought it was important to show that one could survive without the use of tobacco."

He is no longer with us. Farewell, comrade!

Bjorn came home.

It made an impression on me the first time I saw Bjorn in prison. He is the son of Simonaes in Bergens Arbeiderblad (Labor Paper). I had seen him as a small boy. He was in Junior College when war broke out and he became an errand boy for the newspaper during the first hectic days. He lived with us in a collective (commune) during the spring and summer months of 1940. He was quiet and unassuming, but very firm when it came to certain questions.

The story is told that he attempted to escape in Hamburg and he was placed under arrest on bread and water. It was just too much for his young body. He was skinny from lack of nutrition in the first place. A young student that had spent several years already with hard criminals. A sign of the times. Hopefully he will recover and be able to live his life the way it should be lived.

Sigurd is a journalist. He was also supposed to be a partner in the grand newspaper project we dreamed about but Sigurd said no. He wanted a small farm and to be a fisherman on the side when he becomes a free man. It is remarkable that so many prisoners here long to be farmers when they get home. They dream of building a home and tilling the soil!

Viggo has advanced the farthest in his plans. Through correspondence he has persuaded his wife to enroll at an agricultural school while she is waiting.

Of course, we realize that most of us will not follow our dreams...We will, no doubt, end up in our previous professions!

THE MORALE MUST BE WATCHED!

It is an unbendable rule that two prisoners must never occupy one cell. Either one or three, no matter

how crowded it gets. The morale has to be watched. The prison administration is afraid of homosexuality in cells where two prisoners live together. It is possible that it was a problem during peace time when the prisoners received proper nourishment to maintain their bodies in normal condition. In our physical condition it is rather ridiculous. There is no evidence of lust for sex, in either direction! Who in the world could work up a desire for these skeletons one looks at every time we have a shower? No more rumps left, only a bed sore, small or large on the rear end! We really are a miserable sight!

I have to smile when I think of a little physical problem that worried me at home. I discovered a small lump on my thigh, the doctor wanted to operate, but it never took place.

"Fatlumps" do not thrive in prison, there is no food for existence. It has been a pleasure to watch this lump shrink a little day by day. At last it disappeared all together. It is one less thing to worry about.

We get to take a bath every sixth week. We are reminded about our weights at that time. The small amount we gained in the "Chain Factory" has now disappeared. The normal weight for adult men is between forty-seven and fifty-six kilograms (I think he is wrong, that would only be from 117 to 140 pounds!*) The three Union Officers, Josef, Ludvig and Oscar were quite corpulent when arrested. They have lost 115 kilograms between them, the weight of two normal persons. All the "skeleton's eyes are focused on the "kalfaktor's" fat body. The weight of two prisoners...on one body...

It is Christmas again...the third in prison...Nothing extra this year either...

But we do receive Christmas letters and we are permitted to write home. For us Christmas had become, as never before, the high event of the year I wrote home...Do we get home for Christmas? The question is asked from January to December...Once Christmas is over with we have the feeling of having fought through one more year....

THIRTY-SIX MEN IN A CIRCLE

Thirty-six men walk in a circle...walk and walk...the only purpose to inhale the minimum air a human requires to exist. Day after day, week after week. Months, years. Thirty-six pair of shoes tramp monotonously under thirty-six skeleton bodies dressed in worn out uniforms. Five paces apart!

Thirty-six men, a very small percentage of one thousand inmates, which again is a small fraction of a prison system with hundreds of thousands of prisoners. Five paces apart!

On a stairway, high above the berm, stands a disgusting tyrant in a green uniform. His purpose in life is to squeeze out the last part of human life, dressed in these old uniforms marching in the "circus arena"! He has an enormous experience....Over a period of at least twenty years he has produced prisoners with the most unlikely types of human beings as material.

Now he is experiencing an odd situation! His cocktail is not properly mixed! Two different ingredients! Ten are well disciplined and law abiding...twenty-six are rebellious and will not cooperate... Ten will march without showing any emotion and without saying a word, exactly five feet apart, serious and formal.

(The) twenty-six nod to each other and smile and whisper a few words to each other, a few words to the one in front and a few words to the one behind.

"Shut up!" He thunders from the stairway. "Two smiles" are pulled from the rank and placed in "Dunce's Corner"! Without moving a muscle, they have to press their noses against the wall the rest of the airing time.

The march continues, the serious group is more serious, the "smilers" more smiling...

*Translator

"Stop the smiling!" The green one spits out. Two men must return to their cells and will get reduced food rations. The march continues...

A call from the prison section.."Cell No. 253, come here"! The metal washbasin is not shiny enough...Two hours of polishing is the punishment...

The law abiding group at last shake their heads in disbelief! Many of them no doubt agree with the guard when he proclaims that the Norwegian nation is the most undisciplined, dirtiest and most talkative nation in the world!

It was different in the old days when there was peace and quiet and order in the prison organization.

Among these well-disciplined, well-behaved prisoners it is most difficult to spot the professional criminal, the thief, street fighter, murderer...

It may be equally difficult to recognize the non-disciplined prisoners...At one time law abiding workers, foremen, attorneys, editors, officers, engineers. But...that was outside the prison walls...

The milieu and the roles have changed. The convicts have become conservative good citizens here, a perfect example of the prison administration's methods of improving criminals... that is if the intent is to teach humans to be ideal prisoners... in that case one can, no doubt, point to excellent results!

But, if the purpose is to train people to be respectable and law abiding citizens, the system is deplorable...

The prisoners are not transformed into this system in one day or overnight. It takes years behind prison walls to eliminate every spark...But the attempt to put out the fire starts the day the prisoner sets his foot inside the prison walls. He goes directly to solitary confinement, day and night with

one's only miserable thoughts, with a type of work better suited for monkeys than human beings: making paper bags, paper cartons and fooling around with a weaving loom. Officially he is only permitted to say one word: "Good night"!

Like a gorilla, the guard sneaks along the hallways and spies through the hole in the door, properly named the "spyhole"...The inmates always feel they are spied on even in the most intimate situations. The prisoner is fed at regular intervals, either through a partially open door or the food is shoved in through a small trap door. The prisoner shall be "aired" and given a bath, so it says in the prison regulations...

It is a life in loneliness, always with guards who consider it their duty to demoralize their prisoners, to shape them into listless, well trained, obedient animals with no responsibility or will of their own. It becomes natural to let fate take care of itself...Eventually the mind of the prisoner believes that fate is sort of a God in a guard's uniform. This fate will provide for "home, house, farm and livestock, a wife and children...and all good things..."

In the prison everything goes well. It is the outside world that demands will power and responsibility. It is a calamity...

And Fate is getting the blame....

In prison the prisoner learns that cleanliness is the first and most important rule. Cleanliness is, of course, an important factor in a normal healthy life. In prison the "cleanliness" is misused and becomes sort of a part of the sentence. The prisoner becomes "clean" beyond all limits...He must clean and polish old cracked "shoeshine boxes" until they shine like heirloom silver. A small actual example:

The chief guard is making a tour of inspection and complains that the wash basin is not shiny enough. The basin is made of aluminum and shall be made to shine like the sun...

"Do you use the basin every day?" he asks.

I think of the strict regulations on cleanliness and answer, "Yes, at least once a day!"

"That is not very wise, most of the old prisoners use either of those two pails," he points to the "night toilet pail" and the spittoon! "When you use those to wash in you can always keep the washbasin meticulously clean!"

"But isn't that going a little bit too far, Mr. Guard, with cleanliness?"

"I believe this is a good rule and remember, the wash basin must be polished and shiny for inspection every Thursday!"

The criminal without having a choice adopts this type of cleanliness...When released from prison

he soon discovers that the world demands something entirely different than to shine old shoeshine boxes and wash basins.

We have only three items to polish. Besides the wash basin there is one empty shoeshine box and a small container that hangs under the window to get the drippings from the window. Every day I spend more than one hour to polish this junk. Powdered brick is used for this job. Every Thursday the items are placed outside the door when we go for the "airing"! I have then been working "on the shine" continuously since six in the morning until noon. Three times I have "polished holes" in the washbasin! Nonetheless the guards complain!

All prisoners receive the weekly book with great anticipation. But for many it is about the same sensation as when they get a clean pair of underpants! Some really do enjoy reading, but the majority only leaf through the front and back pages, enough of that! Most of them prefer pictorial magazines. In most cases these are people that are completely unfamiliar with reading and the prison system does not care one iota to help the prisoner to develop a reading habit.

As a matter of fact educational reading is totally discouraged. It is, for instance, not permissible to own a pencil stub. It would make more sense to demand the use of pencils!

If all the energy that is wasted on forcing the prisoner to these rules of nonsense, cleanliness and the twisting of his mind would be used to give the prisoner a practical education or vocational training, there is no doubt that the results would be different.

Instead of having life in prison differentiate completely with a normal life, try to copy outside life as much as possible. It might be possible to make responsible citizens instead of listless, irresponsible individuals that leave everything to fate.

But, why do the "smiling ones" continue to be people that do not obey the rules and rebel against all this foolishness? Nothing is spared in attempting to press us into the same stupid "mental uniform"! The efforts are not quite without result...we become shut out...The political prisoners have, in spite of all, roots outside the prison walls and a foundation to stand on. For us the cell is a barricade, a war front that must and shall be held. We do have a purpose.

We are not alone in the cell. We are in possession of thousands of good memories. We have plenty of time to analyze ourselves and to study. When we meet at the airings in the yard, we have more in common than just sitting in the same prison!

In the yard are circling thirty-six skinny men, ten well disciplined and twenty-six rebels. The "sourpuss watchdog" on the steps cannot understand why the ten are serious and the twenty-six are smiling. In fact, this he will never understand!

THE DANES ARE COMING

During spring and summertime came a new flood of new prisoners from the North. It becomes very crowded in prison. In our section will be housed nearly the double normal occupancy. For "moral reasons" it is out of the question to place two only in one cell! This is an unbreakable principle! So, what is the solution...you can have two prisoners in the cell during the day...In the evening one of them is placed in the next door cell, thus one cell will have three prisoners, the next door cell will have one at night! It is rather a problem to be able to position three mattresses in a cell designed for one prisoner! I have a companion during the day, after almost a year alone, I have the cell to myself at night.

Hans, the Dane, is my working companion. It is comforting to have a person to talk with after all this time alone. We have been waiting for these Danish political prisoners. It has been a little difficult to understand the apparent smooth relationship between the Danes and the German occupation machine. Now they are coming in droves, a political mixture from Conservative to Communistic youth. We are happy to hear they now have "Norwegian Conditions" in Denmark too! The ties are becoming strong between us. The Danes do not seem to be offended at all in prison when all of us are labeled as "Norwegians"! It is probably the first time this has happened in history!

Hans is a friendly and sharp representative for the Danish saboteurs. From South Jutland, proletarian youth and red hot Communist. It isn't the first time in life that he has experienced serious problems! When the Spaniards, in 1936, went behind the barricades to defend their freedom and human rights, Hans set his course to the South. He bicycled through Europe, without money, but eager to fight. He volunteered as one of the first Scandinavians to the battalion "Thälman". He remained in the service for two years and four months...until the notorious "non-interventionist committee" chased them home.

At times the discussion between us gets pretty hot, especially when it comes to Stalin and his role in the Russian Revolution. But we always remain friends and we generally end up singing the fight song of the "Thälman Bataljon" that Hans has taught me. It sounds tame, but intense:

Die Heimat is weit
doch wir sind bereit
Wir kämpfen und sterben für dich..
Freiheit!

And the loom moves along twelve hours a day...never fast enough...

Forty-two of us are called down to the hallway, we are to be punished for poor performance. In front of us stands a "slicked down" civilian with a "blown up" tomato face! He represents the administration. The "tomato" is most strict when he reviews the rows of skeletons!

"We cannot continue to let you eat all you want (!) when you are not meeting your quota of work. I have decided therefore to reduce your rations during the next fourteen days."

This is, of course, serious enough. But, we cannot help smiling over this grotesque situation. The punishment is as consistent and arbitrary as everything else here. Many hard workers are punished while many bums go scot free. As for myself, I deserved this from the prison administration point of view.

The punishment means we do not get any bread at supper time. We have to go to bed without food. This creates a colossal problem for the prison administration. How can this be managed when the prisoners sit paired up two and two in a cell in daytime and some in cells with three during the night, others not? Prisoners have to be divided into two groups, the ones who are punished and the ones who are not punished! I sit with Hans during the day, but at night I share a cell with two that were punished!

I get in with two young men from my hometown. We whisper under the blanket until far into the night. We have so many friends in common and share in so many interests. The soft Southern dialect of the city of my youth sounds like music in my ears.

In the morning I am transferred to Hans again. On the table I find half of his evening ration!

Against camaraderie the fight of both Gods and guards is in vain....

A PASSION FOR FOOD AND SCIENCE

Thin soup today!

Did you get nachkost (seconds)?

No, but we may get a chance tomorrow, and a "heel" (of bread) tonight...it will be a fine day!

By the way, have we met before?

No.

My name is Ola.

Per here.

Is there anything as wonderful as meatballs with creamed peas and lingenberries?

Think about Rømmegrøt. (Special type of Norwegian cream porridge)

Why don't you just shut up with all this nonsense! I only wish for three things...potatoes...potatoes...potatoes...

Have a good day....

This is a sample of the conversation when one has a chance to exchange a few words with a comrade.

The human being does not live on bread alone. That is the way it is. But one does not exist very long before one will realize that bread is an important part of the food! The smaller the rations, the more concentration on the food...Everybody can participate in discussions of food! Every dish of soup placed on the table is critically analyzed. For some it becomes a real science, for most of them a passion...

It becomes an intense discussion and comparison with all meals we have previously eaten. The air is "filled with calories and vitamins"! I remember especially the discussions from "Kjettingverket" (Chain Factory). We were always more people around the table at that time. Our "scientists" agreed that "uniformness" of the diet was the best yardstick in as much as the daily food consisted of cabbage, rutabagas and potatoes. The winter of 1942..1943 it was estimated that every prisoner was fed exactly the same nourishment a sheep gets during the winter! Several ingredients are mixed into the food to get more out of it. The most popular concoction made is "Schlagsahne"...translated means whipped cream!! In prison there is neither cream nor milk... The whipped cream is made from potatoes! It takes patience and can only be made when sitting in solitary confinement. The potatoes are pounded into a fine uniform doughlike formation, then whipped with gradually adding water until it becomes surprisingly fine white cream. But, hard work it is! The sweat runs off the face, but the smile gets wider as the cream fills the dish. When the whipped cream at last is ready, it is consumed in many different ways to satisfy individual tastes. The cream may be topped with rutabagas or sauerkraut! Or it can be used as dessert and topped with the ration of marmalade.

The enthused "Whippers" are deeply hurt by the skeptics that shake their heads over the hard work and maintain that potatoes are potatoes no matter what you call them...

At the Chain Factory we used the large ovens to make the most extraordinary dishes. In the prison we occasionally were served a few small salted herring. Salted like sin and next to impossible to swallow. We brought them along to the factory, mixed them with potatoes and fried them as fish cakes!

All of us are more or less interested in the noble art of cooking and many are insisting that this interest shall continue when they some day get to go home. Some changes will be made at home in the kitchen. Papa himself shall have a word to say then! Serious discussions about contracts for large quantities of fish that sometime in the future shall be shipped from one part of the country to another, although nobody believes that these make believe contracts ever will materialize when the jobbers will have adequate food supplies again.

There is always a hunt for food recipes that are meticulously noted in hymnals or the New Testament. Is it religious respect for the food or is it simply a shortage of paper?

Whenever times get back to normal life, it is believed that father will find his place on the davenport, most likely he will let kitchen be kitchen, cookbook be cookbook and hymnal be hymnal!

BREAKING UP

You are leaving prison tomorrow.

This is the kind of a surprise you may receive in prison during war time. The days are passing quietly and lonely. Then comes the shock!

Items that belong to the prison are packed, our personal belongings are handed to us. In this respect the prison maintains a strict order. The clothes are cleaned, pressed and stored away. All items that are returned to the prison are carefully packed and stored. The small change one has in the pocket when one was admitted is recorded in huge ledgers from prison to prison. My own ninety-eight cents has followed me faithfully from one prison to another!

Here we sit in our civilian clothes with our old pipes in the mouth! The clothes are hanging loose on the bodies but it does not destroy the happiness of being a civilian for a little while. All of us are old friends, but it seems as if everything has changed, not just the clothes. It feels as if we have more freedom, we talk about home and the travel home, although we know that our civilian status is short. Only a transition from one prison to another.

All the Danes and Norwegians are to be sent away. Fantastic stories circulate that the Germans are afraid of being invaded by Allied paratroopers in Schleswig-Holstein, and the paratroopers together with us prisoners will promote sabotage against military installations... And with us??. hardly able to stand on our feet....It sounds like a fairy tale, but the guards are serious and believe it to be true...Well, well, that is really something!

It is with mixed emotions I look over my old belongings....It is like having a small talk with myself or that part of me that was put in a sack almost three years ago. Among the items is a bundle of letters that came when we first arrived, but never was given to us. Yellow with age, but new to us. Here is the Christmas letter from 1941: "We will soon meet again..... it will be the first and the last Christmas in prison..." The same hopeful, optimistic spirit as in the last Christmas letter...

Bjarne from Jaeren (outside Stavanger) is remarkably quiet beside me. He stares down into the open suitcase he has before him. On top is some underwear that has big patches cut out...They have their own story....

Bjarne was only nineteen years old when he with fifteen others was condemned to die.

One day at Grin (concentration camp in Norway) all of the prisoners sentenced to die were brought out from their cells. In accordance with the usual ritual, the prisoners' numbers were cut away from their clothes. Their hands were tied behind, and with automatic pistols aimed at them taken to the car waiting for them at the gate.

In the car it was as quiet as in a grave....The pallor of death was shown on their faces. They knew so well where they were going...

The names were called again, Bjarne was taken out of the car and sent back to the camp, the others went on to the execution...Several months later Bjarne learned he had been pardoned because of his young age...

This is what the clothes reminded him about...

The day of departure, both the pastor and interpreter are present. They have a most peculiar sense to be at the right place at the right time! They wish us good luck and give us "travel" tobacco...We hope we will soon meet again at the new place. Wherever that might be...

I meet Hjalmar in the visitor's room. It has been a long time since we last met. He will never change...a most "screwed up individual"! In civilian life he is a lawyer and knows very well how to take the full advantage of his profession: among prison guards to be an attorney is the most wonderful achievement...Hjalmar has a very quick and changeable mind. One moment he will cuss and swear as passionately as he will say the Lord's Prayer! It changes like sun and rain in April. His hymnal is chock full of food recipes that he graciously promises to serve us whenever peace comes....

In the pastor's visiting room he was terribly concerned over two old aunts in Norway, wanted to know if the pastor knew if they were still alive.

Why are you concerned about two old aunts?

It is not just because of the aunts. Perhaps you do not understand, Pastor, but I can't think of anything so wonderful as an old fashioned country funeral. One platter after the other is carried in. You can eat all you want all day long. It is like being in Heaven...I would hate to miss it....

This is what he was afraid of...that his aunts should die before he would be able to attend the funeral party! This is the man who himself stands on the door step to heaven every day!

The train pulls away from the station. We are all through with Rendsburg...Like crates we are freighted from place to place. We are not overly concerned about the whole thing...But we do notice that this time we are headed East...

Whether we travel for the better or worse, nobody knows...We do know that to travel is a pleasant

diversion, even in our special prisoner's compartments!

DREIBERGEN

Our new "homestead" turns out to be a small city called Dreiberger in Mecklenburg. None of us had ever heard of this place before. We baptize it "Three Times Bergen", but it is not meant to be an insult to Bergen (Norway)...The city is small, the institute large, a place where large and small criminals have served their prison terms for more than one hundred years.

It is of no use to try to impress us with huge prisons. We are most familiar with the labyrinths, the long corridors, all the doors. We know it all...We are concerned about practical details like the condition of the cells, toilets, type of floors, heat...

What we see gives us no reason to celebrate....

Of course, it is solitary confinement for us with long sentences...An inventory has to be made of all the "criminals" before they are let out of the cells to go to work.

The cells have stone floors. They are cold, in one corner is a dirty exposed "shitpail"! The pipes carrying the heat appear to be O.K.

After a quick experienced inspection, the march begins. Three paces one way, three paces the other...

One thing to have now is...patience...

Then comes the work...if one can call this idiot process work. It continues from six in the morning to seven in the evening. An enormous pile of short pieces of rope is dumped in the cell. Every little piece has a knot. This has to be untied. Afterwards all the short pieces have to be tied together. It seems to me there are millions of knots to be untied and then tied...For every knot one feels himself to be one step away from the idiot stage.....

Both "kalfaktor" and the guards tell us that the slogan at Mecklenburg has always been "Immer mit Ruhe"! That is to say: never take it easy while working, but keep your own temper at peace...in stormy or calm situationslife goes on...nevertheless...

This prison has fortunately kept the old regulations...no work on Sundays! Sunday is a holiday with German church service in the morning, Catholic and Protestant.

To give the guards as much free time as possible the dinner is served at 10:00 A.M. It gets to be a long day before the evening meal is served at 5:00 P.M. The only way is to make it a REAL day of rest...crawl into the bunk and sleep all day long. It is illegal and the bunks are locked up against the wall, but our old criminal comrades have long ago taught us to use a nail to open the lock...one can always pick up a nail wandering from place to place...Fortunately the guards consider Sundays a day

of rest and are too tired to make the rounds. One advantage from the Mecklenburg slogan. "Always take it easy!"

THE BASKET MAKER

Suddenly one day...no more solitary confinement...no more knots....

Together with twenty to thirty Norwegians and Danes I have been selected to work as a "basket maker". We shall make the type of baskets that are used to protect large bottles of acid. The work hall lies within the prison area but the factory is run by a German firm. The company "buys" the prisoners work force from the prison administration and sells the products to the military.

Working with us Scandinavians are some German civilian workers, Polish men that are working in Germany. Many of them are old criminals. Their job is to get as much work out of the prisoners as possible. They will do anything for a small piece of tobacco....The work quota is ten baskets per day...This might be possible with good material. But these willows are wet and many of them rotten. It is impossible to make it hang together. One has to work very intensely bent over the work for twelve hours to even have a chance to make the quota. In the evening the chest and the back ache, and the fingers are swollen.

The worst part is really not the disgusting work. The real problem is the treatment we receive from the guards.

They are common workers from the country side with no previous training in prison work. All they have to do with this is to watch us work, pick us up and return us to prison. They are more disgusting and impudent than any of the guards in uniform. They represent the most disgusting middle class status seeker that the Nazis brought to the forefront in great numbers.

During the crisis after the First World War they were living in fear of losing identity and would sink deep into proletarianism. They were eager to take the straw that the new system handed to them and to hold tight...

Our boss is the worst of all of them, a feminine type carpenter about forty years old. He has an ulcer and lives on a diet of milk and bread. He probably never dared to have a fist fight as a boy! He is a big shot now with total authority over forty to fifty defenseless prisoners.

With a most disgusting high pitched voice always complaining that we are not producing enough...It is not more than "children's work" you are doing..."the few hours you are working, you must be more industrious...on and on.....He had found his "word caramels" and sucks on them continuously...

He sneaks around with a stick in his hand. Anyone not sitting perfectly still and working hard gets a rap from the rod or slap in the face with his hand.

I will never forget when he hit my face from behind with his flat hand because I had said a few words to my sidekick.

The slap itself did not hurt very much, but it did hurt terribly that I had to control myself not to plant my fist in his face!

TWO UNION OFFICERS

At this work station we have two top officers from the Norwegian Labor Party, Josef Larsson and Ludvig Bulans. But there is no room for skilled labor. The slaves are bought and paid for. Human rights are nonexistent...

These two men were sentenced to death during the occupation in Oslo in the fall of 1941 as reprisal for the activities of the skilled labor union. It was a stroke of good luck that they were not taken in the first group that the "new order" sentenced to death and executed. When time came for their turn they were pardoned to life in prison...

They are contrasting types, these two men.

Josef is blonde, a happy extrovert. He does not worry too much, his views are realistic, clear and fair. Josef has experienced a terrific loss of weight while sitting in solitary confinement, but he has kept his good sense of humor. I cannot remember ever having met anyone that could measure up to Josef's "prison charm"! He has taught himself to converse in German with a superb disrespect for the German grammar! His use of the language would in record time have given a teacher of German a severe heart attack, but understood he is! The prison guards cannot hid their feelings that they appreciate this form of conversation! Josef was never cast in a mold for "whispering conversation"! His deep voice sounds like thunder. Often times I listened to his deep basso voice come through the thick walls...

Long hair or a beard is not allowed in prison. Josef has started a beard, an elegant black goatee! This makes him appear considerably older than he is. He has barely passed fifty...The guards call him "der Alte"! Furthermore the guards say this with a certain respect. Because of his "high age", Josef is privileged to walk "the inner circle" during the "airing". While we have to march in step at a fast rate in the large circle, Josef loafs around the small circle with the sick and elderly.

Josef is the only one in the basket factory that the foreman cannot discipline. The hall vibrates from his deep voice...he is bawled out and rapped with the rod...he ignores it all and keeps on grumbling..He starts every conversation with..HO...HO...HO...that can be heard by everybody.

The foreman simply gives up...and Josef's conversation is the only entertainment we have at this dreary place!

Ludvig is a "Trønder" (from Trøndheim) and rather serious minded. He is a deeply religious man,