

In addition diphtheria and T.B. The empty stomachs drove many to attempts of futile escapes, escape from this hell at any cost. The war news is disappointing and depressing. Every week we get a small newspaper, printed for the prisoners, "The Lighthouse" is the name. It is not a bright light; it beams. The Germans are deep into Soviet Russia and Africa. A large part of the American Navy was destroyed at Pearl Harbor. Old established British fronts have fallen to the enemies. It appears to be hopeless.

During this time the solidarity among comrades at Fuhlsbüttel became rock solid! We did not see much of each other but our common faith binds us together. It becomes a task for all to see optimism. The driving force in the branch of optimism is Viggo the flyer. His job is to deliver material into the cells and to take the completed product out in the evening. When the news is at it's darkest hour, Viggo quotes Father Ibsen:

"Right with Victory lives the shipwreck,
Prussia's Sword will be Prussia's spanking Rod"!

"I think I am permitted to help Ibsen a little bit!," says Viggo, smiling wider and wider as his face becomes narrower and narrower.

Ivar is the opposite of Viggo in the sense that he is a pessimist, or should we say a realist? He shakes his head when he hears the war news and can hardly believe the Allies will be able to win for many, many years. He believes in ultimate victory, no doubt about that, and he never regrets in any way the activities that brought him to the German prison. Ivar would do the same thing over again without regret. He is a firm believer in justice; and he suffers because he is a man that "loves true justice". He is familiar with peoples' rights and points this out to the prison's authorities. This results in additional punishment. This reduces our stamina at a time when we need our resources. He is placed in a cell with a sick Frenchman. During the night he pulled out "klaffen" (small spy hole cover) and called the guard.

"Is the man dead?"

"No, but he is seriously ill."

"The regulations say you can only call the guard when a man dies, otherwise not."

The slot is closed.

This is repeated twice during the night, same result. In the morning the Frenchman is dead. Ivar is sent to the basement in solitary confinement and darkness.

I think of Kristen, he has learned that the best way to start the day is with a line from the hymnal: "From sorrow and self-inflicted trouble nothing will be gained...."

GETTING PRISON EXPERIENCE

"Would you like to move to a cell with your Norwegian friend and a German prisoner?" It is the friendly guard asking.

Do I want to!!

My belongings are packed in a hurry. It is the only combined cell in this section. It was formerly used as a guard room. The first thing meeting the eye are two large steam pipes. Kjell has already gotten his items in the proper place. We embrace each other. Heat! Solitary confinement is over with for a while!

The third prisoner is a real old timer. Hein, thirty-five years old. He has a square jawed, quiet farmer's face with large expressive eyes - not a common criminal type. It is a mistake to believe that certain people are born with a special "criminal face"! The rough and scared faces we often see in court are often a result of a life of fighting and carousing. A regular and strict life in prison will erase some of the lines and make their faces look normal again. If one is to look for criminal types, choose other hunting grounds than prisons!

It is almost bedtime. Our cell mate is busy with something we do not really understand. The cell seemed to be bewitched! From all corners he pulls out one item after another: newspaper, small boxes and shaving blades - everything illegal.

I discover the magic after a while! The evening's smoke is being prepared! We have the pleasure of being presented with the prison's form of enjoying tobacco - "priemtüten". It translates simply to "the chewing tobacco bag"! A piece of paper is neatly cut out, and formed to a neat cone shaped little bag. The tobacco is cut in thin pieces and filled into the bag. In our cell we stick to "prison mix", half is chewed first, the other part is not. The most expensive Havana cigar could not tempt a prisoner when he has his priemtüte!

"The Cigarette Lighter" is one used in prisons in five parts of the world. In a small tin box is a fuse, a burnt piece of cloth with a fantastic capacity to receive a spark for igniting. A small piece of flint is "buried" in the wood knife or the breadboard. The spark comes when the flint is struck with a piece of glass or a razor blade. With this equipment one does not have to worry about "fire" for several years.

The guard has finished his rounds, the lights are out. "Get the "priemtu"ten" out, our new friend!" Indian Style, from mouth to mouth. It reminds us of "stealing a smoke" when we were boys.

We are having a cozy time together. The conversation is lively while thousands of paper bags slip through the fingers... Most of the time Hein carries the conversation, not because he loves to talk, but we urge him to.

He is like a wise old professor giving us his life's history and lecture on prison philosophy. He can quote from a tremendous prison experience.

At his feet are two students that take in every word. It is a classic story of the snowball that started to roll!

When he was eighteen years old he left the farm and came to Hamburg. He had barely become a part of the "Metropolitan maelstrom" before he was arrested for stealing a car.

"The first time I was convicted, I was innocent," he repeats this time and time again with passion. The conviction and sentence to prison made him an enemy of society and he despised the judiciary system.

The second time he got into a fight while drunk. The other fellow was given a fine, but Hein was jailed and lost his honor. There is a difference between jail and prison... There is a vast difference between city jail and a prison. After serving time in a jail one can return to society as an honorable person, after a prison term he lost his honor. A prison term is for criminals sentenced to serve many years and for habitual criminals. Hein maintains that if you have not had this experience you cannot understand what it means to lose your honor according to German standards. Not only does it mean you cannot serve as a soldier which is a catastrophe alone; it also means you are hunted down at all times. To get a job is impossible.

"I have tried to travel to another part of the country. It is of no use, it is hopeless to flee from your past. It ends up with drinking and robbery. One has to steal to be able to live. Next, the long arm of the law hauls in the victim."

In the past ten years, Hein has only been a free man for two years. He does not covet this honor either. The last time he was sentenced to three years. He has only a few months left.

When Hein is a free man again, he meets a society of enemies in a foreign world. His home is behind the walls. He is in step with the prison rhythm. Here he does not feel he is different than anybody else. Here, where nobody has any honor, it is no catastrophe to be without honor. In this environment he is not a street fighter, or a noisy drunk, but a quiet and peaceful fellow that would not hurt a fly!

He has never had any good memories from the outside. But his eyes light up when he tells about life in prison before the war. The soup was so thick the spoon could stand up by itself! One could even have a canary in the cell! Those were the good old days!

Many years of experience have taught him to take it as it comes. The experience has developed into his own "prison philosophy" that he does not mind to share with other prisoners.

"Be satisfied where you are. If you sit in a cell alone, don't wish for the advantage of being in a cell

with others, but enjoy the peace and quiet of being alone. If you do get into a cell with others, enjoy the fellowship with others.

Never wish for something beyond reach. When pea soup is all you are able to get, it is hopeless to wish for steak! It is frustrating to wish for something you cannot get and frustration saps your strength.

Never be jealous if others are getting more food than you do. Try to be satisfied as a principle!"

Hein can lecture this way by the hour. It reminds me of "words of wisdom" I once heard: "Be satisfied with what you have, if you are not, nothing in the world can make you happy"!

This slave-morale, which is the best way of destroying all will to live outside the wall is necessary to survive inside. This happy old "prison fox" is the best example and evidence of the truth of his philosophy!

Hein is a member of the "sprengkommando" (bomb detonation squad). He has volunteered for this job that specializes in detonating bombs that have not been exploded. I always was under the impression that this was done by forced labor. Not so. The prisoners stand in line for the job.

The prisoners with a long sentence hope that they may get a pardon because of the dangerous work. Most of them, however, are doing this to relieve the monotony of the daily prison life... A day outside the walls, to have enough to eat and to sneak in a smoke, is enough to compensate for the danger of losing one's life. When the sirens start the members of the squad signal to each other by knocking on the wall. They are signs of congratulation for being able to get a trip on the outside. This while thousands of their fellow countrymen are buried under the debris.

The time goes by fast together with Hein. One day comes the word - One man will be leaving! It is Hein going to be set free. The war has made it easier for the "dishonorable" to find a job says Hein. "It will be the last time I am behind these walls. Farewell!" - Farewell, good luck, - you will make it. We pretend to be hopeful. We all know that Hein is a stranger outside the walls.

It is really not necessary to add this - but I do it anyway. I met him again a year later. He came marching with the tailors, happy and smiling. He is now a typical criminal type, his face contorted by a life of carousing outside. He will have plenty of time to change, he is sentenced to six years or more if required! Fortunately he does not understand the dimension of his tragedy in life. We are more concerned about his ruined life than he is himself. He is one of those unfortunate to be born under an unlucky star. But he was a fine young man, and it was he that taught me how to live in a prison.

THE ARISTOCRACY OF THE PRISON

Big time farmer Jan takes over the vacant place in the cell. He is about sixty years old and he has

one hundred cows in the barn. He got two years in prison for being too aggressive with a Polish-Jewish maid.

Jan would not be worth one word on paper if it had not been for the fact that he presented us with the year's biggest feast! A very large washbasin loaded with potatoes that we ate. The day after we consumed seventy potatoes each. We knew the prison was full of empty stomachs, but to find surplus food in prison was something new!

How long was Adam in Paradise?

We were there two days! Our farmer had been promoted to high society of the prison.... together with the privileged prisoner...

He is now a "kalfaktor"!

What is that? Rather difficult to explain. Everyone with any knowledge of the German prison system knows what it is. In a Norwegian prison it would be something like a "go-for-boy"! To call a kalfaktor this would be sacrilegious, as bad as calling a butler an errand boy!

In looks and behavior the kalfaktor is the direct opposite of the ordinary prisoner. He is heavy and fat and has acquired a very obnoxious, loud, "commando voice"! His main function is to bring and give out the rations. He ladles out the food with a master's touch, filled all the way for his friends and skimpy portions for the others.

For himself and his buddies he reserves as much food as he is able to get away with. There are few, very few, in war torn Germany that have the abundance the kalfaktorene have. The kalfaktor of the section also does most of the clerical work; many of the guards know little about office work. Consequently the kalfaktor is the "drive wheel" of the section.

A prisoner favored with this position could be of help to his fellow prisoners. Some were. But only a few. Most of them feel their loyalty should be with the guards and treat the prisoners worse than the guards. The guards have a certain respect for the kalfaktor; one is sort of dependent on the other.

Besides "kalfaktoriet" the "aristocracy" consists of clerks, foremen for a prison gang and section foremen, a separate society with strong class distinction. These men do not want to mix with the regular prisoners and stick together like peas in a pod. They steal and cheat with food and tobacco in such quantities only found on the outside of the walls!

It is totally useless to fight this class distinction. It is like running your head against the prison wall. They are able to take their revenge in numerous ways. It is possible to have a feud with the guard in prison, it is like committing suicide to be out of favor with the prison aristocracy! "Kalfaktoriet" is a most important part of the prison administration.

It would be difficult to operate a prison without criminals says an old friend!

No question about it!!

WE ARE GOING HOME!

Rumors are flying all over prison. Like a prairie fire from cell to cell: all Norwegians are going home. One prisoner maintains he has read it in the paper, one guard indicates the same. It is told that the minister says it is so. The rumors take more solid support. It is going to happen April 9, 1942. It is said to be a big favor from Quisling. Prisons have a hotbed for rumors.

It sounds fine; let us wait and see!

"Pack all your belongings!" The guard stands in the door and gives the order!
"There you are, you pessimist!", says Kjell.

We pack and are ready.

It was not to be Norwegian travel at all. Only a move to the story below! Nevertheless it was a shift from our daily routine existence. We are transferred to work with others in the corridor and do not have to sit in the cell all day long. The prison is absolutely overfilled, cells previously occupied by one prisoner will now have three prisoners. Against all regulations, three Norwegians will be in one cell. The third man is Otto, thirty years old, a dock worker from Drammen. We come to share our fate for several months ahead.

Otto is a pure proletarian! Straight and honest. It was the natural thing for him to volunteer in the Norwegian Army when the country was invaded. After he was captured and let out of the military prison he escaped to Sweden with four friends to get over to England and join the Norwegian forces there. The Swedish Government gave him a choice: either be interned in Sweden or return to Norway. He chose to return to his country. At the border the Gestapo was waiting for him.

He was sentenced to ten years in prison.

He should have remained in Sweden said the wise men, but Otto had not escaped to sit on his duff. Then at least make an attempt to find other ways, or do a job for Norway. He had attempted to get a rifle, not to protect himself! For this fellow, the quiet "fight" in a cell is more difficult to live through than life in the trenches!

"Our apartment" has a square area of six paces times three - it is more like a cabin on a ship. It is a combined living room, dining room, bedroom and toilet! If this turns out well one will have to be considerate of his fellow prisoner. It works out well!

Being able to cope under such conditions leads to a solidarity that is stronger than comradeship; it is more like being a part of a family.

DAY OF FEAST

Wednesday is feast day, high point in our existence, the attraction of the week! We receive our weekly margarine ration, 125 grams. The ration is for one week. We use it all on one slice of bread. Long experience has taught us that it is better to take it all at once than divide it up in "specks of fat"! We do this Wednesday evening, perhaps not sensible! It helps our spirits to let our desire triumph over being sensible once a week! It isn't sensible to sit in prison either, and certainly not amusing. We pay gladly for this little extravagance by munching on dry bread the rest of the week. Hunger is the best sandwich spread! Three happy "butter goats" hit the hay!

THE BOOK

Once a week a fourth friend comes into the cell and remains there a long time. That is the book. The light is turned off at seven, hardly any time to read in the winter time. Then comes spring and light so we can lie in the bunk and read.

The prison has a good German library. In addition there are five hundred Norwegian books that the Seamen's pastor has brought us. Fortunately, our friend Sigurd is the librarian. He selects the books for us. A book has never meant so much to us in our entire life. We are getting in contact with OUR world again. Forgotten is the cell and the barred window. We are in company with Falkberget's miners, feel close to Duun's "juvikings" and Markusson's fishermen. Laxnes's "Salka Valka" in Danish, is a new and enjoyable acquaintance. Omres' criminals have become a reality. Markus the fisherman, Øivind Plassen and Synnøve Solbakken have become new persons for us again. Even Gulbrandsen's Bearhunters appear to be different than when we were introduced to them at home. (Some of these Norwegian authors are standard reading for the Norwegian youth.)

Fairy tales and romance? Perhaps, for us it is not....

We eat it up...history and philosophy, true it is only one book per week. But it becomes many weeks. And magazines, "Church and Culture", "Norwegian Yearbook", "Samtiden". Old copies. But they give us a meeting with real culture in this land that has been in darkness for ten years. Marks of the whip are smarting over Nazi Tyranny, and we are happy.

We wonder how many years in prison it would be for our librarian if the prison administration could read Norwegian?

IN SENTRUM (IN THE CENTRUM AREA)

I have been assigned to work at "sentrum", the only Norwegian with twenty German prisoners. We are standing by long tables making patterns for large paper bags. Having been sitting in a cell for

such a long time it is really tough to stand up twelve hours in wooden clogs. But the human being has the ability to adapt to worse conditions than this. The working area could be compared with the number ten line in a practice target! We are situated directly under the watchful eyes of the guards at the "prison commando bridge"! However, the direct responsibility rests on a prisoner that functions as the labor foreman.

It does have an advantage of being located in the center of the target. This give us a top view of the prison activities and what ever contacts one might make here. The variety of work is very extensive. A small factory is producing "blendings gardiner", black shades or curtains to screen out the light (for air raids). Tailors and shoemakers are in a separate "ELL". Twenty men work in the bakery. Their trademark is "shiny Easterbun faces". Our type of work is classified as "bookbinding", printing and book binding. Erling, business major student from Bergen has been promoted to the leader of this section which is one of the top jobs in the prison. In this period the book bindery is a center for German and Norwegian political prisoners. Sverre Løberg plays a domineering role.

We are on the sidelines. Our aim in this life is first of all to cut patterns for the millions of small and large paper sacks which are glued together in the cells.

In addition to these "craftsmen" the prison administration runs sort of an "employment agency" by hiring out prisoners to work on the outside, sort of a modern slavery! For a daily price the prisoners are "sold" to various institutions and firms that are using them during the day. In the evening they are brought back to the cells.

Only short term prisoners are used for this. A short sentence is under eight years! A "volunteered" prisoner is occupied with camouflaging the airfield, others are building barracks and digging ditches. The favorite job is in the "garbage gang"! They work at the large garbage mountains that pile up in front of the metropolitan city "garbage ovens"! The garbage is sorted out first and every once in a while, the prisoners find a tidbit. Certainly not appetizing, but it was never known that anyone became ill from the garbage...far from it...The garbage gang were the picture of health!

Going and returning from work, all have to pass by the central. It becomes the "clearing central" for smuggling small items and to get the latest news. We establish contact with inmates from solitary cells when they go to the showers; new arrivals must go by us when taking the first steps in prison. One gets to be a combined news center and errand boy. The editor, who works in the print shop gets to read German newspapers. He gives us the news as he goes by. Stinesen is promoted "kammertjener", "hoffservant", he brings us prison news and news from new arrivals. The "bomb squad" brings us rumors from the outside. Tobacco and flint (for light) are smuggled in. Everything is distributed to others. We are beginning to fall in step with prison life!

For a person that has ever met a sadist once, the eyes and the teeth will always be imprinted in the mind. The eyes seem to have "no bottom" and restlessly moving as if he were mentally ill. His dentures appear as if they were copied from the teeth of a horse, same shape, same color. His life's prime function is to take care of prisoners that are suspected of having done one thing or another and

are in line for punishment. ("Arrest") "Arrestforvaltor" (perhaps a chief interrogator) is the official title...He is called "Pappa Kraps". He has been employed in prison for a life time.

He is by no means the excitable and yelling type, a man that will go off the handle and hit somebody...What he does is deliberate, slow and thorough. His feet seem to be wading in tar when he walks. Sentences and words are pulled out of his throat as if pulling out chewing gum! He comes to the cell and opens the door with less noise than an Indian! Heaven help the prisoner that is not doing what he is supposed to do. He enjoys to stand in the corridor when the inmates go by. He will hit the skinny backs with his fist or with the large metal key. It may not look as if it hurts, but it DOES HURT.

"The Arrest" (punishment area for prisoners) is located near the center. From my place I can see his daily exercise with the prisoners. They are completely naked while Pappa Kraps with unbelievable deliberation searches every clothing item, it may take a half hour or it may take an hour. Then follows a very, very intimate search of the body, front and back. He loves to give this inspection a perverse impression. He examines the rump to see if it is used for storage of tobacco.

This is the last act in the examination of the one arrested. For every question he must answer: "Jawohl Herr Oberwachtmeister"! Whereupon the heels must be clicked loudly together. A neat trick when barefooted in wooden clogs!

"Much louder," says Kraps, "twenty more times!" The heels are clicked together so the ankles get numb.

One of the prisoners is a Norwegian, he gets to hear a real specially composed oration for this damned degenerated people:

"You dumb idiot, you Norwegians do not want to work, only lie on your backs and drink cod-liver oil. It smells cod-liver oil from this damned country all the way to the Danish border. Be careful, or I will knock your teeth out with this key!"

All of this comes in a slow and deliberate tempo.

The menu in the "arrest" is bread and water, and the prisoner can be there up to four weeks. Every day the same routine exercise.

Pappa Kraps has his own personal history that the old time prisoners enjoy to tell. During the First World War he had served as a guard away from home, his wife came regularly to visit him. She fell in love with one of the prisoners, and when her lover was let out of prison, she eloped with him! Alone was Pappa Kraps. He swore revenge!

This is "prison talk" and not necessarily true, it could be the revenge that the rascals in prison have taken over him!

MAY FIRST

A cold stream of air circulates through the central. Large hails are drumming against the windows. May first! The darkness has still a strangle-hold on light and new life of spring. We have to depend on thousands of years of previous experience. Spring and sunshine will be victorious again.

In spite of all it is SPRING!

It is "showerday"! All friends serving life sentences are passing by, many of them former officers in trade unions, the VEEP of the National Organization, Ludvig Buland, and foreman of the Metal Workers, Joesph Larsson, leading the group. We are only able to exchange a few words. A quick glance and hand shake will do. We understand each other.

Perhaps it is only my imagination, to me the old boys seem to carry their heads more erect.

"Happy May First", it comes from a Conservative with respect for the Labor organization and its contribution.

It is Editor Fredrik Ramm whispering in my ear as he goes by. That is all it takes to make a drab cold day seem bright!

All through the day they pass the central, column after column. Norwegians, Czechs, French, Dutch and German political prisoners. An international brigade! The Wooden Shoe Army! A little smile and a nod - today means solidarity, in spite of all. "In spite of all?" Was it not at one time Karl Liebknecht's parole? At any rate it is our May Day manifest. The German Communists and Social Democrats occupy perhaps the most of our thoughts today. Most of them are Communists. They have been locked up in prison for many, many years. Their fate has been very hard. Many of the old timers gave up, but these young people were tough and did not give up. Most of them were arrested at ages from twenty to thirty years old. They have many years in prison behind them. They were sentenced to long prison terms, some of them for life. They have friends that were "lucky" and received "small" sentences, five to eight years. They have managed to survive their terms in prison. For many individuals the road leads directly to new imprisonment -- to the concentration camp!

That is another side of German Justice.

These people suffered unbelievably, especially after 1933 when terrorism raged at its worst, week after week in iron chains, kicked, slugged, and thrown down stairways. Many committed suicide, others were executed. Some just gave up and lost all hope. For others, every lashing strengthened their faith. They learned one thing, to hate with a vengeance. Only those with a strong will to live survived. They went from concentration camps to prisons. Regulated prison life for them was recreation! Prison life gave them peace of mind. Whenever the subject of concentration camps came up their faces showed pain. It was like a frightened child.

Some evil minded prisoners enjoyed to see these people suffer and came up with a devilish plan of spreading rumors that all the German political prisoners would be transferred back to Nacht and Nebel - camps of total destruction....

For one of our best friends - Walther - it became too much of a strain. One day he hanged himself in the cell, thirty years old, one year in concentration camp, eight years in prison, perhaps victory would come soon...

How do you look after seven, eight, nine years in prison? Old, sad, bent over. That is the way I had pictured these Germans in my mind. Instead I met ramrod, smiling youngsters. Skinny they are, but not knocked out! They are not carrying any feelings of guilt!

During their long stay in prison they have used as much of their time as possible to do sensible reading. Some of them have trained their minds to perform the most unbelievable things. Many asked for Norwegian cell partners and learned the Norwegian language in no time at all. When they had time on their hands, they played chess without chessmen, without a board!

After a long association with them it becomes evident that they have not escaped without signs of distress. They lack proper balance of mind, and often times are without ability to do rational thinking. Thirst for revenge has shut their minds to constructive reasoning. The long life in prison has taken away their perspectives. Someday perhaps they will recover, when life again will be normal. It is doubtful, however, that any of them will play a part in politics. Very few have that in mind. These men are no longer soldiers of the revolution. In spite of their young age, they are already war veterans. They dared to fight when most were cowards. They held the torch burning in the dark. Their contribution in the future would perhaps be to light the torch for a new generation.

I hope we shall never forget that in the shadow of the Nazi high stepping boot army was a little army in wooden clogs!!

JØRGEN LYSHOLM AND PETER MØLLER

The life in our cell has changed since we started to work outside the walls of the cells. We received the welcome news that after "our great hunger" the Seamen's pastor has received permission to bring in a bottle of cod-liver oil to every Norwegian prisoner. There is a wonderful logo for cod-liver oil, naturally invented by Americans: "SUNSHINE IN BOTTLES"! The cod-liver oil, anyway, gave us a little warmth and strength.

Kjell has been delegated the job rationing out the cod-liver oil. For a person starved for fat it is as dangerous a job as for an alcoholic being put in charge of tapping wine!

He lies on his bunk vomiting after a day's work. Fortunately, the "hangover" lasts only so long. The next day he starts all over again!

We experiment to find out in which form the cod-liver oil will taste the best! "Slice of bread saturated with cod-liver oil" wins the gourmet prize! Alas, after breakfast comes the urgent temptation upon us. The bottle comes out again, we allow ourselves only one more drop, just a little one! Later in the evening a few more drops. The bottle lasts only a little while. The temptation is overwhelming and the flesh is weak... It was good as long as it lasted. Peter Møller (maker of cod-liver oil) has become the prison's Jørgen Lysholm. (Producer of Brandy!)

THE LETTER

Your life is in danger if you let the lonesomeness take over. You must occupy your mind with the everyday problems. They are not large, they are small. It is a question of to die as a human being or live as a prisoner. To survive we have to relax and remove, as far as possible, all that nags the mind.

Then one day the letter comes from home. For a few days the world has changed completely. Just what is needed to save us from going to seed!

It does not come very often. After a wait of six months, we get one every six weeks. When the time approaches the body starts to tingle and we begin to count the days. It is like a "race of patience"! If the letter arrives a few days early we know we must wait another six weeks before we get it. It is taken for granted that all letters make the rounds. Thus the joy is tripled! A certain atmosphere comes over the cell the day the letters arrive. Not a word is spoken, only the mind is working.

We never hear a word of complaint from those that are alone through months and years at home. Always the wonderful optimism, don't give up, we will soon meet again!

We feel blue for a day...or maybe two...

THREE CATS IN THE SUN

(Expression from story by Author, Wilhelm Krag)

On a bench in the yard for "airing" sits three old men, our eldest. They are allowed to sit on the bench while we have to race around in a circle. There is something charming about these three old-timers sitting in the warm sun and smiling. They are a true copy of the "Tre Katter I Sola" by Wilhelm Krag! (Three Cats in the Sunshine!). They remind us about the older people sitting in the parks and enjoying the sunshine.

The fellow in the middle is the oldest. Today he was permitted to put a small flower in his lapel. It is his birthday - eighty-six years old!

He is a criminal, the old boy. He was sentenced because he was listening to an enemy radio! He

was marched through the prison gate as a first time criminal after he had lived eighty-five years. His friend is only seventy-two, also a radio listener. There was no evidence that he had listened to music from Moskva, he got away with two years! The third man does not utter a word and seems to stare out in space. He is blind. The old man was careless enough to make a few critical remarks about the state government.

They sit on the bench, as a living protest of a system that has defiled all moral limits. The old boys are smiling ironically, thank God we are not young in this world!

PROMOTED!

I begin to climb the promotional ladder, from assistant foreman to group foreman in "sentralen". I feel like a new confirmant in the new stiff uniform, my sign of dignity. I received a nice little portfolio with writing material, scissors, and a knife! For others it is not permitted to have anything sharper than a wood knife. It gives me a good feeling! All that is needed now is a little courage and all is ready for suicide!

Outside the walls one always has the impression that a supervisor does less work and receives more money. This is true here! In a solemn conference with the inspector it was explained to me that my pay would be increased from ten to twenty pfenning per day. For the first time the income is greater than the outlay! The money is not paid out, however, until the full sentence has been served but the earnings are credited to my prison account. It amounts to a little as times go by! I am sentenced to 4,320 days, in all this is 86,400 pfenning - 864 Marks. I shall put this in my billfold with a clear conscience on a day in October 1953.

In return I have accepted a heavy responsibility on my weak shoulders. I am supposed to maintain order and discipline. I shall see to it that the others are meeting the work quota. I am responsible for training the newcomers and prisoners not familiar with the noble art of gluing paper bags! Reports have to be written: daily reports, weekly reports, monthly reports. The Germans are insane to get reports. Numerous forms have to be made out. It would be an unbelievable coincidence if the numbers and totals were correct! This does not mean a thing, nobody pays any attention to what is reported! What counts is that "the papermill" is running and the stack of forms is of considerable importance.

A few times a day I have to yell "aufhören"! and "antreten"! as loud as I can, and before long be equally obnoxious and impossible to understand as a Prussian noncom officer!

As a result of this conscientious and well trained foreman, the job of an errand boy and spreading of news is smoother than ever! Al Capone would be green with envy if he could see "my boys": a crew of from twenty to thirty prisoners, only Germans. They are serving long terms, professional criminals and many are serving life terms. All prisoners with "light terms", like the ones with only up to eight years in prison, are working on the outside of the walls, except for old people and the handicapped.