

given a thorough medical examination for the purpose of evaluating their physical capability. They were then divided into three categories according to their physical strength and “sold” to various enterprises.

I had already gotten to know my fellow inmates. They were mostly from western Ukraine, ultra-nationalist, anti-Russian and anti-Soviet. They were proponents of a free and independent Ukraine and critical of the political position of Ukrainian Russians. The Special Council in Moscow had sentenced them to twenty-five years of forced labor and they were subjected to a special regime. I was surprised at being put together with them. Perhaps I too was condemned to forced labor, contrary to what I had been told in Yerevan.

The situation in that transit camp was horrible in every respect. Our hair and beard grew like bushes. It was an annoying feeling but there was nothing to shave with. Anything sharp that could be used to commit suicide or to harm others was confiscated. Yet situations bring about the ingenuity that produces the necessary means, no matter how crude or primitive. An inmate came up with an “invention.” With cold water and a piece of broken glass he had found, he shaved the prisoners and received fifty grams of bread from each one. Mind you, there was more blood than hair shedding from their faces.

It was my turn. All blood. It took me a long time to stop the bleeding.⁷

⁷ Here my father's memoir ended, but he had not yet reached his final destination. Shortly after his death, I delved into the mass of his handwritten papers in an effort to find the continuation of his journey, with the intention of publishing his memoir someday. In the next chapter, I will guide the reader through that journey.