

CHAPTER VII

The 'Liquidation' of the Kulaks as a Class

The 'inter-regional distribution of labour'—The 'liquidation' proclaimed—The Decree of February 1st, 1930—Solovetsky and other penal camps—The Penal Code of April, 1930—Its 'class' character—The allotted task and dependent ration—Penal camps chiefly lumbering—The Solovetsky Decree of October 1st, 1929—Statements of an official, a forest engineer, and prisoners, as to conditions in penal camps—Reported heavy mortality—Evidence of prisoners working on timber exports—Of large increase of forced labour—Mr. Wales describes the deported *kulaks*.

THE Instruction of June 1929 no doubt swept many *kulaki* into its net, and it seems indisputable that it contributed substantially to increases of timber exports from 1928-9 onwards.¹ But greater efforts still were required in 1929-30. Moreover, the lumber areas which were mainly to be tapped were at the far extremities of Soviet territory—at Archangel in the extreme north, in 'the Lower Volga region,' the Urals, and the Far East.² In the northern area, in particular, population was scanty. No great exploitation of timber could take place there without importing large numbers of people.³ Imported labour had never been easily secured for

¹ For these increases, see pp. 75-76.

² Grinko, p. 114.

³ This is stated by persons having experience of Russia's timber industry before the Revolution. See also p. 74.

heavy work such as timber-felling in so severe a climate and so uncolonised an area. Forced labour was necessary, therefore, and on a permanent basis, inasmuch as houses would have to be built, and railways and sawmills developed, before any really big export of timber could take place.¹

Wholesale deportation rather than sentencing was therefore needed—in Soviet phrase, an 'inter-regional distribution of labour'²—and *kulaki*, 'the capitalist top of the village,'³ were obviously the people to despatch. Besides, if dispossessed, their lands, cattle, and machinery would be valuable assets to the *kolkhozy* and would make up for the poor contributions brought in by other peasants.

These conditions led to the adoption of a sweeping and merciless policy, though with some hesitation.⁴ On November 17th the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party decided that the *kulaks* must be liquidated as a class,⁵ and the all-powerful Secretary openly proclaimed this policy a month later. Immediate action was taken, without waiting for official endorsement.⁶ But this came in due course. On February 1st a Joint Decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of

¹ Statement to Mr. Henry Wales, correspondent of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, by Comrade Tsetlin, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Archangel Soviet (*Chicago Daily Tribune* (Paris Edition), April 2nd, 1931).

² Grinko, p. 311. Elsewhere he says that the Plan required 'a radical revision of the entire programme of colonisation with a view to . . . transplanting entire groups of people' (p. 286).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁴ Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomsy, opposed the policy, but shortly recanted. Larin objected in December (Tiltman, *Terror in Europe*, 1931, p. 50).

⁵ Baikaloff, *Soviet Agricultural Legislation*, *Slavonic Review*, June 1931.

⁶ Hoover, p. 103.

People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. gave formal expression to the terrible policy.¹

The right of the individual peasant to rent land and employ hired labour in a district where collective farming was being carried on was peremptorily withdrawn by this Decree, though exceptions might be made in respect of the 'middle' peasants by the Executive Committee of the *rayon*.²

Provincial Executive Committees in Russia proper and the Governments of the autonomous Republics were further authorised to 'apply all the necessary means of fighting the *kulaki* to the complete confiscation of their property and their deportation from the territory of the separate *rayons* and provinces in which they live.' The confiscated property, other than that part which was owing to the State or co-operative organisations, was to be handed over to the 'indivisible funds' of the *kolkhozy* as a contribution made on behalf of the poor peasants and hired labourers who had entered them.

Kulaks, therefore, under this decree were 'deported' wholesale wherever their labour was needed, but chiefly it is believed to the timber areas. In some cases entire families were despatched, in others, families were broken up. Some were left destitute in their villages. None was allowed to keep more than the clothing on his back. The property handed over to the collective farms was valued at over 400 million roubles.³

¹ *Pravda*, February 2nd, 1931.

² A *rayon* is the smallest type of Russian administrative area. It includes some 25,000 or 30,000 people.

³ Stalin, *Report to the Communist Party's Congress*, June 1930, p. 65.

The total number thus mercilessly expropriated and uprooted is said to have amounted to over five millions,¹ including some *serednyaki* who were hard to distinguish from the poorer *kulaks*.

A Report of the Commissar of Labour mentioned later admits that not less than four or five million people had been deported to compulsory labour 'in the camps' in the last two years.²

Such an open declaration of war was bound to be fiercely resisted, and a stronger weapon than the Instruction of June 1st, 1929, was needed for those who gave trouble, or against whom there were any bad marks, such as priests or those who had served the Trarist régime. Such a weapon was not far to seek. For some years a convict camp had existed on the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea, in which prisoners were employed on timber, fishing and road-making. Officers taken from the White armies in the Civil War had been sent there in large numbers, also many bishops and priests. From 1923 onwards it became the chief place of internment for political prisoners, and as such enjoyed an unenviable reputation.³

In view of the declaration of war against the *kulaks* it is not surprising to find that camps of this type

¹ Dr. Hoover says that 'at least five million *kulaks* were expected to be involved' in the 'liquidation,' but that on account of the difficulty of distinguishing between *kulaki* and *serednyaki*, the number was actually much larger' (p. 103). Larin said there were 5 million *kulaks* (Tiltman, p. 50).

² Letter from Moscow in the Russian Moderate Socialist Newspaper *Dni* (Paris), May 24th, 1931.

³ A terrible account of the conditions on Solovetsky Island was given by a political exile in a letter to the Berlin *Socialistichresky Vestnik*, March 8th, 1924. Mr. Boris Cederholm, who was a prisoner there in 1925, confirms this in detail. (*In the Clutches of the Tcheka*, 1929.)

began to increase in number. In September 1929 there are said to have been six timber convict camps in existence. By the spring of 1931 they numbered nineteen.¹

A Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R., dated April 7th, 1930,² laying down rules for their establishment, clearly seems to have foreshadowed development of these camps. They were only to receive persons who had been either sentenced by a court to deprivation of liberty for not less than three years, or who had been sent by special decision of the 'O.G.P.U.', or political police. They were to be under the general control of the O.G.P.U., but considerable powers were given to camp commandants, including the right to inflict disciplinary punishment.

Like correctional labour camps the penal camps were to employ the labour of the prisoners 'in the most rational way on economic enterprises run on self-supporting lines out of the camps' own resources.'

Prisoners were also to be divided on the now familiar class basis. Those of the class of 'toilers' (workmen, peasants, and employees), who had formerly had the right to vote, and who had been sentenced for the first time, for not more than five years, and not for a political offence, were 'privileged.' In addition to enjoying the privileges

¹ *The Russian Conscripts* (articles reprinted from *The Times*, May 18th-20th, 1931) states that 142 convict farms were in existence in 1928, and that there are now 26 'manufacturing convict colonies.' These may be colonies under the Correctional Labour Code. See p. 32.

² Concerning Penal Labour Camps. Cmd. 3775, pp. 120 *et seq.*

accorded to those of the 'modified' régime (see below), they might go outside the limits of the camps and be employed in 'administrative-domestic duties, both in the management of the camp, and in the direction of productive work.'

To a second or 'modified' category belonged prisoners 'of the same class as the above, but sentenced for more than five years.' They were to be regularly employed in 'institutions, enterprises and industries'; were to 'live in messes attached to the enterprises'; and were to be entitled to leave of absence, and to 'be told off to work according to their labour cards.' They might receive 'rewards.'

The third or 'primary' category consisted of 'non-working class elements, and persons sentenced for counter-revolutionary offences.' They were to be employed on 'general labour'; were to live within the confines of the camp, in 'special quarters'; were not to 'have the right to go out of these quarters freely'; and were 'to be told off for work according to a general list.' They might not be employed in administrative-domestic duties.

The primary régime was to be applied to all prisoners on arrival, but the 'privileged' class might pass out of it after six months, the 'modified' class after a year. The third category must spend not less than two years in it.

A note allowed the camp commandant to change the conditions of the primary régime 'in accordance with the character of the work, provided that the

changes do not cause the régime to approximate to the modified or the privileged régime.'

All prisoners on arrival were to be medically inspected. Partly on the results of this inspection, partly according to category, and partly according to the conditions of the régime and the nature of their calling, work was to be allotted as follows: '(a) General labour; (b) work in institutions, enterprises, industries, lumber work, etc.; (c) work in connection with administrative-domestic direction of the camp.'

Article 19 provided that 'general' labour should be done compulsorily under supervision, without the right to any freedom of movement that is not involved in the condition of the work.

Article 21 laid down that 'all prisoners, no matter to what category or régime they belong, shall enjoy rations according to the kind of work they are doing.' The rations were to be divided into four categories: (1) basic; (2) working; (3) supplemented; (4) penal.

A note adds that the basic standard of ration shall be defined by the O.G.P.U., but shall not in any case fall below the minimum of calory-producing substances.

Article 22 decreed that prisoners should be provided with clothing, foot-wear, linen and bedding, as need arose.

Article 23 provided for encouragement to prisoners who showed 'zeal in their work and signs of improvement by good conduct.' They might be publicly thanked or rewarded, or might be given 'an im-

provement in lodging and (other) living conditions, such as the right to receive personal visits, take walks freely, receive and send letters out of turn and in addition to the basic standard, etc. But such rewards were only for the 'privileged' or 'modified.'

Article 27 provided that the working day should not exceed eight hours 'as a general rule.' Exceptions might only be made 'in accordance with the seasonal nature of work in special circumstances, by permission of the People's Commissariat of Labour of the U.S.S.R.'

Article 28 required standards of pay and protection of labour to be arranged by the O.G.P.U. in agreement with the People's Commissariat of Labour.

In each camp there was to be a sanitary section to organise medical and sanitary work. In case of sickness prisoners were to enjoy the attention of the medical staff of the camp. Prisoners requiring treatment in bed were to be placed in camp hospitals, and 'in extreme cases, where the camp has no hospital, in general hospitals.'

This Code also, like the Correctional Labour Code, provided for 'cultural educational work,' intended not only for the 'liquidation' of illiteracy, but for the inculcation of political doctrine, and for a 'criminological investigation relating to the prisoners.'

As to discipline, the 'right to carry arms' was given to the guards and the personnel of the administration. They were empowered to use them

(a) in defence of a protected post or person; (b) in self-defence; (c) against prisoners effecting their escape; (d) in the case of disorder or violence on the part of prisoners against the camp administration.

Finally, Article 44 provided that persons guilty of any infringement of the régime, or of the rules of internal order, should be liable to various measures graded in severity from a reprimand to 'punitive labour for a period not exceeding six months,' or, more ominous still, 'transfer to a punitive section for a period not exceeding one year.' It is said that a considerable number of prisoners have been transferred under this section, and that few so transferred have ever returned.¹

From a former O.G.P.U. official who escaped to Finland in June 1930,² we learn that 734,000 prisoners were employed in camps under the O.G.P.U. in the autumn of 1929, and that they were engaged in eight different kinds of labour. These included: (1) lumber work; (2) log-floating in the rivers; (3) the building of strategical roads near the Finnish frontier, and the construction of railways in various areas from Karelia to Turkestan; (4) draining and ditching; (5) loading and discharging work; (6) building enterprises (including the extension of the northern ports and the construction of a dry dock at Kem); (7) fishing,

¹ Mr. Cederholm (p. 305), describes a section of this kind on Solovetsky.

² The statements of this man and of escaped prisoners, quoted here, were sworn before public officials in Helsingfors and elsewhere. The author has seen copies of all these, signed and witnessed. Each copy bears the original signature of two witnesses who vouch that the document is a correct translation. The statements are dated from February 1930 to April 1931.

and (8) work in sawmills 'carried out by workers sold by the SLON¹ to Karelljes and Sevesoljes.' 'For this labour SLON receives so-called organisation money.'

That the O.G.P.U. sells prisoners who are technical experts to trusts and factories is confirmed from other sources. The demand for experts is so keen that these sales are said to bring in a considerable revenue,² as the O.G.P.U. retains most of the pay earned by the prisoners in question.

The workers loading and discharging, he says, are found at nearly all stations on the Murman Railway and on the railway station in Archangel Government, in the ports on the Murman Coast, and in the towns of Archangel and Kem. 'This category,' he states, 'are handling timber for export purposes.'

Of these various types of industry, 'timber,' he tells us, 'is the chief thing. Neither human beings nor horses need be spared as long as the Lumbering Plan is carried out.' He adds that the programme is continually being added to by 25 per cent. through 'Socialist competitions' arranged between the guards of the various camps.³ We shall find a similar device extensively used in factories and other industries.

How huge an increase in output might be demanded is shown by an Order issued on October

¹ Abbreviated name for the Northern Concentration Camps under the O.G.P.U. Karelljes and Sevesoljes are State trusts.

² *Dni*, Nos. 97 and 99, 1930, quoting a letter from a former officer of the Red Army; and information from a Swiss engineer, returned from Russia, December 1930. A mechanician ex-prisoner mentions several such 'sales.'

³ These are enjoined in the Decree given in the Appendix.

П Р И К А З

ПО Управлению Соловецких Лагерьей ОН ОГПУ

г. Комь.

1 октября 1929 г.

№ 1.

СОДЕРЖАНИЕ:

С разъяснением значения и важности предстоящей лесозаготовительной кампании ввиду увеличения производственной программы УСЛОИ в 1929/30 операционном году и объявлением мер поощрения и заключения работников, занятых на лесозаготовках.

Директива Партии и Правительства — догнать и перегнать капиталистические государства в отношении техники — требует максимальных темпов индустриализации всего народного хозяйства СССР.

Итоги 1928/29 хозяйственного года, первого года пятилетки, превзошли по ряду отраслей все плановые предположения, доказав всем работникам намеченных темпов индустриализации реальность плана и возможность двигаться к социализму еще большими темпами.

В контрольных цифрах пятилетки на 1929/30 год особое внимание отводится вопросам экспорта и, в первую очередь, экспорта лесоматериалов, являющихся одной из главных статей дохода нашего социалистического бюджета.

Управление Соловецких Лагерьей, занимавшее не последнее место в общем плане лесозаготовок СССР, в 1929/30 году увеличило свою лесозаготовительную программу по сравнению с прошлым годом более чем на 300%.

Выполнение этого ответственного задания будет зависеть в большей мере от осознания каждым вольнонаемным сотрудником и заключенным своего долга и обязанностей. Поэтому все вольнонаемные сотрудники и заключенные должны в работах и должностях УСЛОИ — сил и средств должны мобилизовать всю свою энергию, знание, распорядительность, твердость в решениях и быстроту исполнения для успешного проведения возложенного на УСЛОИ задания.

Отмечая роль руководящего состава и рабочих, непосредственно связанных с выполнением предстоящей производственной программы лесозаготовок в 1929/30 году, объявляется для всеобщего сведения нижеследующее:

1. К заключенным, выполняющим возложенные на них задания — нормы в связи с увеличенной программой лесозаготовок будет применено в 1929/30 году, помимо сокращения срока заключения, и досрочное освобождение, а также и предоставление, по освобождении, работ по вольному найму.

2. Путем введения прогрессивного премирования на лесозаготовках и лесозаводах, всем, ревностно относящимся к работе на таковых, дана возможность получать увеличенное премиальное вознаграждение.

Указанные поощрения полностью будут применены и к руководящему составу на местах (надзорсостав, рукабы, десятники и т. п.), от инициативы, распорядительности и организационных способностей которых будет зависеть успех работы.

Отмечая положительные результаты проводимых по УСЛОИ трудовых соревнований, местные партийные и общественные организации призываются распространить инициативу соревнований и на лесоразработки, что еще более обеспечит надлежащий темп работ и гарантирует 100% выполнение взятых на себя обязательств.

ВПО, совместно с ЭКО, развернуть самую широкую разъяснительную работу на местах о роли УСЛОИ в лесозаготовках, в увязке с контрольными цифрами пятилетки на 1929/30 год.

Приказ прочесть во всех Отделах Управления, Отделениях, командировках, пунктах и вывесить на видных местах.

Член Коллегии ОГПУ и

Начальник Специального Отдела при ОГПУ Г. Бокий.

Начальник Управления Ногтев.

Order to the Administrative Bodies of the Solovetsky Camps, ordering an increase of over 300 per cent in the Timber production for 1929-1930.
Dated October 1st, 1929. (For translation see Appendix.)

1st, 1929, to 'Administrative bodies of the Solovetsky camps,' in which it was announced that timber production in these camps in 1929-30 must be 300 per cent. more than that of the previous year, and 'paid collaborators' and prisoners were ordered to 'mobilise all their energies' in order to achieve this.¹ In the Karelian forests the felling programme for the same year was doubled on account of the arrival of over 9,000 prisoners.²

Some 150 prisoners in all are said to have escaped over the Finnish frontier from the penal timber camps of North Russia. All of sufficient education to give intelligible accounts have made sworn depositions before Finnish officials. Others have made similar statements in this country.³ They present a terrible picture of overwork, bad feeding, insufficient clothing, crowded and insanitary accommodation, and deaths from exhaustion, disease and cold. A daily task is set the prisoners which is far beyond the power of any but an expert worker's capacity. Failure to fulfil it brings reduction of an already scanty food ration and may mean other brutal penalties. No pay is given at Archangel; in Karelia, from one to forty kopeks a day.

The statements made in Finland are fully corroborated by the six Russian prisoners who were examined in England by Sir Alan Pim and Mr. Bateson, and the statements are accepted by them

¹ A photograph of this Order appears opposite.

² Sworn statement by Nikolai Lukin, formerly forest engineer under the Board of Forests of Red Karelia, made at Helsingfors, Sept. 29th, 1930. He says that none were employed in Karelia on timber before.

³ Three statements of this kind were sent by Sir Edward Hilton Young, M.P., to the Prime Minister in December, 1930.

as 'in the main true.'¹ The three English seamen whose evidence appears in the *Report* also speak of the prisoners working in twelve-hour shifts to load their ships with timber. Two give vivid pictures of the underfed appearance of the men.²

The evidence of the officials already quoted is as emphatic as those of ex-prisoners in regard to the excessive tasks imposed. The forest engineer in March 1931 gave figures showing that in Karelia the tasks set required work in the forests not only for six hours of winter daylight, but for four hours of darkness as well.³ The O.G.P.U. official confirms the work in the darkness, adding, as several of the ex-prisoners do, that men as a rule had to walk five kilometres to their toil. When it is remembered that many of the prisoners were elderly men, or men totally unaccustomed to heavy work such as timber-felling, the inhumanity of the 'production programme' set them becomes apparent.

The O.G.P.U. official is as eloquent as the prisoners as to the inadequacy and unpalatable nature of the food. The main part of the ration, he tells us, consists of 1 kilo⁴ of 'doughy black bread.'

¹ *Report on Russian Timber Camps* for the Anti-Slavery Society, June 1931.

² It is rather surprising to find the authors of the *Report* doubtful whether any tasks were fixed. As we have seen, the Labour Code of 1922 required an individual standard of output to be laid down, and pay to be reduced if the task were not fulfilled. Later pages will show how vital a factor the allotted task has become in the execution of the Five Years' Plan, and how the rations of the ordinary worker may depend in quality and quantity on its fulfilment (p. 166). If tasks be fixed for the ordinary trade unionist worker they would surely be fixed for prisoners. But the *Report* admits that having regard to the type to which a proportion of the prisoners belonged, and the diet they received, the hours of labour were excessive (p. 119).

³ The snow throws up a certain degree of light.

⁴ i.e. 2·2046 lbs. avoirdupois.

If a worker fails to complete his task, his ration is at once reduced to 300 grammes¹ per day, which is not again increased until he has made good the deficit. The cooked food is positively awful. It consists chiefly of soup, generally made of rotten fish. Meat, poor horse-flesh, is given only twice a week.² Owing to the total lack of fats nearly all the prisoners acquire an eye trouble, hemeralopia, or night-blindness. It, therefore, frequently happens that prisoners suffering from night-blindness have been shot down by the Chekists, because they were unable to see in the dark, and therefore by mistake stepped off the path.'

He also tells us that on May 1st, 1930, 14,875 prisoners under the O.G.P.U. were 'without clothes'—they had nothing more than 'ragged, dirty underclothing.'³ The O.G.P.U.'s method of dealing with this situation was to order that prisoners returning at the end of their day's work should hand over clothes to fellow prisoners, who would go out on night-shift. A man thus deprived of his clothing was lucky if he had 'some rags in his bed so as to keep himself a bit warm and be able to rest.'⁴

¹ i.e. about 10 ozs. 1,000 grammes = 1 kilo. Two of the ex-prisoners examined for the *Report* gave this figure respectively as 700 grammes and 400-800 grammes. Another prisoner states that the basic ration of bread was 300 grammes per worker; the ration for those not doing heavy labour was 400 grammes; the ration for fishing, forestry and farm-work was 600 grammes, with 200 extra for those who fulfilled their task. This gives a maximum of 800 grammes. Quantities no doubt varied with supplies.

² No prisoner mentions meat—only two, occasional horse-soup. But see p. 81.

³ The chief officer examined in England said that the men in two camps he saw, each of 600 men, wore the same clothes in winter as in summer (*Report on Russian Timber Camps*, p. 103).

⁴ This confirms ex-prisoners' statements of lack of blankets and bedding. Beds were simply wooden benches or shelves.

An ex-prisoner states that only camp officials are provided with leather footwear. Prisoners working in deep snow may be shod only in 'bast shoes.'¹ There are, in consequence, he says, many frost-bitten feet in winter, and at other times feet are permanently wet.

As to housing, the O.G.P.U. official says that at the time of his escape 'the prisoners were distributed over 873 groups of barracks, having a total space of 470,162 cubic metres, equal to a breathing space of 0.71 cubic metres for each prisoner.

Ex-prisoners confirm the overcrowding, and say that the barracks² are hurriedly built of thin and badly jointed logs, through the chinks of which the wind penetrates, while melting snow drips through the wood and turf roof on to the earthen floor. Sanitary and washing accommodation hardly exist; vermin abound, and stoves provided in winter give insufficient warmth. Caucasians and others from the south frequently therefore succumb to the cold.

Again, the official states that for 734,000 Slon prisoners there were only six hospitals with altogether 580 beds. Besides the hospitals there was a medical assistant for every group of barracks, but 'the assistants as a rule do not understand anything about medicine.' The supply of medicines was totally inadequate. For 700 or 800 prisoners 100 grammes of iodine and 50 headache powders were allowed, 'and the same quantity for gastric troubles. Old ragged, unwashed shirts, full of vermin, are used for bandages.'

¹ i.e. shoes made of a fibre derived from the bark of lime trees.

² On Solovetsky prisoners sleep in the cathedral of an old monastery

THE 'LIQUIDATION' OF THE KULAK

These statements fully explain the 'insufficient medical supervision' and the 'almost entire absence of medical stores and equipment, noted in the *Report on Russian Timber Camps*.¹

One of the ex-prisoners who escaped to Finland tells us that 'the whole Russian intelligentsia and also a great many foreign subjects are on Solovetsky Island.' Another refugee from the same camp states that whereas there were dozens of priests when he was first admitted to the camp, there were only two left when he escaped. Being unused to heavy manual work they were the first to succumb. Germans, also, and Ukrainians, tried severely by the climate, had died in numbers. But even men accustomed to heavy outdoor work were taxed beyond endurance. One statement describes how 'a big peasant during the work in the forest suddenly made the sign of the cross and threw himself against a fir-tree, cracking his head to death.'

Ex-prisoners state that only high fever, incapacity to walk, serious wounds, or infectious disease excuse a man from his work, and more than one account is given of the pitiful condition in which disabled prisoners are sent to special camps, as a rule, to die. Many in desperation had committed suicide. The O.G.P.U. official states that 72,000 prisoners perished between the autumn of 1929 and May 1st, 1930. 'They had died either during the typhoid epidemic, raging in those months, or from exhaustion or scurvy, or had been shot down by mentally deranged Chekists on the charge of attempting to

¹ P. 120.

escape, or clubbed to death with rifle-butts by guards trying to force them to finish their day's work.¹

A prisoner who saw a statement of the health conditions in his camp says that in his detachment between February 17th and August 21st, 1930, there were 600 deaths out of a total number of prisoners varying from 1,200 to 1,600. One of the prisoners examined in England said that of twenty-five men admitted to camp with him, sixteen had died.²

But it is to be feared that all these estimates are conservative. The recent Report of the Commissar of Labour, above referred to, states that the average mortality 'in the camps' had fluctuated between 60 and 70 per cent. in the last two years. In other words, out of four or five millions sent to the camps some three millions had perished. These terrible figures no doubt include persons sentenced under the Correctional Labour Code, and probably also deported *kulaks*, but the penal camps must have made the heaviest contribution in proportion to their numbers.

It is said that following on this Report, orders were sent to the O.G.P.U. that mortality among prisoners doing compulsory labour must not exceed a fixed rate. The expenditure of human life was evidently recognised as too costly for the Plan.³

¹ Witnesses examined by Sir Alan Pim and Mr. Bateson also spoke of this 'clubbing.' The O.G.P.U. official and several of the ex-prisoners state that the guards are often promoted criminals. The Penal Code, as we have seen, allowed for non-political prisoners performing administrative duties. An ex-prisoner states that beating or clubbing by the guards was so frequent that it did not count as a punishment. Other punishments are described.

² Report, p. 83.

³ *Dni*, May 24th, 1931. This is no doubt why the timber industry is to be mechanised, as announced by Stalin on June 23rd, 1931.

Finally, instances are admitted in which men have been retained in Solovetsky camp beyond the expiry of their sentences.¹

There will be few readers of the foregoing pages who will be ready to accept Premier Molotov's denial that 'prison labour of any kind is used in the timber trade,'² even if the verb is to be interpreted literally. His further statement that forced labour has 'nothing to do with the timber trade, or any other commodities produced for export,' is equally disproved by the *Report on Russian Timber Camps*, which shows that prisoners were employed on lumbering exports in the Dwina area in the autumn of 1930, and on loading ships with timber in the White Sea from 1926 to 1930.³

The *Report* further points out that the Northern forest areas work in the main for export, as their

¹ Statement by Mr. Tsetlin to Mr. Wales, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Paris edition, April 22nd, 1931. Mr. Cederholm also mentions cases.

² According to Mr. Wales, by March 1931, owing apparently to the feelings excited abroad by the statements of escaped prisoners, prisoners who had been brought from Solovetsky to Archangel in 1930 to load ships had been sent back. He accordingly telegraphed to the *New York Times* that 'convict labour was no longer employed by the State timber trust for export production.' This message was altered by the Soviet censor to read 'convict labour is not employed, etc.,' *New York Times*, June 15th, 1931. The *New York Times* had evidently not been seen by the compiler of the Timber Trade Federation's pamphlet, *Russian Timber*, as only the censored message appears in it. This is also the version given in the *Bank of Russia's Trade Review* for April, 1931, as quoted in the *Report on the Camps*, p. 122.

Many prisoners now may be engaged on making the Canal from the White Sea to the Baltic, as mentioned by Premier Molotov on March 8th. Mr. Chamberlin in April 1931 saw several heavily guarded trains on the railway south of Kem, said to be taking men to this work. A delegation from the Timber Federation in June 1931 found no prisoners loading timber at White Sea ports, but they might be doing so at Murmansk on the Arctic Ocean. Several prisoners quoted here worked north of Kem on timber which was exported from Murmansk. See p. 74.

³ See *ante*, p. 68. Mr. Moyses-Bartlett (*The Times*, Jan. 6th, 1931) also cites an eye-witness of prisoners loading in 1928.

timber is floated down to the White Sea.¹ It also shows that a large number of men had been sent from Solovetsky camp in 1930 to deepen Leningrad harbour.²

The articles reprinted recently from *The Times* tell us that in April 1930 compulsory labour service was introduced in Archangel and the whole Northern district, where timber was being prepared for export,³ and that in September 1930, just after the publication of two successive decrees conscripting labour for floating timber, orders were issued to 'go to the farthest limits' in measures to stimulate the transport of timber to the ports for this purpose.⁴

Further, an Ingrian refugee, who in January 1930 entered the service of an English timber-importing firm with an office in Leningrad, has stated on oath in Finland that, between January and May 1930, he was in Maijguba⁵ in Karelia, taking over timber for his company, and that about 1,200 prisoners, both men and women, and about 400 East Karelians, were working the logs he received. The timber was shipped to England from Murmansk. Later in the year, when acting as a goods-receiver in Leningrad harbour, sawn timber, poles, and pulpwood, were being loaded into foreign vessels by labour compulsorily enlisted by 'Sev-Sap-Pogrus'⁶ for

¹ P. 54.

² P. 52.

³ This no doubt was the system described on p. 91 by which villagers undertook 'self-imposed tasks' in timber-felling. It was in operation in the Northern area in the winter of 1930-1 (see p. 158); and Mr. Chamberlin found it in Karelia at the end of the season (*Christian Science Monitor*, May 13th, 1931).

⁴ *The Russian Conscripts*, p. 2.

⁵ Mr. Chamberlin found a large prisoners' camp there this year.

⁶ i.e. A North-Western Loading Trust.

three months. Some men tried to escape, and when caught were punished.

The findings of the *Report* are thus corroborated.

What proportion of the labour employed on timber is forced is obviously impossible to determine exactly. But that timber-felling was unpopular even when it involved no change of residence is shown by a Decree of February 13th, 1930, requiring villages to be pressed into undertaking 'self-imposed tasks of timber preparation and haulage,'¹ and the forest engineer already quoted states that one reason why Russia is 'obliged' to employ compulsory labour is because free labourers are not willing to work in what he describes as 'uncultivated wildernesses,' i.e. new timber-felling areas. This statement appears to refer to the resident population of Karelia, the province lying to the West of the White Sea. It is confirmed by the conscription of 30,000 Karelians for lumbering early in 1931.²

Yet while exports of timber in 1926-7 were only 2.1 million tons, and in 1927-8, 2.5 million tons, in 1928-9, the year in which 'compulsory labour without detention' was first sanctioned for forestry, they jumped to 4.77 million tons. In 1929-30, the year in which over five million *kulaks* were deported, and the Code for penal camps was published, they still further increased to 7.3 million tons.³ If the people of Karelia, inured to the climate and isola-

¹ Decree of the Central Executive Committee of the R.S.F.S.R. and the Council of the People's Commissars of the R.S.F.S.R., dated February 13th, 1930. See p. 91. *The Russian Conscripts* quotes *Izvestia* as admitting that lumbering was very unpopular.

² See p. 157.

³ Statistics of Soviet Customs.

tion of the northern area, were unwilling to move to the 'wildernesses' of their own Province, is it conceivable that this enormous expansion, largely, as we know, carried out in the severe climate of the North, was mainly due to the recruitment of free labour from villages hundreds of miles away to the south?

A further point is that, while in 1926-7 exports of round and unmilled timber were only 0.8 million tons, as against 1.3 millions of sawn timber, in 1928-9 they were 2.4 as compared with 2.33 millions. In 1929-30 they were no less than 4.1, the sawn timber only 3.2 million tons. This large increase in unsawn timber points to a considerable increase in unskilled labour.

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the great increase in timber exports which has taken place in the last two years has been in the main the product of the forced labour either of prisoners, of persons sentenced to compulsory labour without detention, of villages' 'self-imposed tasks,' or of deported *kulaks*.¹

It has also been hotly denied that conditions in the camps are as described in the statements quoted. Those statements, it must be pointed out, refer to penal camps only, not to 'places of detention' or other institutions organised under the Correctional Labour Code. Nor do they refer to settlements of deported *kulaki*.

¹ The writers of the *Report on Russian Timber Camps* (p. 132) think that most of the labour employed on timber-felling and transporting in the last year or two was voluntary, but as already shown, they leave out of account the Instruction of June 1st, 1929, and they appear to do the same in regard to the Decree authorising village 'self-imposed' tasks (see p. 91). Both these Decrees must have conscripted much labour for timber-felling.

But a *Report* conducted in a strictly judicial spirit has found that the food in certain at least of the timber penal camps was 'if not absolutely insufficient, so lacking in variety as to be prejudicial to health'; that hours of labour were excessive for many, and that there was 'insufficient medical supervision, and an almost entire absence of medical stores and equipment.' The main facts alleged by ex-prisoners must, therefore, be regarded as established by the *Report*.

As to the complaints of insufficiency of food, it may be added that the Far North of Russia, and indeed areas much further to the South, are, owing to the severity of the climate, almost entirely dependent on food supplies brought from long distances. Poor communications had even before the Revolution made these forests difficult to work.¹ The railways, as we shall see later, both in 1929 and 1930 were in a terribly disorganised condition and incapable of meeting any exceptional strain. Was it not inevitable that, if hundreds of thousands of people were suddenly rushed into this area, supplies of food, of medical stores, and of everything, indeed, except lumber, would be insufficient? That the shortage must have been severe is shown by the fact that complaints actually appeared in the Russian Press last autumn that the Karelia lumber-men were neglected.²

¹ E. P. Stebbing, *British Forestry*, 1916, p. 93.

² *The Russian Conscripts*, p. 4. Mr. J. F. Stewart, a consulting Forest engineer, a statement by whom is reprinted in the Timber Trade Federation's pamphlet *Russian Timber*, says that food, though scarce in, and near, the larger towns in the Archangel province, was better and more plentiful in the forests; that the bulk of the forest workers were living in villages,

As to housing—*The Times* articles already quoted tell us that the men have to construct their own cabins before beginning to work in the forest proper, a statement confirmed by ex-prisoners examined by Sir Alan Pim and Mr. Bateson. Pressure would be put on them to spend as little time as possible on hut-building, and if the camp were opened up in winter, to provide shelter of any kind as quickly as possible would be an urgent matter. *The Times* articles speak of great shortage of barracks and cabins in 1930.

That deported *kulaks* also had to build their own houses is shown in the statement by Mr. Tsetlin to Mr. Wales already referred to.¹

He admitted that 10,000 *kulak* families had been 'transported' to his district to work in the timber industry, but naïvely added that none were cutting timber yet, as they were 'engaged in constructing houses.' As this statement was made in March, the families in question must have been deported to a severe climate in winter, *without any houses having been prepared for them*. Many of them, Mr. Wales tells us, came from the South—from the Ukraine, the Volga, even from the Caucasus.

An uncensored despatch from Mr. Wales² gives a not camps, and that he only saw one exiled *kulak*. But he visited the north early in 1929 before rationing was severe, or forced labour was employed on forestry, or the *kulaks* had been deported wholesale. Moreover, Mr. Stewart refuses to express any opinion as to 'whether there is forced labour in Russia or not, or whether the lumber camps are supplied with political prisoners'; and he goes on to say that if 'weakly townspeople' were suddenly 'dumped into logging in such a hard country as North Russia, I can quite imagine they would quickly succumb under any conditions.'

¹ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Paris Edition, April 3rd, 1931.

² *The New York Times*, March 30th, 1931.

terrible account of the conditions under which some were living on their first arrival in the North—famishing and 'half-naked' men being 'herded like wild beasts in a menagerie amid the filthiest imaginable conditions.' In another camp *kulak* families had 'burrowed into the earth like rats, and had made lean-tos from bits of board, rags, anything to keep the icy Arctic blast off.' To reach the forests they were to fell, long marches were necessary over the exposed and frozen *tundra*,¹ yet many were barefoot, in bitterly cold weather.

And the 'houses' in which Mr. Wales saw them were mere barracks in which men, women, boys and girls, all slept in one common room on wooden bunks, without any covering. All family life had vanished.²

No one cognisant of these facts, and they are described by a visitor who has been widely quoted by Soviet apologists, could believe that well-to-do peasants could have voluntarily left their homes in very different climates to take up heavy labour under such conditions. That the labour of the *kulaks* is forced was admitted by Karl Radek in his statement to the effect that 'we have never concealed the fact that we employ forced labour recruited from the overthrown class. We are liquidating the *kulaks* . . . and . . . we look upon it as a great conquest for our country.'³

¹ i.e. a vast tract of land growing little or nothing, as during a great part of the year it is frozen to a depth of some three feet.

² *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Paris edition, April 1st, 1931. The two paragraphs above are not among the extracts from Mr. Wales's articles reprinted in the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee's *Weekly Bulletin* (a pro-Soviet publication), and little of them appears in *Russian Timber*.

³ *Izvestia*, February 19th, 1931.

Many persons were sent into exile in Tsarist days, in gross violation of civil and political freedom. But there was no heavy forced labour except for criminals sentenced by a court. A political exile could take his family with him, rent his own house, even if a poor one, and lead his own life, working or not as he chose, and with some choice of work open to him. His writings, even on political subjects, could be published, and many exiles received monetary allowances from Government.¹

It has been left to Soviet rulers, acting in the name of the people, to destroy homes, in many cases to break up families, and to despatch to perpetual exile and heavy compulsory labour some five millions of its peaceful and industrious citizens. The 'liquidation' of the *kulaki* must rank as one of the greatest crimes in history, and the treatment of political prisoners in the penal camps stands out as a dark stain on the brighter page which the twentieth century is gradually writing in the unhappy tale of prison administration.

NOTE.—While this book has been passing through the Press Mr. Hessel Tiltman's, *Terror in Europe* has appeared. It contains the statement of a well-known Armenian Socialist who was sent as a political prisoner to lumbering work in the Arctic Circle early in 1930, and was afterwards employed on loading at Archangel. His account of the lumber camp fully confirms what is said here. Of 20,000 prisoners sent North with him from Kotlas in January only 8,000 returned there in May. All the rest had perished—a 60 per cent. mortality. The only respect in which he differs from statements

¹ Statement by Mr. Baikaloff, who was at one time a political exile in Siberia. Accounts by other exiles confirm this (U. Martov, *Memoirs of a Social Democrat*, V. Zenzinov, *From the Life of a Social Revolutionary*, and L. Trotsky, *My Life*).

in the text is that, in addition to 500 grammes of bread, his ration included fish and, at Archangel, horse-flesh. In regard to hours of work, he mentions that lumbering began so early that prisoners marched to their work guided by lanterns.

The prisoners' accounts are further confirmed by statements made to Mr. Tiltman by the wives of three political prisoners, who were allowed to visit their husbands. Mr. Tiltman's book helps to emphasise what is clear from a comparison of Mr. Cederholm's book with the escaped prisoners' statements, i.e. that prisoners of the *intelligentsia* type of late years have been subjected to much more heavy labour than was the case on Solovetsky in 1925. This corresponds to the increased severity of the Correctional Labour Code, mentioned on p. 32.

A recent statement signed by Comrade Stutchka, Director of the Institute of Research on Law, and Comrade Apeter, Commissar of Justice for the R.S.F.S.R., estimates the net profit from prisoners' labour in camps and prison factories at no less than 32·2 million roubles for 1931 (i.e. over £3,200,000). 17·7 million roubles besides (i.e. £1,770,000) are estimated as the net profits on prisoners 'sold' to various undertakings. These figures are based on the receipts for 1930. New capital investments in factories worked exclusively by prison labour are estimated at 9·8 million roubles; current expenditure on prisons at 15·4, on special bureaux of compulsory labour at 6, on Juvenile Correctional Centres at 5, and on special payments to prisoners showing great efficiency at 9·8 million roubles (*anglicé, Soviet State and the Revolution in Law*, No. 7, 1931, p. 128). These figures give some idea of the extent of prison labour in Russia. Read in conjunction with Krylenko's statement quoted on p. 32 they show how little importance attaches to the absence of prisoners from White Sea ports and sawmills in June 1931. In any case, little reference to work in sawmills is made by the prisoners cited here—none to such work at the ports.

Messrs. Chirvint and Outevsky also give striking figures regarding gross and net profits of prison labour.