

“Communists settle accounts with their opponents not because they have committed crimes, but because they are opponents. It can be said that most political criminals who are punished are innocent from a legal point of view, even though they are opponents of the regime.”

(The New Class, pg. 90-91)

Betrayal and Forcible Repatriation

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The Witness Speak

The following are some affidavits sworn before an authorize personnel by eye-witness of the massacres carried out by Tito's Communists in June 1945 after British forcibly repatriated 12,000 Slovenians.

The names of eye-witnesses are withheld for obvious reasons and their affidavits kept in a safe place.

We should also point out here, that many thousands [of] Serbians and Croats met the same horrible fate in the hands of Communist executioners as did the Slovenians.

One Account of the Betrayal

The fields around the small village of Vetrinje situated on the outskirts of Celovec was our refugee camp. After two weeks, we were told by British Occupational Command that we would be transferred to Italy into a large army camp. In order that they would not arouse our suspicion they picked two predesignated points of transfer. They were small towns of Pliberk and Področica on Austrian side of Italian border.

Our transfer point was the railway station of Podgorje. Our column was stopped approximately 300 yards from the station. We were led in groups into a fenced-in area. We were searched thoroughly for any weapons, when the search had been completed and the list of personnel had been taken we were transferred into railway freight cars and locked up. The train cars were normally ready but were without an engine, which was always connected to the train after we were locked up.

Large truck transports ran from our camp into two groups. The first group had already been loaded into the train and locked up before the second group arrived. After the train transport was fully loaded a swarm of hidden Communist

Partisans came out of hiding to guard the train. As soon as this was done the train pulled away. This, according to other witnesses, was the normal procedure with each transport. This went on for seven consecutive days and over 12 thousand people, mostly young men, were handed over to the Communists.

Another Witness

Since we had some horses, carts, and wagons a special transport was organized. Believing that we were going to Italy into a special army training camp to be integrated into a new anti-Communist army, as we were told, we traveled happily with songs on our lips. We took wagons and horses, hoping that they would be of use to us for transporting the ammunition and cannons promised to us by the English Officers.

It took us 8 hours of travel from the refugee camp to the railway station of Podrošica. We were somewhat bewildered on account of the continual guard of the British soldiers we could not understand why since we knew the way to our destination. As for anyone wanting to escape there was certainly no reason – who of us would want to go back to Communist Yugoslavia?

We were convinced that the train which was supposed to take us to our destination in Italy, would already be waiting for us. When we arrived to the station there was no sign of the train we sat down in anticipation. We sat for about 20 minutes when we noticed the arrival of empty freight cars from Yugoslavia. The train stopped about 100 yards from the station. Out of some cars emerged a good number of Tito's Partisans carrying automatic and various other weapons. They turned and proceeded toward the wooded area nearby. For the first time, we became really suspicious and started to wonder about the presence of Tito's soldiers. We grew tense and critical of the British for we began to realize that they had betrayed us to the Communist. Our leaders tried to calm us down and reassure us that the British would not do such a thing and that Tito's troops had no business with us, but had probably crossed the border for some other matter.

While we were sitting and waiting two Partisan soldiers came over to us demanding to know what kind of soldiers we were and where we were going. "Don't you recognize the emblems on our caps?" we asked. "Such emblems were a part of the old Yugoslavian uniforms." We received a sardonic reply to the effect that they were now replaced by the red star.

Still hoping that our destination would be an army training camp in Italy, we told them that we would soon return with the King's army. We enquired for reason of their presence they informed us that they had come to take our wagons and horses back to Yugoslavia.

At this point English guards gave us orders to load our horses onto the train. Being afraid of possible Communist attack we completed the order immediately. We were still hoping that the worst was not true. We had no weapons and our British guards were low in numbers, whereas the Partisans were converging with ever increasing strength. We had barely loaded a few horses when our British guards gave us orders to go into the freight car ourselves. Realizing that this was a Yugoslavian train, we grew reluctant as our suspicions increased. Our British guards started to use force while at the same time they yelled and screamed. Their threatening guns left us no choice but to enter the cars. As soon as we were on the cars the doors were immediately locked from the outside when the last door was locked the Partisans emerged from the woods and stormed the train, laughing with glee and calling us names unfit for print.

Soon after the train crossed the Yugoslavian border it came to a stop. In fearful anticipation, we listened to their bloodthirsty cursing and yelling. A sudden blow on the door sprung the lock open. They jumped into the car, searching for valuables, kicking us and calling us all sorts of names. Each individual visit brought more abuse.

We were called everything – damned dogs, devils, fascists, traitors, pigs and the like. Soon after they left our car and re-locked the doors we could hear great commotion at the head of the train. Someone in the corner peeked through a small hole and informed us that they are taking our leaders and officers into a special car.

After this episode, the train again pilled ahead and soon we arrived to the nearby town of Jesenice. There we were greeted by a considerable group of Communist sympathizers who had come to the station demanding our blood. It was an agonizing experience which left us in deep shock. We could not even pray or think.

As our journey continued the train made repeated “emergency” stops that made us fall about like pinballs. These sudden jerks caused the door to fly open. We were looking at the green hills and the beauty of the countryside. To this day I can’t understand why we did not take the opportunity to escape. I think that we refused to believe that the English would be capable of involving themselves in such treachery. We kept on hoping that the Partisans were only taking this opportunity to get at us while we were travelling through their territory. We still thought that we were bound for Italy. We refused to believe that we had already been sold, the scapegoats of dirty political double-dealing.

Kranj

We arrived at the town of Kranj at about 7 P.M. where we were again greeted by a mixed mass of Partisan soldiers and some civilians. When the train

stopped they opened the doors on both sides. Into the cars jumped the Partisans whipping us as if we were animals. The mixed mass of demonstrators outside cursed and again demanded our blood. The officers were even more severely beaten. They took us off the train and led us to the army barracks nearby which were already filled with Slovenian civilians who did not quite appreciate Communist liberation. In the camp, we heard a rumour that a group of civilians had already arrived among whom there were women and children from a refugee camp in Austria.

We were left in a well-guarded compound circled with barbed wire. The senior Partisan officers were Slovenian, while the majority of the soldiers were Serbians. They used us as showpieces. Their officers paced in front of our lines, exercising their rubber whips upon our bodies. Those of our boys whom the Partisan officers knew more or less personally, were beaten two or three times a day some of them were taken into offices to be tortured to unconsciousness. They were then revived for further torture. Those who were known to have been associated with any church or religious organization especially “Catholic Action”, were given the worst treatment.

They began a search for a boy by the name of Zorec. When he answered to their call they took him out and led him to the office. Minutes later we heard his agonized screams. After some time had elapsed they opened the door and literally kicked out his limp body and left him lying in the front of the office, unconscious.

It happened that the Communist captain, “Blatnik”, had found his own brother in our group and greeted him in this sad way: “Pig! Now you will get what you deserve,” adding a kick to the insult. But his brother would not change his conviction nor beg him for help or mercy.

No one had a chance to defend his innocence, and so it happened that some men who had just returned from a Nazi concentration camp in Germany, and who had joined our camp in Austria now received the same treatment as the rest of us. They too were taken to the final destination Kočevski Rog to be murdered.

Terrifying were those nights! – We were beaten constantly, and to increase our fear, we were kept awake by repeated shouting and shooting.

On the morning of May 28th, they took from us whatever food or valuables that chanced to escape the eye of precious searches. Our entire day’s meal consisted of a small mug of red beet leaves boiled in water.

At 9 o’clock on the evening of May 29th they brought into the camp a Home Guard Artillery unit. They were forced to exercise throughout the night – a night of endless torture. Two of the men collapsed from exhaustion. They were quickly accused of insubordination, put before a firing squad, and shot in the presence of us all.

Št. Vid – Ljubljana

Those of us who were left alive in the camp of Kranj and Škofja Loka were marched in groups to the base camp in Št. Vid. The majority of men were left 7 to 10 days on bare sandy ground, rain or shine, with nothing more than shirts and hardly any food.

Camp Št. Vid was the last station before Kočevski Rog – the place of massacre. Many had already been killed in the jail, which had been quickly converted from a once famous archdiocesan minor seminary and high school (Škofovi zavodi), or in other nearby places of massacre.

About three hundred of us marched from the camp in Kranj towards Št. Vid. Many were so weak that they had to be supported or even carried. Once we arrived they lined us up in columns of two and two and ordered us to fight each other. Naturally, we would not carry out such an order. At any rate, we were too weak.

The consequences of our failure to carry out this order was renewed beating with gun butts. Every Communist was eager to hit and spit in our faces. The suffering inflicted is beyond description.

I was among those put into what was formerly the school auditorium. For all our toiletry purposes, we were given two halves of a gasoline drum cut in half, and placed in two corners of the hall. These drums were soon overflowing for they had to serve 600 people. For the purpose of disinfection and cleaning, they gave us a few pails of water which were thrown on the floor. Each time this had been done we had to stand on bare feet until the floor partially dried out. The wet cement floor added to our chill. We were kept in these conditions for three days before they came to ask us if anyone wanted to ask permission to go to the toilet. Those near the door were first in line. On the way out, the guards stopped me and tore off the religious medal I had always carried around my neck. With a pair of scissors one of them cut a sign of the cross in my hair commenting that he wanted to mark me for the slaughter-room. Walking by the screened basement windows I noticed a man clutching the cold metal screen rods with his white boney hands. The ashen weak hand extended a greeting. Two burning eyes stood out of that skeletal face ... I can remember them even today. I see him vividly every time I think of those sorrowful days.

On our way to the washrooms we were ordered to sing. We did not sing a song to their liking and therefore raised the ire of some red soldiers. Some of them from the 2nd floor protested violently and proceeded to hurl various missiles upon us. A piece of bread had been thrown in our direction and when one of our men stepped out to pick it up he was shot on the spot.

A ration of 6 to 7 spoonful of food per day was allowed to us. These rations were spaced 2 or 3 hours apart and were intended to be 3 or 4 days food. It was all a part of the planned punishment. They treated us much more severely than German prisoners of war who were also stationed in this prison. They were allowed to do some work outside and were receiving a regular ration of much better food 3 times a day.

Many of our group were taken away and to this day have never been heard of again. The rest of us were constant objects scorn, various punishments and ridicule. The Communists seemed to have a special sadistic joy in heaping insults upon those of us who had managed to retain the rosaries or any religious objects. They kept asking us if we knew how much Christ suffered on the Mount of Golgotha, adding that if He was able to suffer so should we being His soldiers. In a reenactment of Christ's Passion, they scourged us with leather whips that had been reinforced with wire. In spite of it all, having been mentally and physically broken, we managed to pray and even occasionally sing a song. Their reaction on such an occasion was to remark that we would not have the same chance the next day for we would all be dead.

During the two weeks of our detention we never had a chance to wash or clean ourselves. Suddenly a rumour broke out that there was to be an inspection conducted by the International Red Cross, in our camp. An order came from Tito's headquarters commanding the red to have us washed and clean[ed]. They carried out their order with frantic speed.

The International Red Cross Commission really arrived and we took the opportunity to protest. We pleaded with them for help and asked them either to give us food or kill us instead of prolonging our suffering. Tito's red soldiers brought a rain of revenge on us immediately after the Red Cross inspectors left the camp. One of the soldiers rained a burst of bullets from his automatic into our group. This left a number of our men seriously wounded. Some of them died a few days later for lack of medical attention. They began to give us injections against typhus. Not a single day passed without somebody dying.

On July 25th, they began with interrogation. We were lined up in columns of three and three. I was in the very first group of three. When the first man was taken into the interrogation room we could soon hear cries of pain and anguish. Soon after, a few gun shots pierced the air and we never saw the man again when the second man entered we heard his cries of pain and the sound of heavy blows. When the door was flung open the man was brought out on a stretcher. Now my turn had come. Before I stepped in I said a short prayer asking God for strength. How easy it is to pray when one is expecting the worst! Interrogation personnel consisted of an officer, two soldiers, and a female secretary. I had to answer his questions promptly or receive a lash. He wanted to know many details, including

those concerning my parents. I told him that my parents were left in Austria. To my great surprise they let me off without my receiving rough treatment. This was hard for me to understand – maybe I was too young.

While we were in the auditorium we had to get up and stand at attention every time a Partisan soldier walked in no matter how young he was. There was only one officer who did not demand this attention, as he gave us motion to remain seated as were.

After some time, we were divided into smaller groups, these put 40 to 50 men into smaller rooms with hardwood floors and being warmer than our previous habitation, in the auditorium.

One day a young seminarian was allowed to go home free. Later on I heard that many on their way to freedom were ambushed and murdered.

The young semarian whom I knew never came home and has never been heard of again. Another man whom I knew was allowed to leave the prison and go home unhindered. He was home for one year when Tito's Militia came and murdered him. His brother was executed in the same manner one year after the general amnesty.

After a long wait the day came when they let us young men go free. They gave us an order to clean up and make ourselves as presentable as possible. We received our regular daily ration of food which included 300 grams of cornbread. They took a picture of each one of us with serial number pinned to our chest. My number was 2392. On our way out, we were greeted by a large number of civilians. They brought us food, cigarettes and offered their hospitality. We learned that many of these men were picked up again on their way home and never heard of again.

My parents being in Austria I looked to my aunt for help. But I could not live in peace for there were rumours that many like myself were picked up by the Communists and similarly and quietly executed.

It was a frightening and at the same time an interesting thing to watch some of the blood thirsty Communists go wild. A typical case was an officer by the name of Šinkovec who, it had been rumoured, murdered 90 people. He often woke up from his sleep in the middle of the night after having nightmares upon which he yelled out: "Leave me alone", and other cries of fear. At such times, he picked up his gun and started shooting. The walls of his room were full of bullet holes. He kept going to the tavern by the name of Javornik. After having a few drinks he normally went berserk. At such outbursts, even Communists officials had problems controlling him. With him in a nearby town there was no way to relax and live without fear for my life. It was like a horrible dream to see the bloodlust and brutality emblazoned in the man's visage. Every time he walked into the tavern the clients quietly disappeared. He finally committed suicide by putting a bullet

through his own skull. This was by no means an isolated case. There were many like him who served the cause of Communism during and after the war by committing atrocities. For the zeal of their bloody deeds they received the honour of being national heroes with fat perpetual pensions paid by Tito's government, but their scarlet sins did not let them enjoy them for long. These people were free to do whatever they pleased without answering to the law for their horrible misdeeds.

I finally learned of my parent's whereabouts and succeeded in crossing the Austrian border, thus attaining the most precious gift of freedom.

Kočevski Rog

The Communists took most of the prisoners from the converted jail in Št. Vid by the train load to the town of Kočevje. Each train consisted of 40 to 50 freight cars which had to be pulled by three locomotives. The prisoners were placed into two school buildings. From there they took them by transport trucks into the nearby mountains of Kočevski Rog, lined their bound prisoners after more torture along the edges of natural caverns or manmade mass graves and had them shot. Many of them were only wounded and consequently buried alive. Approximately, fourteen thousand Slovenian soldiers and civilians (including many of King Peter's Četniks) were buried in these mass graves. Kočevski Rog is, without a doubt, the largest single cemetery of the victims of Communist atrocities.

Let the witness tell the truth:

From the jail in Št. Vid we were brought to Ljubljana (the capital city of Slovenia). We expected the train to stop at the station but this was not so. Instead the train stopped just before the railway bridge over the Ljubljanica river. Since the bridge had been destroyed, we had to get off the train and cross at nearby road bridge. We were forced to run through the street along the river. On either side of the street Communist soldiers and their civilian sympathizers were waiting for us with whips, sticks and the like. We had to run through this mob. Anyone who had fallen was trampled upon and left there to die an agonizing death. Those of us who ran on the outside received a harsher beating than those in the middle.

Arriving on the other side of the river we were immediately forced into a waiting freight train. Weak from starvation and suffering, we received more whippings from two guards standing at the entrance of each freight car. When the transfer was completed the Communists began singing and playing accordions while the rest of us sadly watched the beauty of the sunset, convinced that it could well be our last. Our thirst became more and more unbearable. We expected to die from lack of food and water.

Someone in my car suddenly spoke out breaking the silence, suggesting that we should say the rosary for our souls and for those who were inflicting this

horrible suffering upon us. This brought an immediate reaction from the guard along with the comment: “Pray you dogs! You followed your stupid religion and priests. Now you have what you wanted. You are not going to have the opportunity to pray for long.” No one answered, for we were all in silent prayer.

The train started to move – the destination unknown to us. The interrogating officer told us that we had already been judged in our respective home towns. He did not tell us where the sentence would be carried out, nor what they were, but we knew just the same what the sentences were. Overhearing the Communist soldiers, we learned that we were to be taken to Kočevje to be shot. Our suspicions were finally confirmed. We began looking for a chance to escape. We tried to open the doors on either side and then risk a jump from the moving train, but with only our weak bare hands every effort was in vain.

It was an extra pain for some in our group whose homes were along the train route. If they could only stop for a moment and bid their last good-bye and inform their loved ones where their graves would be.

With these sad thoughts burdening our minds we settled down in quiet prayer resigning ourselves entirely to God’s will.

The overnight journey seemed to be even longer, for we were so tired, sick and thirsty, and it was days since we had received our last meagre rations.

We arrived in Kocčevje in the early morning hours just before sunrise, and were led into a high school – another temporary jail. After about 20 minutes we were lined up to receive a ration of food consisting of dirty warm water, but were not allowed to consume it. We asked for water to quench our thirst but they did not want to hear about it. We were told that we were going somewhere to work.

Believing we were going to work, we marched through the streets to the community hall. How we managed to stay on our feet I do not know, for we were totally exhausted. We were marched into the community hall and we noticed a pile of clothing soiled with blood. Someone suggested that our time was close at hand pointed to the pile saying: “Look how many were killed already.” It was hard to explain the feeling of death staring into one’s face. We were lined up and each of us was bound twice on arms and legs with wire taken from a prepared pile of cut wire.

We were ten loaded onto transport trucks like lumber, one on top of the other. I was put into the second truck. There were six trucks at this time. As the trucks were loaded they were pulled to the side, forming a line. When all the trucks were loaded we were taken to the mountain forest of Kočevski Rog.

All of us on my truck were 18 to 24 years of age except for one, who was older and was a father to 6 small children, the oldest of them being only 10 years old. The wire began to cut into our wrists.

We were totally helpless. The roughness of the road increased our movement which made our pain more excruciating. To satisfy their sadistic whims our guards used their whips, lashing at us every time one of us made a sound. The married man tried to increase our courage. He reminded us that he was worse off, leaving the children behind fatherless and that we must put our faith in God. We did not moan because of impending death, for this had become almost a welcome end by now, but because of the indescribable suffering we were enduring. We began to say the Act of Contrition aloud and even attempted to sing Ave Maria. The guards strongly objected and demanded us to sing some love songs. Our refusal brought a fierce rain of lashes and laughter, which had satanic tone.

It was a beautifully sunny day and the temperature was rapidly increasing. We were some distance into the forest when we noticed a number of trucks returning, empty, with the exception of blood-stained clothes. We were coming closer and closer to the place of execution, which was located in a shadow valley. We could already hear the echoing reports of guns. The short-lived cries of those being murdered grew louder and louder.

When we arrived to the place, the trucks stopped and the soldiers pulled us off the logs, they began to cut the shoelaces of our shoes with their knives penetrating our flesh. While they were taking my shoes off, I watched a young boy being martyred. He was covered with blood and his eyes were punctured; his head was partially split. In spite of it all he was still conscious, sitting almost motionless on the ground. Red murderers kept on hitting him until he finally slumped over in a heap of blood. Once all our shoes were removed they tied us again into a line of 20 to 30 all of us being tied to each other.

We were marched through two lines of red heroes, each soldier having a stick with linoleum knives attached to the end.

With these weapons in their hands they kept lashing and beating us all the way to the place of execution, a distance of five hundred yards. To prolong our agony, we were repeatedly forced to sit down or walk back and forth. Some of our men received blows which split their heads, and, being tied to the rest of us, we had to drag their limp bodies along, creating ever increasing pain, while these "men" enjoyed themselves laughing and singing.

When we finally arrived at the place of execution we were stopped and individually untied and then ordered to take off our clothing. As soon as we undressed they tied our hands behind our backs. My guard grew impatient and started to kick me, ordering me to hurry up. Dazed, I put my hands behind my back without taking off my shirt. As soon as I was tied I was ordered to run forwards. In my condition, I saw nothing but the man before me who was running through the two lines of Partisans, he suddenly disappeared behind a sharp curve in the path, following, I noticed the opening of a natural cavern, in front of me as I, too,

rounded the curve. Just before this huge hole lay the slashed and bloody corpse of one of my compatriots, with two guards standing on either side with automatics, shooting us one at a time as we fell into the deep cavern. I gathered what little strength I had to jump over my dead friend. As I fell into the pit the red guards let out a burst from their guns. Miraculously, they missed! At the moment I yelled, "Jesus have mercy on me!" and fell into the cavern on top of the huge pile of dead and wounded bodies.

At first, I did not know what happened. Was I dead or alive? Once I gained some control of my senses I realized that I was lying upon the naked bodies of my dead friends. The few wounded were moaning. More and more victims dropped on top of me and blood was entering my mouth. I screamed for the guards to end my misery, for I expected to die from the hunger and thirst. There was no hope to escape if the guards would leave; - the smooth high walls offered slim hopes for a strong, healthy man, let alone a totally exhausted man. My pleas to the guards bringing no response I decided to remain where I was, probably to suffocate under the pile of bodies.

Suddenly, I heard a voice from the corner of the cavern calling out. I felt like I was waking up from a bad dream. I began to turn in an attempt to unite my hands, and get from under the bodies of those laying on top of me. I barely had the strength to twist from under them and I moved in the direction of the call. In the murky twilight, I managed to find the wounded face of the caller. An agonizing crawl brought me closer to him. He informed me that he had already succeeded in untying one victim. He suggested we move to the extreme edge of the hole to the cover of the rocks since the guards continuously shot into the hole or threw grenades into it. Hardly had we moved under the protection of the rocks when a new burst of bullets sprayed over the pile and hand grenades echoed their thunderous bursts. I instinctively sought protection behind the largest rock.

After the shooting ceased I managed to untie my comrade's bands using my teeth. He in turn freed me. I then examined myself for possible bullet wounds. I could not be sure if they had wounded me, since my body was full of aches and bruises and bathed in a pool of blood.

From my shirt, I took out a religious miraculous medal which I had managed to keep, and I said a prayer to God's Mother to thank her for at least keeping me alive. My wounded friends pleaded for a chance to kiss the medal for one last time, for he felt his hour was at hand. Our chill increased to a shivering cold. I began to search for any cloth that would afford my friend and me any warmth. These corpses would find little use for clothing now. Just as we had finished doing this another man fell in to the cavern, shot through the neck, yet still alive. I managed to free his hands and cover his wound with the strips of a dead man's shirt.

A steady groaning of pain came from the pile. This was a ghastly experience as we listened, helpless to give any aid other than the comfort of words. We managed to free the bound hands of those who had fallen close to the edges of the cavern. About fifteen of us did get free, but some died from loss of blood.

The blood from the dead and wounded flowed in trickles audible to the human ear.

It was horrifying to listen to these who still remained alive as they prayed for the forgiveness of their murderers, for we knew that most would soon be dead. The priests among them were reciting the funeral litanies in Latin, saying them more by rote than with meaning.

With a friend, I began to hide behind a pile of dead bodies to avoid being discovered should the guards search for any remaining men who were left alive. We forgot that the new victims would suffocate us. These bodies began to press against the rocky wall with such pressure that we barely managed to free ourselves and move to a small cleft in the wall with a few other wounded. Many had died, and others grew so weak that there was no hope for them to escape, even if the Communists moved away for the night.

As the day closed we began to make plans to get out. Was there a way to climb the smooth, steep walls of the cavern? We had hardly moved from our hiding place when a sudden burst from an automatic machine gun sprayed a deadly line of bullets. The hand grenades created an earth-shaking sound. Some of us were hit and the rest of us retreated back to cover. We lost virtually all hope of getting out alive. Starvation and thirst slowly began to undermine our last strength. We couldn't last two days. Those unable to move pleaded for water to moisten their tongues. We searched for wet rocks which we licked to ease our burning thirst.

The cavern had some longer side tunnels but we were afraid to go further should the bombing create a landslide and close our exit. The first night we remained in a tunnel that appeared to be well supported by solid rock. We gathered in a heap to keep warm. It was no wonder we were shivering cold, for our clothes, if we had any, were soaked with blood. No one was able to sleep.

One courageous man somehow made it out, only to be caught by nearby guards. The rest of us retreated quickly to the side [of the] cavern and waited in suspense for the guards to make a move. We were afraid that they would force the man to give us away. To our relief he kept quiet. Half an hour later, his slashed body was thrown into the hole.

There were five of us left. In dead silence, we waited for something to happen. We soon heard a lot of commotion and digging around the opening of the tunnel. At once we realized that they planned to dynamite the cave. We were convinced that we would be buried alive.

In the next hour, the detonation was carried out. Large boulders mixed with rubble were sealing the cave. None of us had been hit or wounded with the exception of one whose ear drum had been broken from the air pressure. We wondered if we were closed in but the dust and smoke prevented us from seeing. After a while we noticed daylight, but to our dismay, four more blasts followed. Since the cavern was very wide at the bottom and narrow at the top, the boulders and fill fell more to the centre of the cavern and therefore did not block off our small cave. After the blasting was over, they covered the top with lime and finally gassed the open area. We were relatively safe from this in the cave. We waited for the lime dust and the gas to settle before beginning our search. Just as the tunnel cleared we noticed a small hint of light before the sun set.

I found the opening and suddenly I vomited until I nearly choked and then fell unconscious. I woke up the next day and started a bewildered search for others. One of the five lay dead beside me. I was overcome with apprehension, for being alone was unbearable. I prayed to God to help me escape this horrible hell. I finally resigned myself to God's will. With this consolation, I became completely composed and even considered myself fortunate to be able to surrender my life to the Lord and His cause of final justice.

I heard an occasional moan come under the pile of debris. I continued my search and found my four partners, dead. Going on, I found another wounded man who had been thrown in today. He was nervous and anxious to get out. I pleaded with him to calm down and move into the safety of the cave before he should be discovered. Reluctantly, he followed. Hunger and thirst became so intense that we considered eating the flesh of the dead and drinking the blood of another wounded man.

On the morning of the fifth day [the] Communists were still present and they kept throwing hand grenades and packages from which a thick, yellow smoke was spreading over the cavern. Ignoring the yellow smoke, we felt our way through the cave in search of water, which dripped from stalactites. Later in the afternoon the smoke subsided and we could see light again. We made a careful reconnaissance searching for any possibility to get out. Those five days in the cavern seemed to lessen my desire to escape. Suddenly a voice called out for me to come out. To make such an attempt in daylight would be suicide. If there was any hope left, I would have to wait for nightfall.

The afternoon dragged on endlessly. The drops of water from the wet stalactites gave us enough refreshing strength to prepare for the evening attempt to climb out, if I still had the desire to do so.

We started quietly, penetrating farther into the cave. Thoughts of my family raced through my mind. They would never learn of our terrifying death. Lack of strength and hope affecting my decision. I almost decided to stay and welcome

death to end my agony, but my desire to live was stronger. I would try to get out somehow and tell my relatives, friends, and the whole world about the martyrdom my fellow men had to endure for their homeland and their God.

As twilight approached, I asked my only live friend if he had decided whether to escape or not. I received my reply in a sad, whispering tone: "As long as I have the strength I would have the hope. Now my strength is failing me and I feel ready to drop. My death is near. If you have the strength please try and save your life. If it is God's will, be a living witness to our execution and these Godless Communist horrors."

His response shocked me deeply. I said my last good-bye to my friend as he lay dying, with his hands in silent prayer. Once more I made an Act of Contrition and prayed to God for help.

My attempt to scale the smooth rock walls were in vain. I began to search for a better spot when I noticed a tree stump about five to six yards long, standing in an angle against the top of the cavern. At first, I hesitated to use this lifeline, being afraid that it was a trap prepared by the executioners. Considering the possibility that the log was thrown in by the explosion, I tried my luck. I had nothing to lose. If I was caught I would be shot and thus be saved from prolonged agony. If I succeeded, I would have fulfilled the dying wish of my friend.

These thoughts seemed to garner my wanting strength and I finally made it to the top. My heart pounded with the strain of climbing and even more so from the fear of being discovered. I stole a moment of my precious time to search into the darkness for any approaching guards. When I convinced myself that no one was around, I proceeded. The fresh air and the bright stars seemed to revitalize me.

I sat down to rest under the protection of the trees and contemplated on which direction to turn. I began to feel the pain in my toe, which had been pierced to the bone by a wire, on my fall into the cavern. I began to feel the effects of infection and every footstep created more pain. My whole body swelled. The thirst was excruciating and my gums were so inflamed with pus, that from time to time I had to scrape it with my fingers.

With great effort, I continued my journey, directing myself by the position of the moon and the moss on the trees. My legs began to turn blue; and with indescribable pain at times, I dragged myself along. Finally, I reached sympathetic people who helped me and nursed me back to health.

Let this miraculous escape be a living witness to those who think that God is dead, and let them realize that God has his way to provide for the exposure of the evil deeds committed by those pretenders who attempt to lead the world astray under the seductive trade mark of freedom and social justice under Communism.