

## [Deliverance]

After sitting in prison for many days, without so much as an explanation as to why and for how long, we were finally summoned to the *kancelaria*, where we were notified that they suspected us of belonging to an organisation striving to overthrow the currently existing order - and that was why we were under arrest.

The prosecutor, who was present there, cried out, “*нужно было это вам?*” [Did you need this?] - and a wild flame was ignited inside me. I wanted to answer him, but [decided it was] better for me to keep silent.

They ordered us to sign a paper to the effect that they have explained to us why we are in prison. None of us know the exact meaning of this. We hint to one another not to sign the paper. The gendarme telephones his superior that we are refusing to sign, to which the chief replies that he should not force us. In the end, upon reflection that our signature cannot be of any harm to us, we sign that we do not belong to any criminal organisation, but that we have been informed as to the grounds of our arrest.

The fact that they suddenly remembered us prisoners cheered us up to a certain extent. We reassured ourselves that our hearing would possibly take place shortly - and that is exactly what happened. A few days later, we were summoned to the *kancelaria*, where they notified us that the Governor of Piotrków had only given the right to hold us for one month, but that the [Saint] Petersburg police, who were in charge of political affairs, had added us another month - meaning that we would already definitely be arrested for two months.

Suddenly, and we had not been expecting it, through our little windows, we notice the arrival of two gendarmes with a few prison orderlies. They appear in our cell and summon me and another comrade to an interrogation. They search us well, just in case we are hiding some illicit object which may cause them harm. Following the search, we are led outside the thick walls and we see, for the first time, the street, alive with its noise and tumult. As we walk down the street, it seems to us that we shall never be able to become accustomed to this life, even if we are freed. But, nevertheless, we wish to be free like everybody else

I see my mother standing in front of Town Hall. I dearly wish to speak to her and greet her, but my escorts prevent me from doing so. My mother, upon seeing me, pours out streams of tears. She cries out with her motherly voice, “My son,

come to me! I want to embrace you in my arms!” But my guardians take me further and further away, to the chambers of the Chief of Gendarmerie.

We come to his office. Already, we sense that things are starting to move. I feel cold and warm. I sense that my fate now depends upon him and he can decide what will happen with me.

A gendarme asks me how old I am, where I studied, what my profession is, etc. Everything is typed up on a typewriter and presented to the chief in his private office.

I am the first to be summoned to the chief. After I enter, he closes the door, so that the gendarmes should not hear our conversation. I look around me for a moment. On the walls are hung pictures of old rulers and also antique weapons. On the table lie many documents and papers, which have buried more than one person for all his life.

The first accusation he throws at me is that I belong to the *Poalei Zion*, that am the leader of it in our city, that I have taken part in conferences, etc. He demands an acknowledgement from me, but I deny everything. I tell him that, during the course of the raid at my house, they only confiscated legal items which served me in my day-to-day newspaper trade.

He asks me various questions regarding the notices, in Yiddish, that they found in my house, of which he has copies in Russian. I respond to that without becoming entangled. He shows me a written denunciation to the effect that I belong to the *Poalei Zion*, who are waging a war against the Russian government, etc. I categorically refuse to confirm what he wishes.

He casts his irate glance at me one last time and, once more, inquires of me why I participated in a legal workers' meeting, which took place sometime back in our city and why I had read them the *ustaw* [statute/legislation]. I explain everything to him in detail and exit his office.

Then, my other arrested friends were summoned. Their offence consisted of a false denunciation that the owners of the bakeries had made against them - and also against myself - to the effect that we had founded, instead of a legal bakers' union, a revolutionary organisation, etc.

Once more, the days pass one after the other. Gendarmes appear in the prison and I am, once again, summoned to the *kancelaria*, where my fingerprints are taken on various pieces of paper - in order to identify me the next time I am arrested. They also photograph me, along with other prisoners, in different poses.

A few days later, once again, I am summoned to a rigorous interrogation and am demanded to acknowledge I belong to a party, etc. They already threaten me with a large fine if I do not confess. But, seeing he could do nothing with me, he [viz. the chief] ordered me to be taken back to jail.

Finally, after six weeks in prison, I am suddenly summoned to the chief. Once again, he places the same questions before me and, seeing he cannot obtain any results from me or achieve anything, he writes something on a piece of paper and puts it in an envelope. I am taken back to the prison *kancelaria*. The scrivener opens the envelope and starts looking at me in a friendlier manner. He declares to me that I am free and that I am to gather my clothes, as quickly as possible, and leave my cell.

I could hardly believe it but, realising it was not a joke, I entered my cell, fell on the necks of my remaining comrades, kissed them and wished them a speedy release. I cast one last glance at everything around me and went out to the wide world.

I immediately made my first visit to my parents at home. I found them in a despondent mood, pondering my fate. An indescribable joy enveloped them when I suddenly came in. We fell onto each other's necks and kissed one another heartily.

That evening of my release and my being back together with those whom I had missed so much and who are so beloved and dear to me, will remain in my memory for a long, long time!

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