

## **Streletskii, Dmitrii Nikolaevich**

Interviewers: Svetlana and Andrei Grebenshchikov

Dates of interviews: 4-5 May 2004

### **Interview nr. 1**

**- Please introduce yourself.**

- My name is Streletskii, Dmitrii Nikolaevich. Born in 1917.

**- Where were you born?**

- I was born into a peasant family in the village of Baraba, in the Ketovo district of what they've now named Kurgan Oblast. [in Western Siberia] I'm the son of a peasant.

**- How many were you in your family?**

- There were four of us children: I was the eldest, then came my brothers Aleksei and Stepan, and, finally, my sister Lidiia. So there were four of us. We grew up rejoicing in life. Nature in those parts was beautiful: there were forests all around, the Tobol River flowed near our village.

**- Could you say something about your native village – how many inhabitants did it have? Was it a large village?**

- It was a large village. Grandfather's house, in which I was born, was on a good spot. I mean there was this square. On the right was the church, quite close nearby. Straight on ahead a broad, comfortable road led to our village's parish school. And all around our house was this large area of open land. That was our village square – the young people would always gather there and make merry on the holidays. Otherwise, though, it was work all the time for everyone. Peasant life was such that you had to work hard. And all of us worked from childhood.

**- What kind of house did you have? How big was your household?**

- Our house was large, with a cross-pitched roof, as they call it. It was Grandfather's. So what it consisted of was, first of all, the *seni* [an entrance-lobby]. That's where we had our kitchen. Our house was of the sort they call an *izba* [a typical peasant log cabin], if I'm not mistaken. Then, next to the kitchen was the *gornitsa* [the main living-room in a peasant's hut]. That's the kind of house it was. A large one, and our family was large, too. Around fourteen folks – actually, not around: we were fourteen in our family.

**- And you all lived in the same house?**

- We all lived in the same house, indeed. Well, later, when I was growing up, then our family... Father then set up on his own. You see, Father went off to the army in 1912.

**- What was his name?**

- My father was called Nikolai Iakovlevich. He married in 1912 and a few months later went off to the army. Well, of course, it was to do active service in the Tsarist army. Everyone in our family was illiterate.

**- But didn't you say you had a school in your village?**

- There were schools, but if you take into account that there were just one or two – three at most – forms... Yes, our school just had three forms. My father's younger brothers and sisters did manage to get some education, but not Father – he didn't get to go to school. He learnt to read and write in the army. So it wasn't until then that he got his chance.

When he returned from the army, he could read and write fluently: we even started subscribing to newspapers.

**- Which ones?**

- There was this newspaper called *Bednota (The Village Poor)* And also one called *Kopeika (The Kopeck)*. I don't remember if there were any other ones. At any rate, these were the ones Father subscribed to. As for books, we didn't have any at home, except for a reading primer. I don't remember any others. That is, for some reason we did have a book by Ibsen – I've got no idea how it ended up in our house, but I actually read it, although I wasn't able to make sense of it then.

**- Now, you said that after your father returned from the army, he set up his own household. Where was that?**

- Well, you see, Father fought in the First World War from the very first day and right up to the last. He was in the artillery and took part in the famous Brusilov Offensive. But after the February Revolution in 1917, when the army collapsed, he went back home. And in 1918... or, rather, 1919... no, sorry, it was the end of 1918 when the Red Army started fighting Kolchak's forces – and the Whites occupied our village, so he fled and hid on one of our ploughed fields. We had some ploughed fields a long way from the village. The nearest of these fields was about six *versty* [c. 4 miles] from Baraba, the furthest some fifteen *versty* behind the forest. That's where people would hide from forced mobilizations. But when the Red Army captured the region, he happened to have gone back home, so he ended up being conscripted into the Red Army. From the end of 1918 right up to 1922 [*sic*], he took part in all these battles against Kolchak. As I remember from Father's stories, he was in the army commanded by Shorin. Yes, Vasilii Ivanovich Shorin who later came to be arrested – in 1937 – was declared an 'enemy of the people' and shot in 1938. Like many military commanders at that time.

**- Could you please explain why your father hid himself from the White Army? Was it because he didn't want to fight on the side of the Whites?**

- I don't know, I'm not really sure. What I do know is that he went into hiding. I also know that the Whites lined my grandfather up against the wall – they blindfolded him, lined him up against the wall of his granary, and were about to execute him. But he was saved by our village's churchwarden, who happened to be walking past, since he was on his way to the church – Grandfather's house was literally a stone's throw away from the church. So he saw this scene, went up to the officer in charge of the execution squad and told him: "Do you realise who you're executing? That very same peasant whose cart and horse and whose son you took away the other day!" You see, the Whites had conscripted one of my uncles, who was still a minor then – he was just 15 or 16 at the time – into one of their transport units. But they'd also wanted to take my grandfather's cart, so they came back again – Grandfather, though, had hidden it – that is, simply stowed it under the penthouse. And he refused to hand it over to them. That's why they lined him up against the wall to shoot him. Fortunately, though, the churchwarden managed to save him. Mama's brother, on the other hand, Uncle Stepan – he lived in the neighbouring village, four *versty* from ours, and we called him Uncle Stepa – the Whites beat him up with these *nagaiki* of theirs [the short riding whips used by Cossacks] for having carted away his possessions to that same ploughed field behind the forest and hidden his cart and horse there. Someone had denounced him. And they left him in such a state that this young, healthy, strong lad never recovered and actually died. Well, of course, such

atrocities were committed on both sides, but what Father had seen of the Whites' conduct evidently played its part in his decision to go into hiding.

**- Do you know what your father's attitude to the Revolution was?**

- Listen: both my father and grandfather accepted the Revolution; they accepted it approvingly and believed in it. After all, these slogans were good, they were very attractive: "All land to the peasants! All factories to the workers!" Believing in, and rallying to the Revolution was one and the same thing. That's why people started living as they did.

**- Did all of your relatives fight on the side of the Red Army?**

- No. My two uncles Petr and Stepan had also been drafted into the Tsarist army. I don't know their exact birth years, but they were younger than Father, in any case. Father had gone off to the army in 1912, whereas they were drafted straight to the front when the First World War started. I imagine they were called up either in 1914 or 1915. That's how it was, but after the Revolution one of them ended up with the Whites, whilst the other found himself on the side of the Reds. And they actually faced each other in battle somewhere near Cheliabinsk. I think it was when these troops, these *kappelevtsy* were marching through the area, but I'm not sure. [The *kappelevtsy* were the White forces led by the Swedish-Russian general V. O. Kappel (1883-1920), who had been a staff officer in the Imperial Army and became one of Kolchak's most loyal followers.] Somewhere between Kurgan and Cheliabinsk; one of them with the Reds, the other with the Whites. They both fought and fell in this same battle of the Civil War. Yes, that's how it was. That was their lot.

**- What about your mother? Please tell us a bit about her.**

- Mama was a typical peasant woman. In all her life she never learnt to read or write. Yes, she was still illiterate when she died – in the neighbouring village.

**- Did you have a housekeeper in the house, or did your mother do everything herself?**

- No, we never had a housekeeper. Never. I mean, think about how our family lived: Father wasn't there because he'd gone off to the army – and when he did get back, after 1922, when Soviet times were on us, we were still poor. We had livestock, our field for tilling – yes, we had all that – and bread, too, but we didn't have any money to buy ourselves clothes. A peasant's life really was hard. Yes, so Mama and her... now, what's the word for it?... Father's sister, who lived under the same roof as us....[Russian has a notoriously large number of terms for relations by marriage – it isn't so surprising, therefore, that Dmitrii Nikolaevich couldn't remember the one for a husband's sister, *zolvka*] Right, so Grandmother allotted to Aunt Nadia and Mama one or two ridges in our kitchen-garden and said to them: "Sow some onions, and here – take this goose, too. If it breeds any goslings, they're all yours and you can go and sell them." Well, and Grandfather was able to sell some of our produce, and that's how we raised the money to buy ourselves things we needed. That's how we lived.

**- Could we now turn to your childhood? Do you remember much about your childhood years?**

- Yes, I do remember a great deal of things from that time. Well, take this for example: it's something that stuck in my mind a lot. The year was 1923. I remember how I was running around once, with some other children. Then I walked back to our house and saw that the gate was locked... and the wicket-gate, too... and that a lot of people had

gathered on the grass-plot in front of our house. You see, Father was telling them something. I knew that Father had been elected [by the village soviet] as an envoy from our village to hand over a petition to Lenin. But, of course, he got back from Moscow and the upshot was that he'd gone there in vain. Because already in 1923 Il'ich was unwell, and, of course... [Lenin was sometimes referred to affectionately by his patronymic – especially amongst less educated people. In March 1923, less than a year before his death, he had suffered a second major stroke.] I don't know who received Father, but, anyway, he'd returned from Moscow and was telling everyone about it. That's what I remember.

**- And what was the general impression that this made on the people in your village? I mean what your father told them about how he'd gone to see Lenin...**

- Oh, God knows – I don't really remember anything about that. I mean, I saw that a lot of people had gathered in front of our house and that Father was clearly telling them how his mission had turned out. But I don't know what he said. For some reason, I didn't join the crowd listening to him – instead, I ran over to the back of our house and sneaked in that way, so that I could get myself something to eat.

**- Where were you actually living then?**

- On Grandfather's homestead – that is, we weren't living under the same roof as him by then, but in a separate hut. Because in 1922 or 1924... No, in 1923... or, again, 1924, Father built himself an *izba* on the yard of Grandfather's house. So we were living in that *izba* – we'd set up on our own. Or, rather, our families were living in separate houses, but we still stuck together in the same household. So there you are.

**- How was your relationship with your brothers and sister?**

- Well, we were all children then. As a child, one doesn't really ask oneself about that... I mean, I just couldn't say.

**- Did you get on well with one another, for instance?**

- Of course, of course. But you got all kinds of things – a family is a family, after all.

**- How were you brought up? Was your family strict or perhaps not so strict?**

- Right, well, when Grandfather was around, everything went smoothly. No one got into any trouble, none of the grown-ups smoked or drank. It was quiet and peaceful in our family. We always kept counsel with one another – that is, Grandfather would never undertake anything without... without keeping counsel with the next eldest family members. That's how it was. And Grandfather was held in respect by all the villagers. I can think of many occasions on which people came round to our homestead to ask him things like: "Iakov Fedorovich, isn't it time to get going with the haymaking?" – "No, let's wait another week." He knew thoroughly all the signs one had to watch out for in order to predict the weather and so on. And that was evidently what earned him so much respect. Yes, and in our family there was always this mood of... well, psychologically sort of... neither too bustling nor laid-back, but, rather, a kind of unflustered mood. No one ever quarrelled – not in my memory. No one ever came out with any hasty judgements. I can't think of any occasion on which this was not so. Everything was peaceable, everything somehow made sense. We observed all the feast-days. We went to church: the grown-ups took me along. I remember how we'd go to receive Holy Communion. Back then, I could even read Old Church Slavonic, but I've forgotten it now. This very morning I was telling someone how I'd once been able to read and understand the church books. Last year, in fact, I had to bind this book – the *Psalter* –

and I couldn't collate the pages at first: I had to spend two weeks mugging up on how the pages are ordered in Old Church Slavonic. Well, I sorted it out in the end and was able to put the pages in order and bind that book. Anyway, that's the kind of atmosphere which we had at home. We always had lots of people coming round. Our family was very... We kept open house, were very hospitable, and we always had lots of guests – especially on feast-days and Sundays, after attending church.

**- Could you tell us in more detail how you'd celebrate these festivals? Was everyone religious in your family?**

- All of us were believers, all of us, we all were: Grandmother, Grandfather, all of us would go to church together. On every Sunday, on all the feast-days, without fail. We'd go to church first, and only then would we sit down to eat on those days. Our meals on such occasions were certainly large and hearty by the standards of those times. I remember we kept a lot of poultry: geese, turkeys, chickens, ducks. We had a lot of poultry, and... I don't remember any more what we'd have for breakfast, but for dinner there'd always be *shchi* [cabbage soup] or some other soup, to start with. And then we'd have either a fattened turkey – a really huge roast turkey, you know... We had this brazier, you see, apart from our huge Russian stove, equipped with everything. Yes, so we had this huge brazier on which we'd carry our roast goose or turkey to the table – we'd put all that on the table, and only then would we carve up the turkey... Moreover, we'd all eat from the same bowl. Our table was large, yes, but we'd all take our food together from the same bowl with these wooden spoons.

**- Did you observe the fasts?**

- Without fail. We always observed the fasts. That was a matter of course. Yes, we invariably kept the fasts.

**- And for how long were you able to continue attending church and observing fasts?**

- Well, until they closed down the church. That was in 1930 or 1929.

**- How did your family and the other villagers react to that?**

- Hmm... well, I don't remember exactly how, but everybody, everybody was there... I remember that when they were closing the church down, I ran inside a couple of times to fetch some books. Why, you may wonder, did we decide to plunder the archives? I'm afraid I just don't know why. What I do remember is that we children rushed into the church several times and carried off some books here and some records there. I don't know, however, if we actually needed them for something or not. So that was when they closed down the church. Yes, and I also remember the day they hauled down the bells from the belfry – although they did try to drive us off the grounds of the church. But, all the same, we were all standing there, watching.

**- The whole village had gathered to watch this, is that right?**

- No, not the whole village – it's just that we children all went there to watch. You know, it wasn't something that was publicly announced: what happened was that a small brigade would arrive in the village and... They were usually members of the Komsomol. Yes, they took part in this, alongside a couple of other people whom I don't remember.

**- Were there any protest actions by the local population?**

- No, not that I can think of.

**- How old were you at the time?**

- This was in 1930, so I was twelve more or less – yes, twelve.

**- So you were already going to school then, weren't you?**

- That's right, I was.

**- Please tell us about your school.**

- To get to our village's school I had to cross this road... That is, not at first, when we were still living on Grandfather's homestead, which, as I think I've told you, was right next to the school – our house was on the bank of the small Iurgamysh River, a tributary of the Tobol – but in 1927 or 1928 Father bought a new house by the Tobol River itself and we moved there. As a matter of fact, it was near the place where the Iurgamysh flows into the Tobol. Yes, and we children were splashing about in the Tobol all the time.

**- Yes, but we were asking more about your school as such: did it influence you in any way, for example?**

- Well, like any school does, I suppose. We were village children, after all – we were a quiet, disciplined bunch. As the saying goes, we were “quieter than water and lower than grass” [an English equivalent would be “quiet as mice”] We were always well-behaved and obedient.

**- Did you enjoy going to school?**

- Yes, I did – I found the lessons interesting. I attended that school for three years, but when I was about to start the fourth form, Father decided to send me to this school in our district's main village – it was a ShKM. [School of Kolkhoz Youth: instituted in 1923, these three-year schools admitted youngsters aged 12 to 18 who had completed four years of elementary schooling and provided them with a general education as well as theoretical and vocational training for agricultural work. In 1934, they were renamed ‘incomplete secondary schools’ (in the Soviet system a ‘complete’ secondary education entailed ten years of schooling)] Actually, for the fourth form I still had to attend an elementary school, but the following two years I went to that ShKM – a School of Kolkhoz Youth.

**- Did you have any childhood idols in those years?**

- Nothing of the sort. What do you mean by idols, though?

**- Well, for example: at school, did you get told about all these heroes?**

- Not that I can think of, no. Well, I mean... No. I didn't hear anything. No, you just didn't get that in the 1930s... or, rather, around 1929 and 1930, – there wasn't anything of that yet. But when we were with... when I was in the fourth form, I took part in... well, we had manual labour [‘introductory instruction in the productive process’ – a subject which was obligatory in most Soviet general education schools until about the mid-1930s, when there was a return to more traditional syllabi] And our school's headmaster – he was a very fascinating person, always on the go... I've unfortunately forgotten his surname: he was called Arkadii Ivanovich, but what was his surname?... I'm sure that a few days ago I'd still have been able to remember it... But now it's just slipped out of my mind. Anyway, he was a very enterprising person: he loved going to Kazakhstan on holidays, and some of us would also go along on these trips. Yes, and he had two workshops – a metal workshop and a carpentry one – both affiliated to the school. He also kept horses: in these stables which were next to the school building he actually kept three horses of his own, and we children would sometimes take part in grooming them and so on. Yes, even though we were just schoolchildren! Well, only now and then... because there was, of course, a groom to look after them, but we were sometimes allowed to lead these horses to the Tobol, to water them. We would take them there and also give them a good currying and brushing. But more frequently we were

given assignments in the workshops. There, we'd make... You see, they taught us how to plane wood and metal, and... Well, everything that you need for lathe-work and joinery or, rather, carpentry. We knew how to plane planks and we'd make tables, stools, and benches, and we'd sell them to the villagers. That is, the school would sell them for us. I don't remember how many kopecks we got for each stool, say, but in the course of the winter we did make quite a lot of furniture. Yes, and we also knew how to solder, which was very handy, since there was always someone who needed the bottom of a saucepan replaced, or that of a kettle, or a bucket. We would replace everything that needed mending, do all the jobs that we were given, and the kopecks would keep rolling in! And for these kopecks... Obriadin! Obriadin – that was the surname!... for these kopecks Arkadii Ivanovich would buy flour and groats. So that was that. Oh yes, and he'd take the most hard-working pupils with him on his trips to Kazakhstan. We'd travel to Kustanai, which is a hundred, a hundred and fifty kilometres from Kurgan. It's in the Kustanai area where various tributaries flow into our Tobol. I myself went on this trip twice. Yes, and there we would... Back then, we'd refer to the locals as Kirgiz, for some reason – when, in fact, they were almost certainly Kazakhs! [From the nineteenth century to the mid-1920s, Russian ethnographers generally called the Kazakh people 'Kirgiz', to distinguish the Kazakhs from the Cossacks (in Russian, *kazakhi* and *kazaki*, respectively). This practice officially ceased after 1925, when the Kazakh ASSR was set up, but, as Dmitrii Nikolaevich's account shows, old customs die hard] And they had these... in winter they stayed in their villages, but when the grasslands were warmed by the sun again, they'd leave their houses and take all their cattle to the steppes, where they would live in their *kibitki* [here 'nomad tents', but the word can also mean a 'covered wagon']. However, these *kibitki* weren't actually wagons, but exactly the same as *iurty* [Central Asian nomad tents]: yes, they'd live in these *iurty* during the grazing season. And we would arrive at these settlements of the Kirgiz – for some reason, that's what they called them in those days; now, of course, we just know them as Kazakhs. We'd go and talk to them – that is, Obriadin would ask their elders for permission to pitch our camping tents nearby, but separately from theirs. And that's where we'd stay for a few months, living on the fish we caught in the lakes. There were both freshwater and salt lakes. And the former were teeming with crucian carps which we'd catch ourselves: we had our own nets and we'd wade into the lakes and set up these sweep-nets. Oh yes, and we also had a wireless receiver with us: we rigged up an antenna and would try to pick up various stations. Once, we actually managed to pick up a radio station from Alma Ata, which was evidently broadcasting in their Kazakh language – and when we asked their elders if they wanted to come and listen, they said: "That's Shaitan talking. That's Shaitan." [in Islamic theology, Shaitan is the evil spirit] They refused to listen and they actually asked Arkadii Ivanovich to forbid this, which he duly did. It was only after they'd gone that we would... that he'd turn on the wireless again and we would tune in to Radio Moscow. So those are the kind of things I remember from that period. All this was in 1930, by the way. Well, and towards the end of August we made our way back home. Oh yes, I've just remembered: after earning ourselves some cash, we set off to have a look at these combine harvesters.

**- Where was this? Also in Kustanai?**

- No. We went to this place called Mokushino – by train. We visited the local *sovkhos* [state farm], near the Mokushino station... It was quite a large station – I'm not quite sure

how many kilometres it is from Kurgan to Mokushino; I'd say about 150 or 200 kilometres, but it may well be less... In fact, it must have been less, because our train journey just lasted a few hours – it certainly wasn't as far from Kurgan as Kungur [a town in Perm Oblast]. So we got there, went out into the fields and had a look at the combine harvesters at work. You know, these machines were a wonder back then, they were a novelty of the first rank! And we got to see them for ourselves! [The first Soviet-produced combine harvesters were developed in time for the 1931 grain harvest]

**- What was it like for you to see all this technology?**

- Yes, of course, that... Well, it's a long time ago, but I do remember that it was very much a novelty. When we got back to our village, we told everyone what we'd seen and how these combine harvesters worked.

**- So this technology did make a strong impression on you...**

- Of course. I mean, it was something completely new.

**- And did you experience a sense of pride about this?**

- Well, isn't it... Well, who knows? I mean, it's difficult to say now, because seventy years have passed since then – in fact, more than seventy... Yes, because I'm going to be eighty-six soon... And all that happened when I was still a child. So who knows? Although I suppose it must have been as you say, because we were all mighty pleased: both my family and I. Yes, and I kept telling the other children where we'd been and how we'd seen these machines at work. That's how it was.

**- Did you get good marks at school?**

- Who knows?! I can't really say – after all, the teachers didn't use any marks then: all they'd write in our exercise-books was "*sm*", that is, *smotreno* ['seen']. They never told us what marks we'd got – at least, that's how I remember it. [As a consequence of the educational experiments of the 1920s, formal marking had been abolished in schools – only to be restored with a vengeance by the early 1930s. From Dmitrii Nikolaevich's account of his experiences at the ShKM in the years 1930-32, we may see that they were very much a period of transition, since he mentions later that the teachers did award grades]

**- But were you a good pupil, say, in comparison with the others?**

- Well, I suppose I didn't really stand out from the rest of the class. I was like everyone else.

**- I thought that your headmaster would only take the best pupils along on these trips?**

- But that was for all the work we'd been doing – all these orders, you know. We worked hard and earned money for the school. That's why we were taken on these trips.

**- Didn't all this work affect your studies?**

- No. Why should it have? We had a lot of time, and it was enough to get everything done in. So no, it didn't get in the way of our school-work... During two or three summers, in fact, I went along on these trips. You see, from the very first day, almost, that I started the fifth form in that school, I signed up for the practical classes in these workshops because I knew that I'd get a chance to go to various places and see interesting things.

**- Were there many teachers at your school?**

- Not in the elementary school – there was just one teacher there. We had the same teacher up to the third form – you see, the first three forms were taught in the same classroom, with just one teacher for them all. We had this female teacher.



**- How many children were there in that classroom then? It must have been quite a large number...**

- Yes, there were a lot of children. The way it was, was that you had a whole row of up to ten desks, and there'd be two children to each desk. I remember how my old teacher... You see, when I was in the fourth and fifth forms, I would sometimes go back to my old school and... The teacher there was called Evgeniia Atol'fovna – her patronymic must have been something like Anatol'evna, but for some reason everyone would address her as Atol'fovna. I think it must have been Anatol'evna. Anyway, her surname was Danilo – that I know for sure, but as for her real patronymic, we never really found that out. We just called her Atol'fovna. But it's very likely that she was an Anatol'evna, after all. Well, and she always called me Mitia or Dima – I don't remember which of the two... although it was probably Mitia – and when I went round to my old school, she'd always ask me: "Mitia, why don't you go and give the third formers a hand? – I've set them this arithmetic problem, so if you like, you can go and check what answers they've come up with." Yes, and during these classes, she'd write something on the blackboard for the pupils of one of the three forms; the next minute, she'd turn the panel round and write something else for another form. So at one and the same time, she was giving the second form their lesson, the third form theirs and... She was able to keep an eye on all of them. But that's the way it was: there was just one teacher to go round these three forms, and she had to divide up the lessons like that. I remember it very well because I dropped in at my old school quite often, and she would always give me, say, a text to dictate to one of her forms... although, as a matter of fact, it was usually arithmetic which she would be teaching them.

**- What about in the School of Kolkhoz Youth?**

- Oh, in the ShKM... well, when I attended the ShKM, I wasn't living at home any more, but separately. You see, the school was in a larger village ten kilometres away from ours, so Father decided to send me to live there during term-time.

**- Where did you stay when you were living in that village?**

- Well, I lived with some relatives – with my other grandmother's family. Yes, and at the ShKM we had a specialist teacher for each subject: a mathematician, a physicist, and so on. And we were taught by them. Now, in those days the schools were also being shaken up, and they'd introduced this brigade method of teaching [The "brigade method" was one of the various pedagogical innovations thrust on Soviet schools in the early 1920s. The 4-6 students making up a 'brigade' would study a textbook amongst themselves, with the teacher being on hand merely to answer questions or provide help where necessary. Grades were awarded to the brigade as a whole, rather than to individual pupils. These experiments in "progressive education" proved to be a failure and began to be dropped by 1931-32]. I know this, because that's what we had in the fifth and sixth forms. This is how it worked: there was a table – a square table – and you'd have four pupils seated around it. Each one would be sitting like we are now, for example – at this table – except that the tables there were all square. You had one pupil sitting at each side of the table, and each group of four would be given a textbook... we were also allowed to take some textbooks home, but not all... So what we'd do in the lessons was to sit around the table, read something from the textbook, write down this and that – I can't tell you what exactly we were supposed to do, but I do remember very clearly that the only teacher in our school who refused to use this brigade method was our maths teacher, Aleksandr

Vasil'evich – I think his surname was Volonin, but I'm not entirely sure. Anyway, he refused to acknowledge this method and would examine each pupil individually – whereas in the brigade method the teacher would ask at our table: “Who's answering the questions for your group?” For some reason, it was always me who was chosen as the speaker. And if I got a *chetverka*, [the mark ‘four’ (out of five) equivalent to ‘good’] everyone else in my brigade would also get *chetverki*. There were also *piaterki* by then, too, [‘five’ or ‘excellent’] and if the speaker got a *piaterka*, so would the whole brigade. If it was a *dvoika*, [‘two’ or ‘unsatisfactory’, effectively the lowest mark] well, then we were all in the same boat! So there you are: that's how it was.

**- One for all, and...**

- And all for one, yes. It was this teaching method which they used in our school – the brigade method. That is, the maths teacher rejected it... In his lessons each pupil answered for himself.

**- In what light was this seen at your school? – I mean that one of the teachers was refusing to...?**

- How could we know? How can you expect a schoolboy to see such things in one light or another? At any rate, we behaved as always – as was expected from us: we didn't start criticising him or anything; there was no criticism from our quarter.

**- But what did the other teachers think of this?**

- Oh, but they all taught in the same way.

**- No, what I mean is what did they think of the fact that your maths teacher didn't support this particular teaching method?**

- Who knows? I just don't know how they felt about it, but that's how it was: he didn't support this method, he went his own way. Everyone in his class had to be prepared to answer when examined, and he would give each pupil an individual mark reflecting his or her abilities. Then there were the lessons in agriculture. Our school actually had an agronomist on its staff – her name was Elizaveta Ivanovna Gus'kina – and she was in charge of these lessons, which, for some reason, always turned out to be very lively. She would often take us to some *kolkhoz* or *sovkhoz*... or, rather, not a *sovkhoz*, but a *kommuna*... [collective farm]. Yes, she would take us to this *kommuna* so that we could see how they looked after the cattle there. For example, she'd tell us first about the various diseases affecting cattle, then she'd take us to one of the animals [with bovine tuberculosis], show us how to comb through its hair to find these fistulas and she'd squeeze the pus out of them. She also took us to the cow stables, so we could see how they were fed and milked. But we weren't allowed to have a go ourselves – we were just taught the methods. So those are the kind of lessons we had. But when I was in the sixth form... that happened to be when we were deported – in March. So I had to complete the sixth form here [in Perm Oblast].

**- When were you deported?**

- On the 25<sup>th</sup>. But this is a very long story. We were deported on the 25th of October.. that is, of March 1933. In the morning, they loaded us all on various sledges and transported us to... But there's quite a lot to tell before that: you see, Father joined the *kolkhoz* in 1931.

**- Did he want to do that, or was he...?**

- Do you really think that back then they went around asking if people wanted to or not? Of course not! He had no choice but to join. The village assembly convoked a meeting of

the poor peasants: “We’re going to organise a *kolkhoz*! We’re going to organise one!”, and if you didn’t go along with this, you’d be considered either a kulak or a *podkulachnik* [‘kulak’s henchman’ – a term invented by the authorities to cover any peasant opposing collectivization, regardless of his wealth].

**- But surely your father didn’t belong to the village poor?**

- No, no, he didn’t. We lived... Our household was a good and strong one: we had cattle and everything, really... we had poultry, too. Besides, all of us worked. There were fourteen folks in Grandfather’s family, all of them good working hands. And we’d all go mowing together – I remember that so well, and it was just like in *Anna Karenina*, when Levin organises the hay-harvest – remember those scenes? Oh, that really was a fine thing! And I can see it all in front of me now, just as if I’d been swept back to my childhood... Yes, and there were also *pomochi*, [pl. ‘mutual aid between fellow villagers’] which meant that you could say to the other peasants: “Come on, give us a hand today...”, and that way you came to an agreement like this: “You help me today with the reaping – or whatever – I’ll help you tomorrow.” Yes, and thanks to these *pomochi*, you’d get ten mowers coming out to the field, carrying these *litovki* [large scythes with handles]. You know, these *litovki* were this long! [*shows their span with his arms*] they had a sweep of over a *sazhen* [2.13 metres]. So if you had ten mowers with these scythes going through a meadow, they’d leave a good hectare clear in no time! It was a feast for the eyes, this! All the while they mowed, there’d be singing, chatting, noise all round, and people cracking jokes! And then afterwards, we’d all run down to the lake and take a good bath. The mowers were all strong, young lads, and they’d get everything mown really quickly: in one or two days the whole meadow would be finished. And we children would rake the grass into heaps – the women, too... everyone went out to the fields to help with this work. The whole family. The men would cock the grass, we too would run here and there with our rakes, and then we’d stack everything into large hayricks. We’d get this done either in the evening after finishing the mowing or the following day. Grandfather would stand on top of the hayrick, holding it together, whilst a few lads below loaded it onto a *volokusha* [a primitive sledge, consisting of two poles to which the load is tied and which cross each other on the back of the horse or ox being used to drag it.] Actually, no, we didn’t use a *volokusha* – what we did was simply to lead a horse close up to the hayricks, wrap this long rope around them all, and harness the horse to it. That’s how we’d bring the hay home – I was always allowed to ride the horse. Yes, already from the age of five or six, I’d get to ride the horse that drew our hay home. And it was the same for all the other children.

**- Well, I suppose your father wasn’t too happy about having to join the *kolkhoz*, was he?**

- Oh, who knows? Mother for her part did cry, but as to Father... Well, already in the first winter he was sent to... You know, after setting up the *kolkhoz*, some of the *kolkhozniki* [collective farmers] – about fifteen or so – were sent to this consumer service enterprise in Il’etskoe, to do timber cutting work. I don’t know why they decided to send the *kolkhozniki* there, but, at any rate, they were engaged on this work all through January and February, and only got back in March. So Father had to cut timber for a good two or two and a half months. This was in the winter months of both 1931 and 1932 – in 1933, he didn’t go and, in fact, no one else from the *kolkhoz* went, either. But as for your question, I can’t really say. We’d been deported by then. And how they deported us!... In

1948 or 1947, when I was a student at the university here, I actually went back to my native village during the holidays. I'd always, you see, felt this... what do you call it?... this great nostalgia when we were in exile.

**- You were homesick?**

- I certainly was: I yearned for the Tobol, I missed the Lebiazh'e Lake, all those places where I'd spent my childhood. You know, in the summers, we children would get together to pasture the horses for the night: we'd lead them to a meadow by the shores of the Lebiazh'e Lake and spend the whole night there. There were lots of fish in that lake, and we'd hook quite a decent number. Yes, we'd make a camp fire which would last us for the whole night, and let the horses graze freely on the meadow: we left them to their own devices, and we'd get on with the fishing. So yes, I missed all that – to such an extent, in fact, that at the first opportunity, in 1947, I revisited my native village. I went there and met – this was in 1948, though, I think – I met the chairman of the village soviet who back then had overseen our deportation. He was working as a carpenter in a brigade [a work-team] and when he saw me walking round the village, he evidently asked some neighbours: “Who is this young man, do you know?” Well, and someone told him, because when I was strolling back to the end of the village from where I'd started my walk, he beckoned to me with his finger to come up to him and introduced himself. He told me his name was Serkov, and I said: “I know that name – I've heard it before.” He then asked: “Are you angry with me?” I replied: “What do you mean? I don't even know who you are! Why do you ask that?” Well, then he put his cards on the table and explained that he was the chairman of the village soviet who'd authorised our deportation: “I received this directive to find 17 kulak families and make arrangements for their eviction.” There had been such a directive, that was true. And he also explained this: “You know, I had to work with this Committee of Poor Peasants and we managed to gather together some *edinolichniki* [individual peasant farmers], but the trouble was there weren't enough left, so we had to fill up the numbers with some *kolkhozniki*, too. That's why your family ended up on our list...” [The original Committees of Poor Peasants (*kombedy*) were set up by the Bolsheviki in every village under their control, in the summer of 1918, to assist the armed detachments forcing the 'kulaks' and 'hoarders' to surrender their surplus grain. The *kombedy* were disbanded in November of that year, but were re-established shortly before the collectivization campaign of 1929-30, in order to justify it as an attack on the 'kulaks' as an 'exploitative class'.] And to this day I... Well, all right, it's better to forget these... [*pauses and collects himself*]. Anyway, the fact is that Grandfather was deported at some point before us [in 1931] – and, later, these two Bobrov brothers were also evicted together with us: Mikhail Ivanovich, the eldest brother, and Egor Ivanovich, the youngest of all the brothers. You see, our family had some ploughed fields next to those of the Bobrovs, and I knew them very well. Six brothers they were: each stronger than the other... Real *bogatyri*! [the knightly heroes of Russian folklore] Each finer than the other. Strapping, sturdy, mighty fellows they were. One just couldn't take one's eyes off them. They all had their own households and families. One of these brothers, Grigorii Ivanovich, had also taken part [in the First World War] – like my father, he was conscripted into the army in 1912. He served in the Far East, and then, when the Civil War started and the old army fell apart, he also made his way back home and, like Father, he hid himself [from forced mobilisation by the Whites] on that field beyond the forest. But when the Reds attacked and forced the

Whites to retreat, he and his brothers went back to their families, and Uncle Grisha actually enrolled in the Red Army. Or, rather, he organised this partisan detachment – although I suppose you’d hardly call it a detachment: it was just him and five others – and they all then joined the Red Army. He actually became a Civil War hero and was even awarded the most famous military decoration there was at the time: the Order of the Red Banner. So that was Grigorii Ivanovich Bobrov – I knew him well. He was a tall and striking fellow – all the Bobrov brothers were like that, in fact. Yes, and when this collectivization business began, he was one of the organisers of our village *kolkhoz*, together with Father. That is, Father wasn’t one of the initiators himself, but he evidently joined the *kolkhoz* of his own accord. So the two of them – Father and Uncle Grisha, which is what I called him – organised the *kolkhoz*: Grigorii Ivanovich was elected its chairman, but when in 1933 there weren’t any real kulak families to round up and, to make up the numbers, they picked his two brothers, Egor and Mikhael, there wasn’t anything he could do to save them. So that’s how two brothers from that family ended up going into exile as kulaks... There’s just no way to explain it! I mean, where’s the logic behind it?

**- Do you remember how people in your village felt about this? Your neighbours, for example?**

- How could I know that? After all, at that time I was living ten kilometres away [in the village where the ShKM was]. I really can’t say. All I know is that when I arrived in our village that morning [of the 25th of March], I found everyone in tears. They [the GPU officials] soon turned up with these two carts and told us “not to take anything”. That is, what they said was: “All you can take is this... Put on what you normally wear.” So we got dressed – they didn’t let us take anything with us. Mother, for example, had this necklace which she’d inherited from... I don’t remember from whom, but it was a small gold chain – and they didn’t let her have that, either. She was actually about to put it on just before leaving the house, but one of the officials snatched it from her.

**- What about food? Could you take that with you?**

- Yes, food they did allow. Now, we’d actually baked something – a few loaves, I think. You see, they hadn’t told us the day before that we were going to be evicted that morning, but we always baked bread every day anyway, so that came in handy because they did actually say that we had to take some food with us. Well, and we also took a small sack of wheat – about a *pud* [c. 16kg] probably, although it may have been more. Yes, that’s all we took with us apart from those loaves. We couldn’t take anything else...

**- This was all on the same day, wasn’t it? I mean, when they told you all this and you were actually...**

- Yes, they came in the morning and loaded everyone onto these carts, and that was it. They gave us about two hours in which to get ready.

**- Two hours for all seventeen families?**

- No. That is, each family was given two hours, but they came to us separately, with these two carts. In one of them... you see, they allowed Mother to take this box... or what’s the word?... this chest into which we’d put some of our linen. They let us take out this one chest, but nothing more. Everything else had to stay in the house. However, I forgot to say that before this – three days before – they came to our house and declared it under boycott. What do I mean by ‘boycott’, you may wonder? Well, it’s simply that they got some planks and hammered them in crosswise so as to wall up our gate and... Now, you

see, we still had a cow left. Everything else – the horses, everything – we'd handed over to the *kolkhoz*. All our property, all our [agricultural] implements were in the *kolkhoz*. We had just kept this one cow and a couple of sheep, hens, and some other poultry... So, as I was saying, they came and walled everything up – the entrance...

**- Who was it who did all this?**

- The Soviet authority.

**- Yes, but who actually carried it out?**

- I don't know. Well, I suppose it was these young lads from the Komsomol, because they were the ones who later escorted [the GPU officials on the day we were deported from our house]. Yes, these Komsomol members who went round carrying Berdan rifles – these old hunting rifles, you know.

**- Were they from your village?**

- Yes, they were local lads. So they walled up everything – even the entrance to the cowshed and the other stables, so none of the animals or birds could roam outdoors any more. It was terrible: our cow was lowing all the time, the sheep were bleating, because we couldn't get any fodder or water to them. Such senseless cruelty. I mean, to treat human beings like that – all right, but why these animals? What had they done wrong? There was no way of getting into the stables.... So for 72 hours... no, I think it was a bit less, actually – perhaps some 60 hours went by in this way till we were evicted. They came and rounded us up.

**- At that moment, how did you and your family explain this to yourselves? For what reason did you think you were being deported? Who was to blame for it, in your view?**

- Explain? I wonder if that would have even been possible. I certainly don't remember anything of the sort. I don't know... I mean, what is there to explain? It was a misfortune, a calamity. What's there to explain?!

**- But did you blame anyone for it?**

- No, we didn't blame anyone – not that I recall. On the contrary, Father often said... this was later, though, when we were already at our place of exile... he'd say: "Don't forget, boys, to work hard at school! Always prepare for your lessons, all right? That's what's good about Soviet power: that it gives you an education. So study hard!" That's what Father especially insisted on when we were in exile... As for explaining *that*, the devil only knows! How can one explain it.... I mean, even to this day I still can't figure it out.

**- You didn't think that the regime was to blame, that Stalin...?**

- Ah, but there wasn't any Stalin then, you see – in the [early] 1930s, that is. No, Stalin we got to know later.

**- So who was in the 'limelight' back then?**

- Well, Molotov. I remember how – when I was in the fourth or fifth form – our teacher came into the classroom and said: "We're seeing some important changes: Rykov, Aleksei Ivanych has been removed from his post..." Yes, I remember that moment very clearly, as if it were happening right before my eyes; it's stuck in my memory: "The head of the government is now Molotov." What's funny is that this was the first time we all heard of him!

**- And were you given any explanation as to why Rykov had been removed from his post? How did you react to that?**

- Oh, I don't remember that. To be honest, I just don't remember. I know they explained something about Rykov having... but it's very likely that Rykov's name didn't mean much to me back then and that I soon forgot about it. It was only later, really, that his name became familiar to me – because he had, after all, been a famous revolutionary. It was only then that we found out who he was and what he'd done.

**- Please tell us where they took you – and how long the journey was and what means of transport they put you in...**

- Well, first of all, they took us to Kurgan. There, they put us into a huge empty... storehouse, with a bare earth floor. They put a lot of people in there: we certainly weren't the first ones. What they did, when we arrived, was to separate us [the various families from the same village], telling each family to go to a particular area of the storehouse. They separated all the families. We didn't have anything to eat. Except for boiling water, there was nothing – we were supplied with this boiling water by courtesy of the Soviet authority, which also provided us with guards to 'look after' us. No one was permitted to leave the building.

**- How many were you in that building?**

- A very large number, that's for sure – it was a huge building. And I remember that when we went inside, the whole right side was chock-full, so they had to lead us way into the depot until they found a free spot for us, somewhere on the left. And there we put down our sacks. Although, as a matter of fact, I don't think we actually had any sacks – there isn't much you can fit on a cart if it's got to carry a lot of people, too! I don't know... They didn't let us take anything with us, you see! We had to leave everything behind: our clothes, our livestock, everything we'd once owned. Well, for example, Father had these two walking-sticks: one with a silver handle, and the other one made of boxwood, as he told me himself, I remember. They hadn't let him take these either – "Leave them here," they'd said, "you won't be needing them." They didn't let us take anything.

**- And how long were you kept in this storehouse for?**

- I don't quite remember. I suppose it must have been about a week.

**- What did you live on?**

- We lived on... Boiling water for a start!... Well, we had our relatives, you see. We had some relatives in Kurgan who'd moved there from their native villages. And then there were our neighbours from our own village, who would come to Kurgan to bring us provisions. In those times, you see, there were very strong bonds between country-people: godparents, godchildren, neighbours, all these community ties were very firm... Unlike what we have now. Because these ties have weakened somewhat in recent years, but back then... Well, it was simply different. Our former neighbours would make their way to Kurgan and bring what they could. But how much was that?

**- Did they actually let these neighbours visit you?**

- Yes, they could come freely... As I was saying, though, there wasn't much they could bring – but at least it was food. Some neighbour would bring a bit of milk, another a small loaf of bread, and so on. Even though this was 1933 – a time of famine. Yes, that was when the famine had set in. So, as you can understand, there wasn't much they could regale us with. The harvests gathered in by the *kolkhozy* were pretty bad anyway, but, all the same, everything had to be handed over [to the procurement agencies]. In the *kolkhozy*, they didn't get anything for the 'labour days' they'd put in, and all they had to

live on was what they could grow in their own kitchen gardens, if they had any. It was a very difficult time. But, still, people would bring us things. And I remember how later, when we were being transported, when we were in those wagons – they were closed wagons, but the train would stop at the various stations on the way – the guards would bring us boiling water. Mother would pour some over the wheat we had with us, and we would eat this kasha of sorts, which was more like wheat pulp. So that's what we lived on – I remember that very well – during the train journey, that is.

**- How long were you on the train for?**

- Well, let's see, how far is it from here to Kurgan?... I suppose it must have been something like 48 hours. We were put in these wagons, which back then used to be called "cattle trucks" for some reason. Now we'd just call them goods wagons.

**- How many people were there in each wagon approximately?**

- Listen, I don't know, but they were all packed, it was chock-full everywhere. That's why it was so difficult to lie down to sleep. I don't know, we had this box... or chest, as I said, and the four of us children would somehow stretch out on top of it. As for our parents, I suppose they must have just sat down on the floor. That is, they probably had something to sit on – some sacks or bundles. Yes, I think they were, in fact, sitting on these sacks, but I don't know how they managed to get any sleep.

**- What did you talk about during the journey? Did you try to cheer each other up somehow?**

- Honestly, I don't remember anything of what we might have talked about then. Hunger was our main worry. It was a hard journey – and damn cold, too. There was no heating whatsoever. The guards had to let us out, well, to relieve nature, as there weren't any toilets in the wagons. So the train would stop – the whole train would stop somewhere on the way between two places, between the stations, and everyone would get out, or, rather, tumble out and relieve themselves. Girls, boys, everyone together, not worrying if they could be seen – there was no embarrassment. Yes, that's something I remember all right. And then we would all be loaded back into the wagons – the guards would climb up, shut the doors, wind the wagons with strands of barbed wire, and the train would trundle on again. A few hours later, it would make another stop, we'd be let out again under the supervision of the guards, and so on and so forth until we finally reached a station where they opened the windows and told us: "We're here, everyone disembark!" We'd arrived in Usol'e [a town in Perm Oblast], at Usol'e station, and from there we had to continue our journey on foot. Again, they gave us one cart, and we... Well, do you think one cart can carry six people?! Besides, there was also that heavy chest. [pauses] As I said, all we had on us were the clothes we were wearing when we were evicted from our village. Now, when we reached Usol'e, it was already April and the roads were beginning to become slushy with the spring thaw. A lot of the men and women were wearing *valenki* [felt boots]. But the road kept thawing out more and more, and we had to hurry to be able to cross the Kama River whilst it was still frozen over. We were walking along the right bank of the Kama. Yes, I remember how we reached this little town, Orel, where I'm not sure if we actually spent the night or not, but, at any rate, we were given the opportunity to warm ourselves a bit and, well, even to dry our footwear properly. But then we set off again when it was still dark – on foot, of course, until we reached... I don't know how many days and nights we had to march like this, but we must have covered a distance of a hundred and fifty kilometres at least. But I just don't remember how many days we were



on the road for – my memory didn't register it. Anyway, we reached Pozhva, [a settlement in the north of Perm Oblast] barely alive, of course, since we didn't have any food. They didn't give us anything on the way.

**- When you were walking all these long stretches, you must have been escorted by someone, right?**

- Yes, we were under convoy.

**- How many guards were there?**

- Don't know.

**- Were they armed?**

- I'm afraid I don't remember that, either. But I suppose they must have been armed. After all, it was the NKVD who accompanied us on this journey. That is, during the first stage [on the way to Kurgan] we'd been escorted by members of the Komsomol, but then it was the NKVD who took over from them. So I'm pretty sure they were armed – especially bearing in mind that ours was a huge echelon: a long string of carts, several hundred families... Some of them were transported further north, whereas we were taken south, to the district of... to the Chermoz district [Chermoz is a small town 100 km to the north of Perm]. Yes, Pozhva was in the Chermoz district – that's where they took us. There, by the shore of this farmer's dam, there was another huge stone building, which had evidently once housed some kind of workshop, but was now completely empty. I remember it as a very tall building indeed, with the windows high up for some reason. Perhaps it was also a storehouse of some sort? Well, they led us into this building, but there at least... It had these stoves and it was nice and warm, so we could dry ourselves properly. And it was also there that they gave us rations for the first time – 200 grams of bread for everyone. Brown bread.

**- For everyone? For the children, too?**

- Yes, for everyone. Both the children and the adults were each handed out 200 grams of bread. Well, and the following day the adults were taken out to work. And they set about getting as much done as they could in the time they'd...

**- What kind of work was it?**

- Father... Well, he told them that he was a carpenter, so... I don't know what assignments the other ones were given – for some reason I just don't remember what work they were put to do. Anyway, Father worked in Pozhva for a few days... I think that this building we all lived in for the first few days belonged to some local [economic administrative] agency, which was deciding which jobs to allocate [to the able-bodied settlers]. A bit later, we were... They gave us some accommodation: we were sent to this local peasant's house on the other shore of the small Rotanka River. This peasant actually owned two houses, in one of which he lived himself, whilst in the other one – this old two-storey house – he had a carpentry workshop on the ground floor. We were put up in the first floor. Let's see, how many of us were there?... Yes, apart from ours there were three other families – so they lodged all four of us families on that floor. I suppose the total space we had was something like these two rooms here. Well, and there was a stove, so we could heat the place and that... So, yes, they lodged us in this... We were four families in all, and they put us up in that place for the time being. Father, however, had been selected for work and his living quarters were somewhere else. He was soon sent to Chermoz, though – after a few days, in fact.

**- So he was drafted into the labour army (*trudarmiia*), right?**

- No, no. There wasn't any *trudarmiia* yet in those days. He was sent to work on the construction of the settlement, the 'special settlement' near Chermoz. And towards the beginning of autumn, we too were transferred from Pozhva to that 'special settlement' called Novochemozskii. It had been built by the 'special resettlers' [the official term for exiled 'kulaks'] and was cut off from the other places in the area by this dense forest which surrounded it. It was about three kilometres from Chermoz, though. And Father worked as a carpenter in the village, whereas the rest... all the young people were sent to the woods to work in the forestry industry, felling timber. They... well, considering how many people there were in each family... and, you know, there were many families in the village... you can get a rough idea of how many people lived in the village. Let's see... [*tries to remember*] Yes, there was one block here, another one there... in all, there were four blocks. This is how the houses were arranged [*shows this with his hands*]... Or, rather, not houses, but barracks – you know, these long barracks, divided [into two parts] by the main wall. So you had... let's see... one, two, three families [*shows this with his hands*] housed in each side of the barracks. Yes, and there were three rooms on each side – apart from the kitchen, which was shared – since each family was allocated one room – irrespective of whether there were two or ten people in it. Each family would still get just one room.

**- And how did you get on with your neighbours at the time? Were you generally on friendly terms, or did you ever quarrel sometimes?**

- Never – there were never any quarrels. Everyone was crushed with grief, so how can you expect... This wasn't... No, it was only later, after we'd lived there for a number of years, that you might find someone quarrelling... But back then, I mean – how can you expect strangers to start quarrelling amongst themselves?

**- You helped one another, perhaps, or at least those people you knew, yes?**

- Yes, of course, we all helped one another – What else do you..? I mean, we were all members of a community. Well, and don't forget that we didn't have anything: neither hens to lay eggs, nor spades, nor axes – we had absolutely nothing! So how would we have survived if we hadn't helped each other? Of course, we helped...

**- Do you remember any examples of this mutual assistance?**

- Of course I do!... Take, for instance, this old woman who lived next door to us... I really don't understand how she and her son ended up in exile. To think that she might have been a 'woman-kulak' wherever she came from, that's just absurd! She was a little old woman with a son, who was the same age as me. Was he supposed to be a 'kulak' then? And his mother a 'woman-kulak'?! Anyway, that's the way it was: she'd ended up being deported. Her eldest son, I think, was serving in the army, in Sverdlovsk [Ekaterinburg], and he eventually settled there, whereas she and the youngest son were taken to our 'special settlement' and housed in the barracks next door to ours. Well, and... her son fell ill once – he caught a chill or something and was laid up for quite a few days, and she was too weak herself to be able to fetch water for him. Who wouldn't lend a hand in such a situation? Of course we helped her: I went to fetch water for her a number of times. Now, to get some fresh water you had to go either to this spring which was one and a half kilometres from the village, or to the cattle-yard where there was a well – yes, a well had already been dug, you see. I'd usually go to the well myself, since it was closer: about a kilometre from the village. Yes, and not just me but a number of us would go and fetch water for the old woman and her son. How would we have survived

otherwise? I mean, we didn't have anything... we were real have-nots, so to speak, we didn't even have proper axes. Fortunately, though, Father, who was working as a carpenter, had got to know this... You see, he was sent to work for a while in the neighbouring village called Karakozka – it was about half a kilometre from Novochemozskii – and was billeted at the house of a very friendly peasant family, whom he helped a lot, and who gave him a spade and an axe as presents. So he brought these home, and with this axe my younger brother and I would go into the forest to fetch firewood. The forest was right next to our village... As I said, we didn't have anything otherwise. But thanks to the axe we were able to fetch some wood to heat our barracks... The [following] summer, fortunately, we were brought some tools... So yes, we helped one another a lot.

**- Did the experience of exile in any way affect how you got on with one another in your family? I mean, perhaps you felt more united by...**

- Listen, it was very difficult in exile. The rations we received were 200 grams of bread. The bread was... Well, it was a chunk about the size of these small loaves you can get nowadays. But the bread would actually arrive [in the village shop] as these huge loaves of three kilograms apiece – they were huge rye loaves: this high... and this long... [*shows with his hands*]... yes, these wide loaves. Now, to get these separate portions of 200 grams, [the shopkeeper] would cut the large loaves into chunks of this thickness [*shows with his hands*]... Yes, and then, of course, one of us had to go to the shop and bring the chunks we'd been allotted home... Now, bear in mind that we were all hungry and cold... So it wasn't so much a question of getting on with one another ...! I mean, of course, [*pauses and collects himself*] we weren't exactly of good cheer... Anyway, I made this... I got a stick and tied a thread to it... and constructed this balance, which we'd use to... We'd hang one of these chunks of bread from each of the two ends and check that everyone was getting the same – if there was any imbalance, so to speak, we'd pluck out a crumb from the heavier chunk until it stopped outweighing the opposite end, until they were both even... Yes, and we'd simply share all the crumbs that were left on the table. And everyone was satisfied... That is, a bit later one or other of the children would invariably start crying: "Who got more? Who got more?!"

**- No, what I mean is whether this whole experience brought you closer together in some way?**

[*pause – a heavy sigh*] – Who knows... whether it brought us closer together or... At any rate, we didn't quarrel. But we all had our ups and downs, of course. We started attending the school from... You see, my brothers – Aleksei, the next-eldest after me, also started going to school... Now, at the ShKM in our native region, I was in the sixth form when we were deported – I managed to complete that year, though, at a school in Pozhva. After arriving in the 'special settlement' [in the autumn of 1933], I was therefore able to go straight into the seventh form – now actually at a proper secondary school [unlike the ShKM – see note above], in Chermoz, which was three kilometres from our village. Yes, I was given the opportunity to study.

**- Was that a school only for the children of the 'special re-settlers' or...?**

- No, no. It was an ordinary secondary school – a ten-year district school in Chermoz. And I was admitted into the seventh form. That was the school I went to from then [i.e. in contrast to the ShKM, which did not provide a 'complete' secondary education].

**- Were you never discriminated against there?**

- No, not at all.

**- How did your teachers treat you?**

- Kindly and helpfully. They knew what it was like for us. I remember how my physics teacher, Anfiya Timofeevna, asked me why... You see, the school provided hot breakfasts, but they cost ten kopecks and I didn't have any money, so I usually stayed behind in the classroom during the morning break... Well, Anfiya Timofeevna noticed me sitting there once and she asked me: "Why don't you go have your breakfast?" I've forgotten what I replied, but, evidently it... Well, she pulled out three 1 ruble notes from her wallet and pressed them into my hand like this. I took them and stared at them in amazement – I mean, three rubles! That was like a fortune!

**- You hadn't seen any before?**

- That's right, I hadn't. Well, I thanked her, of course – I don't remember how I thanked her and what I said, but she just motioned me to run over to the canteen before the lunch break ended: "Get a move on, or you'll be late!" she said, and I darted across the school-yard. So I had my first meal there: they'd give you a piece of bread – about 100 grams – and a bowl of *kasha* [porridge] as a second course. That's what all the schoolchildren got. And so I too started going there to have breakfast – since those three rubles lasted me a good month... When I told my parents about this the first time, they said that it was all right for me to accept this gift and have a warm breakfast at school... Yes, all the teachers were kind to us and we positively adored them and held them in great respect. They were good, kind people.

**- Did any of the other children of the 'special re-settlers' also attend that school?**

- Well, you see, I was the first one... I was the only one [in my form]: all the other children from the 'special settlement' who were my age went to work. But Father said to me: "You just make sure you get to school on time, Mit'ka. Don't worry about anything else." He'd often repeat this reflection of his: "That's the good thing about Soviet power – that it gives you an education. So mind you study hard!" And so I went to that school... I was badly dressed, of course, but I think no one paid any attention to it then. That was something that people weren't particularly fussy about in those times. No one tried to bully me or wound my feelings. That is, a couple of lads did once, but this classmate of mine, who was also a local, stood up for me, and after that no one else tried to pick on me.

**- How did those lads try to bully you? What did they say?**

- Oh, that was so long ago I've forgotten! They pushed me around a bit... [*pauses*] or perhaps they just tried to tease me. But that friend of mine stepped in and sorted it out: after that, I didn't get any more trouble. So, anyway, eventually I'd completed my ten years of secondary education and had my certificate.

**- What about the Young Pioneers – were you able to apply for admission there, through your school?**

- No, no – I wasn't a Pioneer. There was a Pioneer organisation in Chermoz, but not in my school, as far as I can remember. Besides, have you ever heard of there being Pioneers in the seventh form?! [The cut-off age for admission into the Young Pioneers was 15 – the age of most children by the end of the seventh form in Soviet schools] What we had was the Komsomol – and by the time I was in the tenth form, I'd become a member of the Komsomol. Yes, I was admitted into the Komsomol.

**- Was this important for you?**

- You bet it was! I mean, how could it have been otherwise?

- **So it was something you actively strove for?**

- I strove for it and I was jolly well glad when they admitted me.

- **They didn't put any obstacles in your way?**

- No, I don't recall any, no! All I remember is that it was very solemn – I mean the admission ceremony at the Party *raikom* [district committee]... that is, the Komsomol *raikom*... where I was readily admitted into the Komsomol. I was very glad and I always took an active part in Komsomol work and carried out all the assignments. So I...

- **Were your parents also glad that you were admitted into the Komsomol?**

- Well, Father was always... You know, we only saw him on rest-days, because he lived and worked away from home. And as for Mama, well... you know how it is: a mother is happy if her son is happy.

- **By the way, what kind of work did your mother have to do in exile?**

- She was a sick person, so she wasn't made to... that is, in all, she probably spent just one month doing general work [i.e. manual labour outdoors], and then she... She was a sick person, so she was eventually exempted from this work and registered as an invalid and so on, and she didn't have to work outdoors any more. She'd do this drawn-thread work, knitting and embroidering various table-cloths, and then I would go round the villages with her to see if we could find someone willing to exchange some potatoes for one of these table-cloths. If they gave us a bucket of potatoes for one of them, we were only too happy. Sometimes we'd even get one and a half or two buckets, depending on what we'd managed to settle for. So there you are. Because we did get help from people, and later, when we were in Chermoz [district] and were still struggling to survive – our situation, you see, didn't really improve until... Well, in the spring [of 1933], we couldn't plant anything, since we didn't have any crops or vegetables to sow. Towards the autumn, though, we were allotted a plot in front of the house [i.e. the barracks in the 'special settlement']... It was an area where they'd cut down all the trees for a few metres round, and so we had to grub up the ground to clear all the stumps. Everyone in the family who was able to helped with this. And, in this way, Father and me eventually managed to grub up a few *sotki* [hundredths of a hectare] – about two, I suppose – where we planted some potatoes. Yes, and then came the winter of 1934... no, hang on, was it really 1934? No, we're still talking about 1933 here. Yes, because we moved [to the 'special settlement'] in the autumn of that year. That 1933 was a very hard year for us. We survived, but very many people died, very many [*pause*] died, [*pause*] every day [*pauses and collects himself*]. Every day we saw people being buried. So many died. But we survived and, again, it was thanks to Father. When they'd been building the 'special settlement', you see, he was sent to live in a nearby village, and one of the peasants from that village worked in a slaughter-house – in the Chermoz cattle abattoir. So Father asked him: "What do you do with the blood?" That fellow said: "We just let it drain." – "Could you collect some in a bucket?" – "Sure I can, sure – a bucket or... hang on, I've got this small barrel..." – "Well, do me a favour and fill that barrel with blood, and I'll come and fetch it." It was already snowing by then. And Father and me went to the slaughter-house and brought home this barrel of frozen blood. And Mama started frying small quantities of it every day. Now, for frying, of course, you need some butter, and we didn't have any – not even vegetable oil – so I really don't know how she managed to do without it. Because there just wasn't any butter – apart from a bit of bread, you couldn't get

anything in the shops. They gave us nothing, not even groats – nothing. During the whole winter of 1933-34, we didn't receive anything, and it was very difficult. Anyway, perhaps she cooked the blood in some water, I don't know, but we all ate it gladly. Whatever one might say, it was a foodstuff. That's how our whole family managed to survive, that's how we lasted out that winter – and the winter of 1934-35, too. But in 1935, from January they abolished the ration card system. You've heard of that, haven't you? Yes, they abolished the ration card system, and immediately things... That is, it was almost impossible to buy bread. You had to stand in a queue for nights on end, waiting to see if the following day they'd actually bring enough bread to the shop. We'd queue up from late in the evening and stand in line all night. If we were lucky, we might actually be able to buy some bread at some point in the middle of the day – that is, if we'd joined the queue sufficiently early, since otherwise they'd close the shop right in front of us. But I'm not sure if it really... you see, they'd hand out these loaves and you couldn't actually buy more than one loaf at one go... Even though [rationing had been abolished], you still couldn't get more than that... On the other hand, if, say, I was standing in the queue and a bit later Mama and one of the children joined me, that meant there were three of us and we could at least buy three loaves... You know, these were heavy, large loaves of about three kilograms apiece. A kilogram of rye bread cost fifteen kopecks – apart from rye bread, there wasn't anything else you could get. So from that point things did get better for us, we weren't going hungry any more – life did become better, and, as they say, more cheerful.

**- Do you remember if in your family you ever had any conversations about politics, about the Soviet régime?**

- No, no.

**- But perhaps you did read some newspapers?**

- Sure, we read newspapers. In the settlement we had this club where they organised amateur artistic activities – in which I also took part myself, by the way – and where they also had newspapers. A great deal of them, in fact: *Pravda*, *Izvestiia*, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, *Pionerskaia Pravda*, as well as periodicals... Yes, those are the newspapers I remember: *Izvestiia*, then *Pravda*, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, and *Pionerskaia Pravda*. There may have been more newspapers and periodicals, but those are the only ones I remember. Yes, and I'd always go to this club-house because it was very convenient for studying. They had lamps, you see, whereas at home, when we were sitting at the table and doing our homework... this was in 1934, 1935... we didn't have any lamps whatsoever, and no paraffin, either... There was no point in trying to get hold of paraffin, since we just didn't have any lamps at home. What we'd do was to light this piece of wick – well, a cord about this wide [*shows with his hands*] – saturated in and inserted in some... What was it?... Oh, I don't know what fat we used or even where we got it from... Where ever did Father get hold of it? I just don't know, but he must have got it from someone he knew. Anyway, he'd bring it home and it served as a fuel all right. So we'd ignite this wick to provide us with light by way of a *luchina* [a burning splinter of wood, set on a special stand and traditionally used by peasants to light their huts] whilst we were sitting in the room, doing our homework. In the club-house, however, they did have paraffin-lamps, so I would often go there with my textbooks. There were always lots of people there, but, all the same, I'd find myself a place to sit down in some corner, and no one would disturb me whilst I got on with my studies.

**- You just said there were newspapers there and that you read them – did you ever discuss any of the articles that appeared in them?**

- What, at home?

**- No... well, yes, there too, or at school perhaps?**

- Well, at home, you see – that wasn't... No, and at school we didn't either – we didn't discuss any articles, not that I can recall. But since I did read these newspapers, I was able to keep up with events. And... but as for discussing them at home – no, we didn't do that, really. I didn't have anyone to discuss them with... that is, I suppose I must have discussed something with my friends from school and those neighbours of ours who were the same age as me. Yes, I mean after reading some piece of news or whatever, of course I'd raise it in some conversation. Well, for example, I remember that I followed all those political events, all those reports about these enemies [of the people]... there were these trials of enemies, and I followed them all in the newspapers.

**- Apropos of these trials, what did you make of them?**

- Oh, we believed them [the accusations], we believed them. I believed them, I did, I did. I believed them, and my family believed them, too. Because, you see, it wasn't just us who believed them – everyone believed them. If you look at books on the subject now, you'll see very clearly that everyone believed [these charges]. I mean, if that's what they tell you at school, if that's what you hear on the radio, if that's what you read in the newspapers, you couldn't help believing them. And that's what all of us did.

**- And you never had any doubts?**

- None whatsoever. You see, we actually thought that it had also been enemies of people who'd deported us. We believed that... and, besides, it was in the 1930s that Stalin sprung forward... that everyone was suddenly talking about Stalin. We... How could one not believe in Stalin?

**- What was your attitude towards Stalin?**

- Very positive – as far as our family was concerned, it was very positive. We believed him. We believed Stalin just as much as we believed in Lenin. We believed him.

**- Was this really so?**

- There was never any... What are you driving at?! Look, twenty years ago I was talking to this good friend of mine once... Iurii Sukhov – he'd graduated in mathematics and was headmaster of a school. And we once had this conversation – at some point in the 1980s... Actually, no... he died in 1980, so it was probably in 1979... Anyway, we were having a conversation which for some reason turned on the subject of... Having recently read something about Stalin, I said something like this: "No, Stalin wasn't at all what they made him out to be – how ever did we believe him all those years?" At that, he gave me this fulminating look and said: "What are you on about?! I went into battle with the name of Stalin on my lips, and you – someone who calls himself my friend – you come out with such...!?" We believed Stalin, we did, all of us believed him.

**- In which year did you finish school?**

- In 1937.

**- And what did you do after that?**

- You see, I was the only one, I was the first of the special re-settlers' children who finished school there. For some reason, all my mates went off to work... Well, things weren't easy then – you had to be sure of your daily bread. And so they all went off to work – that is, all the 'special re-settlers'. The way it worked out was as follows: if you'd

fulfilled the norm, you'd get an extra 400 grams, that's 400 grams on top of the 200 grams you'd normally receive – in other words, 600 grams! And if you managed to do more than the norm, you'd get even more still. Yes, and in our family Father, who was living and working away from home, would normally get 600 to 700 grams of bread. And I imagine that where he was sent to work, they also had some kind of catering or canteen. But he was sent to places very far from the village and he'd only come home to us on Sundays, on public holidays. Now... what was I talking about?

**- I was asking what you did after finishing school?**

- Oh yes. Well, you see, Father said to me: "Go and see the commandant." In our settlement we had this commandant, a district commandant from the NKVD. Yes, and they were in charge of things in the village and kept order and so on. Unfortunately, though, you did sometimes get real scoundrels amongst them – or perhaps that's too strong a word, but, at any rate, these particular ones weren't honest, decent people. On the other hand, some commandants were decent people – and very much so. Kolobov, for example – everyone came to like him. I've forgotten what his name and patronymic were, but he said to me... You see, Father had told me: "Go and have a word with the commandant." And I went to his cabin and... Luckily for me, it so happened that he was the commandant at that time... and he let me in and asked me: "What do you want?" I explained to him my situation, but he actually knew already that I'd obtained my school-leaving certificate and he said: "You'd better go and see the district commandant. He'll sort it out." Well, I took heart and set off for the district commandant's office [in Chermoz]. His name was Nevolin. Now, I was in an upbeat mood all the way there, but when I reached the building and saw "NKVD" on the door-plate, my heart sort of quailed: was I really going to...? But I did, I walked inside and was received very kindly, in fact. He listened to all that I had to say and nodded encouragingly: "Yes, we'll give you a hand, we'll help you." Now, you see, his wife taught maths at my school, and she knew me and my abilities. So it's not impossible – dare I say this without sounding conceited – that she actually put in a good word for me. And he received me very warmly. I told him about the reason for my visit, about my aspirations in life and... hmm... well, we must have talked like this for half an hour at least. And he said: "I'll help you... We'll give you a hand. Look, sit down here and write this application." He dictated it to me and I wrote it down. Then he gave me 100 rubles – they'd earmarked this sum for me as financial assistance! You know, that was a huge sum in those days! Father, for example, he earned 80 rubles [a month] – his wages were 70 to 80 rubles. And I'd just been given 100 rubles! This is what he said: "That's for the journey, and we'll soon fix you up with a passport, too. Just call in tomorrow and we'll give you a three-month passport..." [According to a government decree of 22 October 1938, the children of 'special re-settlers' and exiles – as long as they hadn't committed any offences – were to receive internal passports on the same basis as other Soviet citizens (i.e. at the age of 16) and could then leave their settlements. Nevertheless, even before this decree – as is the case with what Dmitrii Nikolaevich is describing here – the children of special settlers were meant to be issued with passports and allowed to leave if they could secure a place at a higher educational institution in some city] – back then, you see, there were these passports valid for periods of, say, one or three months – "And you'll be able to go to Perm to take these...hmm...exams..." What's the word I'm looking for?

**- Entrance exams?**



- Yes, that's what I mean... And when I heard that, I almost wanted to weep for joy! Oh, what happiness that was! I went straight away to buy myself a pair of shoes from the Leningrad 'Skorokhod' Factory. They cost me 25 rubles. You know, they had an outsole made of synthetic rubber, a leather covering, and black sail-cloth uppers! That's what I bought! And then, the following day, when I went to Chermoz again, to pick up my passport, I was again blessed with good luck, since one of these 'Uraltorg' shops opened early in the morning. You see, there was this system of shops back then, called 'Ural'skaia Torgovlia' [Ural Trading]. And what a stroke of luck! – they were 'throwing away' various unwanted suits, and I was able to buy myself one for 14 rubles. It was made of... oh, what do they call it?... Nina, what do they call that cloth they used to make those herring-bone or chequered jackets?... No, what did they call it in those days? It wasn't chintz or... I don't know, it was just a simple fabric, really. But, still, to be able to get a suit for 14 rubles – a real suit, I mean: trousers and jacket... and, moreover, it fitted me like a glove. Yes, it was in this spruce new suit and wearing my new shoes that I set off for Perm together with a friend of mine. We arrived there and some relatives of his put us up for the night. Then we continued our journey to Sverdlovsk where we both wanted to enrol at the Mining Institute. And I did take my exams, but... That is, first of all, when we arrived, they put me in a room in the... what's the word?... on the student campus, in this hostel of the Mining Institute. Yes, and the lads whom I shared the room with had all just passed their State exams [finals] and had defended their degree theses. They had all qualified as "Markscheiders" ['mine surveyors' – the German word entered the Russian language at some point in the eighteenth century, when it became one of the grades in the Table of Ranks for officials in the Mines Department.] Well, my friend and I lived in that hostel for a while... and we sat the entrance exams... By the way, those lads kept teasing me: "Why ever do you want to get into the Mining Institute? Why?" And I'd always reply: "Because I want to be a geological prospector!" That was in vogue back then, you see – just like aviators – being a geological prospector was a fashionable profession... I'd tell them: "Well, I want to take these exams! All right?!" and they'd just shake their heads: "Sure, sure, go ahead and take them if you want to, but you'll regret it." Anyway, I eventually sat my exams and got a mark which... Either I didn't actually pass or some invisible hand fiddled with the marks, or I don't know... But, at any rate, I was assigned – or should I say downgraded – to the 'Markscheiders' department', to the Faculty of Mine Surveying. Now, these room-mates of mine had just finished their course and, again, they warned me: "Look, we ended up cursing the whole damn thing. You'll be underground all the time! Are you really sure you want to study here?" And I did think it over for a bit, although there was no way I was going to change my mind – it was the only chance I had. I didn't let myself be persuaded to repent of my decision. But then this agitator turned up from the 'Sibaka' – that's what they used to call the Siberian Agricultural Institute... the **Siberian Agricultural Academy** [in Omsk] – SIBAKA... Or, rather, not an agitator... but what do you call them?... yes, this student recruiter who was encouraging people to enrol at the 'Sibaka'. He promised that our travel expenses would be paid for, that we'd get a grant, and that we wouldn't have to take any entrance exams. That is, any students were welcome, he said – both those who'd taken and passed their entrance exams to study in Sverdlovsk and those who'd failed them, as well as anyone who'd dropped out from a course they'd already started. Yes, and I listened to what he had to say, and he took me aside: "Don't just sit here listening! Come on, let's go to

Omsk!” I faintly retorted: “But I’ve already taken my exams.” – “Wonderful!” he said, “that means you can become an agronomist or a livestock specialist or whatever you want! You must go to Omsk! You won’t be underground like a mole but above ground, in the open, with all this wonderful nature around you...” Well, so I agreed. He handed out 13 rubles to me on the spot and took my identity documents – you see, I’d asked for my documents back from the Institute’s admissions office, and he took them from me after giving me these 13 rubles and a sort of receipt acknowledging that he’d taken charge of my documents. And then I set off. That is, first I made my way to the Sverdlovsk station, which turned out to be crammed full of people grumbling that they’d been waiting 72 hours for a train and that none had still arrived. Well, fortunately, some of the more travelled fellows there had decided that the best thing to do was to send a telegram to Kaganovich, [then People’s Commissar for the Railways] saying something like this: “SITTING HERE WAITING 72 HOURS STOP NO PASSENGER SERVICES STOP PLEASE SEND TRAIN STOP ” And that very evening, shortly after I got to the station, in fact, the following telegram arrived from Moscow: “FIT OUT GOODS WAGONS URGENTLY STOP MAKE UP A TRAIN STOP DISPATCH TRAIN AT ONCE STOP” So they coupled several of the freight wagons which were stored there in the marshalling yard into a huge train... and rigged up some seats out of wood planks – that was all! there weren’t any other fittings, of course. And instead of the 13 rubles which a ticket to Omsk was supposed to cost, they just charged 3 rubles a ticket, so, again, I was laughing. Yes, and then we did set off. When we got to Omsk, I went straight to the Academy, handed in my documents... no, sorry, it was the recruiter who had them – well, he soon arrived with them and I was registered and given a certificate which entitled me to a room in this hostel. And that’s where I settled in... The next time I turned up at the Academy, they said that I had to sit a couple of exams! In this and that subject, I’ve forgotten which exactly. You see, in those days you had to pass the final exams in all your school subjects, as well as the entrance exams to the higher educational institution you’d chosen, so there were lots of exams. It wasn’t at all like it is nowadays, where you just have to pass four [school-leaving or university entrance] exams [in Russian, mathematics, social studies, and a further subject depending on the applicant’s chosen faculty]. I remember I even had to take exams in geology and mineralogy. Anyway, I sat all the extra exams that were required of me – I’ve forgotten in what subjects they were – and was allocated to the Faculty of Agronomy... As I said, I’d been given accommodation in a hostel, and, after taking these exams, I was told: “Do you want to earn some extra cash? Well, go out and help with the harvest.” I said yes, of course, because I really was keen on earning some extra money. So we set out to the fields and worked there all through September: we were fed well and didn’t have to pay anything. I even earned myself some 30 rubles for this work. Well, after getting back to the city, the lectures started and we settled down to our studies. But after the holidays – the November holidays, that is [7th and 8th of November – Revolution Day] – I was summoned to the dean’s office and told all of a sudden: “Young man, you’re being struck off the student register.” – “Why?” I protested, “We haven’t even taken our end-of-semester exams yet! Why?” – “All right, if you want to study here so much, are you prepared to pay for it out of your own pocket? Without a grant?” Now, how on earth was I going to get by without a grant! So I said: “No.” – “Well, pick up your identity documents then.”

**- And why did this happen? Did they explain anything to you?**

- No, they didn't. But later, when we all got together – that is, all the students who'd been told to pick up their documents – we soon realised why: we were all children of 'kulaks', of priests... in short, of all those who'd suffered repression. Every single one of these students was expelled. This was the year 1937.

**- In November, right?**

- Yes, all these students were expelled. Well, and there I was, stranded in Omsk – little more than a schoolboy, really; with hardly any experience – and I wasn't able to find any work, of course. So I decided to return to Kurgan, to my native region. And when I arrived there [in the city of Kurgan], the first thing I did was to... and would you imagine?!... You see, I was so hungry, I had to get something to eat, so I made my way to the market, in order to buy myself something – for some reason, I didn't go into any shop, but headed straight for the market – and when I got to the market, I bumped into my uncle! What a chance meeting that was! He'd travelled into Kurgan to get something – I don't remember what – my very own uncle! Mama's brother! He recognised me and said: "Well, I'm not going to let you slip away now. Come on, let's go back to our village." So we went there and I stayed at my uncle's place for a week or so, but eventually I had to tell him: "Listen, Uncle, it's no use beating about the bush – I have to find work somewhere!" But where? I didn't want to work in the *kolkhoz*. So where was I going to set my sights? Well, eventually someone advised me to go to the District Department of Education. And that's what I did – there, they suggested this: "Why not try going off to work as an elementary school teacher?" I wasn't so sure about the whole thing and said: "But what if it's me who needs to do the learning?!" – They tried to allay my doubts: "Oh, don't worry about that. You really ought to give it a try – there are some very experienced teachers there, and a very capable headmaster. So do come... Agreed? Well, please come again tomorrow – the headmaster's supposed to be dropping in tomorrow, so you'll be able to meet him." The following day, I turned up at the appointed hour and was indeed introduced to him. He said: "You really ought to come along. We'll help you – we'll provide you with the textbooks you need, and we'll show you how to give lessons and what you've got to start with. We'll explain everything to you. What do you say to that?" I was only too glad: "Let's go!" I said. And so we went to that village – now it's the administrative centre of a district, but I'm not sure what status it had in those days – at any rate, it was in a district of Kurgan. I was going to start work in a four-year elementary school – they'd assigned me to teach the third-formers. Well, first of all, of course, he explained and showed me everything, and gave me the textbooks I was supposed to use in class. Yes, and then things got underway, and, as it turned out, I wasn't worse at this job than the other teachers – though I'm not quite sure why?!

**- Perhaps you had a gift for teaching?**

- Well, I wouldn't be so sure about that. I don't know – perhaps it was just a question of my sense of responsibility when faced with such a task, and nothing more. Because, after all, honesty and decency weren't always so... Anyway, around April I suddenly received a summons... The headmaster – Vereshchagin was his surname – told me this: "They want to speak to you at the Municipal Department of Education." I don't remember whether it was the District or Municipal Department, but I apparently had to show up there the following day at so-and-so a time. I asked my headmaster: "What for?", but he just said: "No idea, sorry." So I went there the following day and was received with the

following words: “You’re going to... And order has been issued for you to go to the village of Proletarka as a school principal.” I tried to protest: “How can you make *me* a school principal?! You’re not serious, are you?” It was a two-year elementary school with just one teacher, and they wanted me to be the principal. Well, I insisted: “No, I can’t, I won’t be able to manage that!” but it was to no avail – “Orders aren’t meant to be questioned. This order will be issued to the headmaster of your school this very day. By the way, it’s you who’re going to bring it to him.” I went back to the village and had no choice but to start packing my few belongings. Whilst doing so, I couldn’t help lamenting my lot: “What am I going to do there?” and this elderly man who heard me going on like this said: “There are always kind souls around, you’ll see. When you’re there, don’t forget to drop into Shmakovo. That’s a place near where you’ll be. It’s got a school, an ‘incomplete secondary school’. Go there and they’ll help you.” Well, then I set off. That is, first I had to call in at the District Department of Education, to pick up my instructions. And as a matter of fact...

Cassette nr. 2, side A

**- Dmitrii Nikolaevich, could you tell us something about your work in the school?**

- Well, when I arrived at the school, we were still almost in the middle of winter. The third term of the school year had already started. This school just had two classes: the first form and the second form. The overall number of pupils was no more than twenty or twenty-five – I don’t remember the exact figure. Anyway, when I arrived at the village, I went to see the *kolkhoz* chairman. And it turned out that he’d already been notified of my arrival – I don’t know by whom or when – so he was able to provide me with accommodation straight away... They lodged me in the house of this elderly woman who was living on her own – her son, if he’d still been alive, would have been the same age as me... You see, we’d both been class-mates at the ShKM in Utiatskoe, the administrative centre of [Ketovo] district, but he was killed in an accident at the railway station in Shumikha, which is also in Kurgan Oblast. So she looked after me like a son: I didn’t have to worry about anything – about the food or whatever – she’d prepare all the meals. But she’d get all the provisions from the *kolkhoz*, though...

**- So you got along with one another like a mother and son, yes?**

- Exactly, yes – she admitted me into her house like a son. But as I was saying, she’d receive from the *kolkhoz* all the produce with which I was being paid – some milk, for example – I don’t remember how much exactly, but it was enough for us anyway. She’d also receive flour, meat... and all this at quite low prices, you know – if I remember correctly, a litre of milk was 15 kopecks, meat was about 3 rubles a kilo, and the same for butter: that also cost 3 rubles a kilo or so. And all this would be paid out of my salary – we got enough of everything. Besides, the house wasn’t too large – just two rooms: a small kitchen and some living space.

**- You mean a room, yes?**

- That’s right – a room.

**- Just one room?**

- That’s the only room there was – well, I suppose you could call the kitchen a second room.

**- And in which part of the house did you live – in the kitchen or in that room?**

- I was allowed to use any part of the house I wanted, but my bed was in the large room. She'd make do with the kitchen: that's where she slept. So that's how we lived. Now, I'd often travel into Shmakovo, where that 'incomplete secondary school' I told you about was located. You see, when I first went there, they promised to help me with everything they could. That's not surprising, since as chance would have it, my old teacher in *trud* ['manual labour' – see note above] classes, Petr Ivanovich Rodionov, was now working at that school! A terribly nice and kind person he was, our Petr Ivanovich – remember I told you how he'd taught us lads to make benches, stools, and basic tables, and how our school would then sell these? Yes, and now I came across him in Shmakovo! And he helped me a great deal. In fact, the headmaster of that secondary school – his surname escapes me – also lent me a hand. I was able to get exercise-books, pens, even ink, and I'd pack all this stationery onto a cart from the *kolkhoz* and transport it all to my school. So there you are: that's how things were.

**- Did you have any spare time after your work, and if so, what did you do in it?**

- There was quite a lot of spare time, in fact. Well, and since I had books, I'd read... The trouble was that in... that in Proletarka there wasn't even a village club or anything! So on big occasions, on public holidays, for example, the young people would walk all the way to Shmakovo – that was a hike of 7 kilometres, mind you! in both directions – there at least they had an *izba-chital'nia* [a village reading hut – apart from housing a library, various propaganda activities would also be held there] and a club-house. It was quite a large settlement, you see.

**- How did you celebrate public holidays? And which ones particularly stand out in your mind?**

- Well, to be honest, we didn't really have... That is, I did get to see the May Day celebrations once: well, all of us in the village simply gathered in front of the *kolkhoz* office, someone or other standing on the front steps made a speech on the significance of this holiday, and then we all just went home.

**- Is that all? Didn't you organise any festivities or special activities?**

- No, you see, we didn't really have any such festivities. Perhaps in the larger townships they did, but in our little village – this Proletarka – there simply wasn't anything of the sort. As for organising things for the children, well, I did bring the children together quite often for after-school activities... which weren't... hmm... which didn't really follow any particular thematic plan, but could cover a wide range of things: for example, we'd organise various games – chess and... We didn't have any chessmen or a chessboard, so we actually made our own: the children drew up a chessboard on a sheet of paper and fashioned these chessmen out of clay! And I taught them how to play chess. Then we'd also recite a lot – we had these boisterous readings... So those were the kinds of activities I came up with for them. And time really did fly, what with all these lessons and activities, and when the summer holidays drew closer, I decided to visit my parents and sent them a letter. Well, and they wrote back to me: "Yes, do come – we're not so busy now as at other times of the year." So I set off for Novochemozskii and almost immediately after arriving there, I was summoned to the commandant's office. They confiscated my passport and told me: "From now on you're absolutely forbidden to leave the village!"

**- What justification did they give for this?**

- They said: “You know you’re in exile here, and yet you ran away!” I protested: “No, I didn’t! I was given permission!” But that commandant who’d issued me with a three-month passport – in Kurgan, by the way, I’d managed to exchange it for one that was valid for a whole year – that friendly commandant wasn’t there any more. I had no one to stick up for me. And so once again I became an exile. [Dmitrii Nikolaevich means that he again became subject to the same restrictions on movement as his parents which had been waived the year before, when he was allowed to leave the ‘special settlement’ to study – as in theory they were supposed to be waived for all the children of ‘special re-settlers’ once they reached the age of sixteen]. But here again someone came to my aid. This was in the summer of 1938, you see, and the *Short Course on the History of the Communist Party [of the Soviet Union]* had just been published. You’ve heard about it, haven’t you? Yes, and everyone was supposed to study it – children and grown-ups; high and low... Big NKVD bosses and rank-and-file agents alike, and militiamen, too, and... everybody had to study it... engineers and technical specialists as well... And to assist the NKVD staff [in the Chermoz district] in going through this course, they were assigned as a teacher none other than the headmaster of our special settlement’s school – Bezhodov, Viktor Vasil’evich, who’d studied history at university. Thanks to this appointment, he was able to help me a lot: not so long afterwards, he... We met once in the village, and he said: “Listen, I need a bursar for the school. What do you say about taking on this job?” – “I’m all for it,” I immediately replied. “Because otherwise they’ll send me to work in the forestry industry, felling timber.” – “Listen, what I’ll do,” he explained; “is to have a word with the [NKVD] district commandant and I’ll ask him to let you stay in the school.” And he did succeed in persuading them! The following day, I was told that the question had been settled and that from now on I’d be working at the school. When I went there to start my job, the headmaster took me aside and explained: “Don’t worry, just do this work for a while, and then you’ll see: the maths teacher is going to leave us soon, so you’ll be able to take his place.” That is, not the maths teacher but the physics teacher. He promised me that I’d be the physics teacher soon. And so it was: shortly afterwards that teacher left because he was drafted into the army, and from the autumn I started teaching his subject. Well, back then, physics lessons started in the sixth or seventh forms – elementary physics, that is. And it was these forms that I taught. That’s how I was able to stay in the school.

**- Did you already then have a good knowledge of physics, or did you have to...?**

- Well, when I took up this post, my knowledge of physics didn’t go beyond what was expected in the school syllabus – that’s true. You see, I’d never really got down to studying it properly... but I did have a good grasp of the introductory topics that were taught at school, and, whilst I was teaching, I did everything I could to deepen my knowledge of the subject. And subsequently, in my second year as a teacher at the school – in 1939... actually, no, I wasn’t allowed to in 1939... It was in 1941, in fact, when they allowed me to travel to Perm again and take the entrance exams for the State University. After waiting until the closing of the school year, in June, I set off for here. They actually gave me a passport valid for one month, and I went off to have a go at the exams for admission into the extra-mural department of the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics at Perm State University. And I passed the exams, in fact – the marks I obtained were such as to qualify me for admission. I was admitted into the University! And I started... Yes, the university lecturers started giving their introductory lectures [Dmitrii Nikolaevich

would have been attending evening classes]. And after one of these lectures – this was on Sunday, the 22nd of June – we left the lecture-room and heard a crowd of people gathering around the public loudspeaker outside. In those days, you see, we had these public loudspeakers mounted on poles in the street, since not everyone had access to a radio – that is, there wasn't a radio in every communal apartment. Yes, and we saw all these people gathering around the loudspeaker and we found out that Molotov was going to make a broadcast announcing a declaration by the government. And soon afterwards we heard from Molotov's speech that the war had started.

**- Could you tell us in more detail – as I'm sure that you remember this well – how you reacted to this news – what you felt and went through?**

- Well, at first we took it quite calmly. You see, we'd been brought up in the knowledge that we... that our aviators were flying higher and further and faster than everyone else, and that our tanks were the very best, and that our soldiers and we all were patriotically minded. And we all believed that it would just last a month at the most, or two. You know, in those first moments, we actually didn't take it on board – that this was going to be a serious war, I mean. Because, after all, we'd been brought up confident that: "for the loss of but little blood, we shall beat the enemy on his own territory!" [a paraphrase of two verses from the refrain of the famous Red Army song: "If Tomorrow Brings War", composed in 1938 to a text by V. Lebedev-Kumach] That's the kind of mood we were in! But later, in the evening, Bukirev, the rector of the university, assembled us all and told us that things were serious, that it was going to be a long war.

**- Did you believe what he said?**

- Oh yes, we did. That it was going to be a long war. He suggested that we all return to our native regions without waiting till the end [of the lecture course], and then said that he himself was volunteering for the front. And that's what he actually did: he enrolled in the army as a volunteer and returned in 1946, in the rank of a colonel. He was then reappointed Rector of the University. Anyway, we all went home and resumed our normal work. On the radio we'd hear reports about how everything was going smoothly and fine, but that at the same time our troops were retreating. As to why and how this could be so, that was a mystery.

**- Did you have any thoughts of your own about what was happening?**

- Yes – as I said, that it was a mystery.

**- But didn't you make any conjectures?**

- No, you see, we just couldn't make head or tail of these events. There were such heavy losses and we listened to 'Sovinformbiuro' ... [Soviet Information Agency - created on 24 June 1941]. And hard times set in. But by the way, from the very first days... We students left Perm the following day after the rector's speech, but already on the evening of the day the war was declared, we'd seen queues forming in the shops, outside the bread shops – they weren't that long, but, still, they were made up of about ten to fifteen people. We were rather surprised. What was going on? Why were these people trying to stock up with bread? But evidently...

**- So what conclusions did you come to about why these bread-lines were forming?**

- Well, we knew why. I mean, we worried and had our thoughts about what was happening... but we kept our own counsel about these things... We also knew, we understood that it was impossible to talk about them aloud.

**- What were your thoughts, then?**

- Well, thoughts... that isn't the right word. We didn't really think anything. We just braced ourselves for the hardships that we were all expecting. You see, it wasn't that long ago that these ration cards had been abolished, that we'd been standing in bread-lines. Besides we also knew that in 1939, when the [Soviet-]Finnish War started, there'd already been difficulties with the supply of bread. They'd reintroduced lists again and during the winter of 1939-40 you could only get bread rations if you were on the list. So in 1941, these things were certainly fresh in our minds.

**- So the fear of starvation reappeared, right?**

- Yes, yes, fears of starvation and all the rest. And when we got home, there were also long bread-lines in Chermoz and in the 'special settlement'. That's how it was.

**- Could you now talk at greater length about the tribulations of the war years? How did you and your family, your brothers and sisters, experience the war?**

- Well, at first there weren't any particular hardships... We were just anxious about what we happened to hear about and... how people were fleeing and our troops were retreating. We couldn't understand this.

**- Because it was painful to acknowledge?**

- Yes, it was painful and it was hard to come to terms with. But, on the other hand, we believed the 'Sovinformbiuro', we believed unquestioningly that [what they said] was the truth, that we would crush the enemy and triumph. There was this faith, you know. And, besides, there were masses of applications all the time from people volunteering to join the army: a number of friends of mine enlisted. Now, it's true that I myself didn't make such an application, but, you see, the commandant had explained to us so clearly: "You're not going to the army – you'll be working there where it's necessary."

**- And how did you react to the news that the Wehrmacht armies were closing in on Moscow? What did you experience at that moment? I mean, Moscow, after all, was the capital...**

- Yes, and we... Of course, it was a bitter blow and... It's difficult to say now how it was, after so many years, after fifty... no, sixty years, when some things have faded from one's memory and... But it was a bitter pill to swallow. However, we all believed that Moscow wouldn't fall. And, besides, on the 3rd of July Stalin had made a broadcast explaining the situation and appealing to the people to unite. And the partisan detachments and everyone... we all listened to the 'Sovinformbiuro' reports, and all of us hoped that the Red Army would beat off the attack, that they wouldn't surrender Moscow. And that's how it turned out in the end. And in January [1942] we were called up as the first wave of recruits [for that year] – yes, that's right, the 'special re-settlers' were drafted into the army. This is what it says in my work book: "Called up into the Red Army." Well, and we then made our way to Perm – on foot! That's a distance of 150 kilometres! Let's see, if I'm not mistaken, we did it in 36 hours! Yes, so we arrived here in Perm and that's when they told us that we weren't going to the army but to the labour army (*trudarmiia*) instead and that we'd be working in the town of Lys'va [which is some 200 km to the east of Perm]. It was also at this point that we were separated... you see, I'd been called up together with my brother Aleksei... He was born in 1922, whereas I was born in 1917... Several hundred people had been called up from the Chermoz area. But it was here in Perm that they announced to us that part of our cohort would be going to Sverdlovsk Oblast, whilst the rest were to stay in Perm Oblast. And we were... Aleksei was in the group that got sent to Sverdlovsk Oblast, whereas I was assigned to work in



Lys'va. So he worked over there, felling timber, whilst I'd been allocated to the 'Sevuraltiazhstroj' [North Ural Heavy Construction] trust, which was in charge of constructing various open-hearth and blast furnaces in the region. So that's how, for the time being, I ended up working in the Lys'va Metallurgical Plant – though it was called a Combine back then. They put me down as a metal worker because I'd said that I had some experience of metal work, and I was allocated to a tool-making workshop. However, soon afterwards, they dragged me out of there and sent me to help with the excavation of a foundation pit for a new factory. As a matter of fact, it was for the Lys'va Turbo-Generator Plant – I actually went to Lys'va to see it once. [This factory was not put into operation until 1956.] So during January and February – all through the winter months – we were there digging a trench – the foundations, that is. Yes, in winter-time. We hollowed out the ground, shovelling up clods of earth – or if the ground was too hard in some locations, we'd make bonfires to thaw it up a bit. Now, the main contingent in our 'labour army' was made up of Germans from the Volga region – there were lots of them with us. And there was also a fair number of Ukrainians and Belorussians from the western provinces of the Ukraine and Belorussia which had passed to us from Poland. There were many Jews from those provinces, too – even some from Warsaw. In our work brigade, for example, there was a certain Reiner: well, he was a Jew from Warsaw. There was also a Jew from Vienna called Nadler. I don't remember the exact circumstances, but they'd somehow ended up in the western provinces of the Ukraine and Belorussia, which were the native regions of the other Jews in our 'labour army'. After the Red Army offensive in 1939, you see, they'd all found themselves in the Soviet zone. So yes, there were many Jews, too. And the majority of them were, so to speak, experts at their jobs. They were all skilled workmen, you see: sewing machine technicians or motorcycle and car mechanics. Take Reiner, for example: he'd once had his own repair shop in Warsaw. And Nadler too had owned a sewing machine repair shop in Vienna. Well, and in our brigade they were given both skilled and unskilled work to do: digging and removing earth, as well as jobs in the workshops. I for my part managed to get myself transferred to a workshop pretty soon and became an electric welder: I learnt how to do manual [shielded metal] arc welding and was put to work on the construction of an open-hearth furnace. But the digging for that was done by the Germans and Ukrainians – they excavated this huge foundation pit. Our workshop, on the other hand, was in charge of making the gas conduits, ladle sets, and so on – and I would weld the steel structures. Sometimes, however, we were torn away from our work and sent to help with the fitting out of various new workshops on the premises of the Lys'va Metallurgical Plant. Yes, I remember how they built this huge workshop into which they brought all these machines and lathes that had been evacuated from factories in the western regions of Russia. We installed them in place and even before the roof had been completed, these lathes were already spinning and people were busy at work turning these... what do you call it?...these things for bombs...

- **Aerostatic balloons?** [Such barrage balloons played an important part in the defence of Leningrad, in particular, from German bomber raids.]

- No, no. These... hmm... cylinders for bombs [i.e. 'shell cases'] The lathe operators would round them off at the end where the explosive charge of the bomb is placed. I just can't remember the name. Yes, so production at the workshop was already in full swing, but eventually they did manage to close the roof and it was nice and warm inside. After

that, we were sent back to construct the steel structures for the open-hearth furnace, which was finally completed and started up in 1944... or 1943... One of these years – I've forgotten which. It was the most powerful open-hearth furnace not just in the Urals, but in all Russia! We also constructed this blast furnace in the town of Chusovoi [about 140 km to the east of Perm] – that is, I wasn't actually involved myself, but several comrades from my workshop were. I was occupied with the open-hearth furnace all the time, and it was precisely in this capacity – as a welder – that I worked right up to the end of the war – although I did have to do various other odd jobs now and then.

**- Could you please tell us in more detail – providing examples if possible – how relations between the various national groups who made up your 'labour army' shaped up? Especially what the attitude towards the Germans was?**

- Well, you'd have all kinds of things. But the Germans were honest, decent, hard-working people.

**- Didn't the stereotype, though, of them all being fascists predominate?**

- No. I never heard anything like that. I worked with Germans all the time in my brigade, and they were all hard-working, humble Soviet people like the rest of us – these were Russian Germans, you know, from the Volga region. Many of them were Communists. What I couldn't say – because I wasn't yet a Communist back then – what I don't really know is whether they attended Party meetings or not. If they did, they certainly didn't talk about it – at least when I was present – but I did see them carrying Party-membership cards. Yes, they were fine workers, and I must say, I even worked under a German for a while myself – as a blacksmith's striker [an assistant to a master blacksmith who does the heavy work of hammering the metal whilst the smith works it into a more refined shape as required]. You see, there was a shortage of working hands somewhere, so we 'labour army' men were sent to plug the gap, and that's how I ended up working as a blacksmith's striker together with a German. Now, he actually fell ill at one point and a Jew stepped in for him as the blacksmith, whilst I carried on as the hammer striker. I think I spent about two or three months working with them over there, but then I was recalled to Lys'va and resumed my job as an electric welder.

**- But you did say – only a few minutes ago – that you'd get all kinds of things... so was there also some ill feeling at times?**

- No, not amongst us there wasn't. Amongst us 'labour army' men there wasn't anything of the sort. As far as I'm aware, there weren't any negative... Well, there were such cases when... But, you know, it's always... We'd receive 800 grams of bread – we were given hot meals three times a day. At first, we were all living behind barbed wire – our barracks was enclosed by barbed wire. We always had to march in columns. It was effectively the same as exile, the only difference being that it was in war-time. So we'd march to the dining hall for breakfast, then march out of the dining hall to work; after the morning's work, we'd march back to the dining hall for lunch, then we'd march out again to work; in the evening, we'd march to the dining hall once more, to have our dinner, and then it was back to our barracks – in march step, of course! The barracks was a two-storey wooden house. Inside were these shelves of bunk-beds; instead of any bedding, we just had these mattresses stuffed with straw and a bundle of straw would also serve us as a pillow of sorts. And we'd sleep on these shelves, all side by side. The reveille was a very swift affair – just like in the army – and we'd head off to have our breakfast before marching out to work. That's how it was. And we'd receive 800 grams of bread: 250

grams in the morning, 250 in the evening, as well as 300 grams in the afternoon. Well, during the first months, there weren't any... All through 1942, till the middle of 1943, there weren't any supplementary rations. And so in order to prevent us from falling ill... with scurvy or whatever... they'd serve us at lunch-time a glass of this pine needle drink. The way they made it was just by getting some ordinary pine, spruce, and silver fir twigs and boiling them thoroughly ("not twigs, but conifer boughs!" – *interrupts Dmitrii Nikolaevich's wife*)... yes, yes, conifer boughs, conifer boughs, and letting them stand in boiling water. And you were made to drink a whole glass of this brew at lunch-time. We'd drink it up, but, to be honest, it didn't taste that pleasant. Especially when what you had floating in your glass weren't the conifer needles as such, but the wood of the tree itself, which tasted of resin. But we'd drink it – we knew that it was for our own good. Now, from 1943 onwards, if you fulfilled the norm, you'd get a "Stakhanovite lunch" – an extra portion of *kasha* [porridge]. That is, as a Stakhanovite you'd be served a bit more of the *kasha* which was stipulated anyway for lunch. So yes, on the food side things did get a bit easier, but, all the same, I was always half-starving. Always. I was always half-starving.

**- You don't mean you were starving, do you?**

- I said half-starving. "Half-" – that's why I said half-starving: that's how we always felt. We were always hungry. Because although we got 800 grams, but without any... You know, the soup was without any fats... It was tough. A young organism, after all... and I was hungry all the time. Somehow... You see, we weren't paid our wages directly – that is, we were, but we'd only be given a very small sum of money. Because they kept back part of our wages for the food we were provided with, and then a significant sum was also deducted for the Defence Fund, [Set up in July 1941, many Soviet workers and *kolkhoz* farmers were made to sacrifice one or two days' worth of their monthly wages on behalf of this fund to support the war effort] and so all we'd take home in the end was just ten or twenty rubles! But with that you couldn't buy more than a few rolls of tobacco in the local [*kolkhoz*] market!... Yes, it was in those grim days that I took up smoking... What else can I tell you about? Oh yes, after saving up some money, we did occasionally go to the market and buy ourselves some things – for example, I bought myself a tin of potatoes which cost 100 rubles – I mean a mess-tin, a soldier's one. Just for comparison, a bread ration of 300 grams would cost 75 rubles, as did a matchbox filled with tobacco – light tobacco, that is. Yes, those prices have stuck in my mind: 75 rubles. Well, so I bought myself this mess-tin full of potatoes, and after retiring to the barracks after dinner, I put it to boil, had one final look at my potatoes and ate them all up in one go. I ate them all up... but still I felt hungry and would have gladly eaten more if there had been any. So, as I was saying, we always felt hungry. You'd have all kinds of things happening – these really were hard times. But in the second half of 1943, things did begin to get a little easier. For a start, there were more of these "Stakhanovite lunches". You could count on a larger portion and that did make a difference.

**- Did everyone receive a "Stakhanovite lunch"?**

- No, not everyone – only those who fulfilled... who over-fulfilled the norm.

**- Fulfilled or over-fulfilled?**

- Both, as a matter of fact. But especially those who over-fulfilled. However, those who didn't achieve the whole norm would be left there until... sometimes for up to six hours after the end of the working-day... We were supposed to work twelve hours, you see –

including a break for lunch – from eight to eight. But if someone hadn't fulfilled the day's norm by eight in the evening, he'd stay behind at his work place until he did fulfil it. And sometimes people would have to remain working for sixteen hours on end till they managed to achieve the norm – and in the morning they'd have to be up again for the next day's work.

**- What were the living conditions like?**

- Living conditions... [*pauses*] What living conditions?! You'd get back from work and dinner – there was nothing more to do – and all you'd want was to go to bed. We'd been working all day, sweating, working – where do living conditions come into the picture?! There was absolutely nothing. The only amenity, if you want to call it that, was to clamber up onto the upper row of bunk-beds – I slept on both levels in the course of my time there – and fall asleep, which usually happened faster there than on the bottom row. It was tough.

**- Did you freeze in winter?**

- No, there was heating – they heated our barracks in several places. Later, though, we were all transferred to the former Palace of Culture of the Lys'va Metallurgical Plant. It had these huge halls, and we... We also had these double-decker bunks there and we were able to heat the hall. There were these small stoves, you know, in various nooks and corners of the Palace, so we could always ensure that the place was well heated, and we didn't have to freeze at all. We could even dry out our... for example, if someone had come from work with his *portianki* ['boot-liners' – pieces of cloth wrapped around the feet, traditionally worn by Russian peasants and soldiers when working outdoors in winter] soaked, he'd be able to dry them a little. As for clothing... Well, as long as our own clothes lasted, we'd work in those – I had a jersey and trousers. But once these had been worn out, we'd be issued with winter and summer clothing – yes, we'd get these overalls which were convenient for working. But it was difficult to get hold of mittens. They'd give you a pair which was supposed to last... I don't remember exactly, but it was probably a month... but, of course, the mittens would often start falling apart much earlier than that. Well, and we'd have to try to mend them ourselves, to sew them up. So that's how it was. But, as I said, from the second half of 1943, and by 1944 certainly, things did improve. They handed out bread then, and these "Stakhanovite lunches", and it was all more straightforward.

**- Dmitrii Nikolaevich, could you please tell us about your life in the post-war years – up to Stalin's death – as well as what these years were like for your family and relatives?**

- Well, when the war was over, we were all able to come together again... our family was reunited. You see, Father had also been in the 'labour army' – not in the Urals, though, but in Arkhangel'sk Oblast, somewhere near the town of Kotlas. He'd worked there in the forestry industry, felling trees, although he was mainly involved in hauling logs onto trucks and that kind of work. He actually returned after me, in 1946. I'd returned from the 'labour army' in November 1945 as a... You see, since I was a school teacher, I was demobilized by a government decree to the effect that all teachers were supposed to go back to their classrooms. And that's how I was released [from compulsory industrial labour]. Now, given that before the war I'd passed my exams for admission into the extra-mural department, I decided to avail myself of this opportunity. I turned up at the university [in Perm] and was duly reinstated as a student. This time round, however, I

was actually admitted into the department for full-time students. So I started studying again... [inaudible]... During this long interruption, I had forgotten everything, and I had a lot of trouble re-adapting to university studies. As a matter of fact, at the end of the first semester I made a real mess of the Mathematical Analysis exam! Looking back on it now, I can smile of course, but I still don't understand how I could flop it so badly. Anyway, to cut a long story short, I had to retake the exam, but this time I was successful... Father returned to our family in 1946, but I stayed on in Perm as a student.

**- Where did you live? What did you live on, and how did your studies go?**

- Well, I was receiving a grant.

**- Was that sufficient to live on?**

- No, it wasn't. But, still, 300 rubles – which after 1947 became 30 rubles – [In December 1947, the Soviet government introduced a monetary reform, according to which new currency was exchanged for old at the rate of 1-to-10] given the prices back then, wasn't that bad – in fact, one could actually get by on such a sum. It was in effect the subsistence wage. It was certainly better than the current subsistence wage, if you compare them in relative terms. That's for sure. But young as I was, my money sometimes ran out, and I had to look for work. For example, I worked unloading freight wagons at the railway station, as well as in various factories. So that's how I managed to stay afloat. And with the money I earned, I'd try to buy myself a 'shuttle card' [i.e. on the black market]: [*reisovaia kartochka* – a special food ration card for those (e.g. actors, ballet dancers) whose work regularly took them outside their normal place of residence. It allowed them to obtain food at 'closed distribution' shops in other towns and cities – whereas normal ration cards were only accepted on presentation of a residence permit and were valid just in state shops. Rationing was in place until the monetary reform of December 1947] you could get 500 grams of bread [per day] for it, and since students were also entitled to a ration card for 500 grams of bread, on average I'd have a kilogram of bread. But with the 'shuttle card' you could also get groats and various fats, and that kind of stuff. You could always exchange it for goods in ['limited access'] shops or in [special enterprise] cafeterias. That is, if they refused to serve you in a cafeteria, you could always go to one of these shops and exchange it there. That way, instead of meat I could get hold of some fish or whatever there was. So that's how I made ends meet.

**- And where were you living?**

- We lived in a hostel. It's interesting that the first time I saw that hostel [before the war], it was a rather run-down place... It was situated where you now have those university buildings... the Physics Faculty buildings – you know which ones I mean, don't you? Yes, that's right, the ones opposite what I think is now the Geography Faculty, but which back then was a pedagogical institute. And opposite this building is the Physics Faculty – it was around that site that our hostel was located. A very old, dilapidated hostel [before the war], but it had been refurbished by the 'Molotovugol' Trust for its staff. You see, [during the war] the north wing of the university had been occupied by the 'Molotovugol' Trust. However, in 1945-46 they had to leave, as the university took over these buildings again.

**- What were the living conditions like there?**

- Our living conditions were ghastly: they didn't supply us with any firewood and there weren't any stoves that worked. We actually froze so much once that we decided to take matters into our own hands and supply ourselves: as I just explained to you, the

'Molotovugol' Trust had refurbished a number of rooms in this hostel and had installed several stoves in them. Well, however incredible it may seem, we actually dismantled one of these stoves and carried it away piece by piece to our room. And we took care to set it up in such a way that when they noticed that one of their stoves was missing and went round checking all the rooms, they looked in ours for barely a few seconds before deciding that it wasn't there and moving on! So they never found it, and after they vacated the building, we threw away our old stove and started warming ourselves with the new one. When the firewood ran out, we went to Perm-2 Railway Station, found some coal, and carried a few sacks of it home. That's how we heated our room.

**- So you bought coal at the station?**

- No, we just took it. Do you imagine that a student would have the money to spend on such things?! No, we just gathered it up from the ground and took it home. You see, at the station they unloaded large quantities of coal and always left lots of slack and sometimes even quite large coals lying around. We'd pick all this up and carry it away. By the way, we heated our room so well that even the girls would dare to enter our room to warm themselves a bit before returning to their ice-boxes! Oh, and another funny thing is that the walls in our room hadn't been whitewashed since... I don't know, but it was all so dirty that some prankster who'd lived there before us had actually scrawled with white chalk on the wall the following words: "Enrich yourselves!" And some verses, too – by Nadson, I think: "We shall not search nor try to guess, / For in the same throes our mother brought us forth..." [*My ne stanem iskat' i gadat' / v tekh zhe mukakh rozhdala nas mat'*] but I've forgotten half the words! [A fair rendition of some wistful verses – not by the poet S. Ia. Nadson (1862-1887), though, but by the great Symbolist Aleksandr Blok (1880-1921)]. That's what we had on our walls. And one day, some members of staff from the Party or Komsomol *raikom* turned up at the hostel and knocked at our door, too. When they walked in and saw this injunction on the wall: "Enrich yourselves!", they immediately asked: "So what are you enriching yourselves with, then?" Our reply was almost as nippy: "Why, with Marxism-Leninism, of course!" Well, they were good sports anyway, and they sat down for a while and had a few laughs with us before leaving. But the room really was terribly dirty, and so we decided to whitewash it ourselves: on the abandoned 'Molotovugol' premises, again, we found a whitewash solution that had been left in some buckets and some brushes. And overnight we scrubbed and whitewashed our entire room. We left it looking quite cosy and smart. We even painted over the wainscoting.

**- But did the results of this refurbishment perhaps wear off soon?**

- Well, all I can say is that we lived in this hostel for two years and weren't ever dissatisfied... True, the window-panes... There weren't any window-panes: they'd all been broken. There was a whole row of windows on the lower floor that had been smashed. When I arrived there in November, it was already starting to get chilly. You see, I arrived after the October Revolution Day holidays [on 7 and 8 November], having just been demobilized from the 'labour army' and got myself registered as a student again... Yes, three window-panes were missing in our room; someone had evidently smashed them. And the lads... that is, the students who shared the room with me, they would cover over the missing panes with pillows. However, the winter was setting in fast, and this was clearly not a viable solution. So again we went to the empty wing of the hostel which was being refurbished for the 'Molotovugol' staff – the window frames

there were exactly the same as on our side of the building. Yes, and we removed a couple of panes from there and inserted them in our own windows. That's how we saved the warmth in our room. Now, when the decorators hired by 'Molotovugol' came to finish the job and saw that the window-panes were missing in some of these rooms, they were still able to get hold of replacement glass and they repaired the windows – something which the University, on the other hand, hadn't been able to do in so many months! If that was so, then how could we students have been expected to replace the glass out of our own means?! And, besides, it was impossible to get hold of glass in the shops. No one stocked or sold it, and if they had, we wouldn't have had the money! Anyway, that's how we knocked our room into shape... and were able to live in relative comfort and warmth. We'd take care of everything ourselves. Those living in Hostel No. 8, on the other hand – like my wife when she was a student – they had everything brought to them. It was mostly women and girls who lived over there, and they'd have their coal supplies regularly delivered to them. We didn't, our hostel was simply passed over!

**- Why was that?**

- Oh, who knows? Who can explain why? I really don't know... we just provided for ourselves as best we could.

**- Didn't you ever think of simply trying to apply somewhere where they might have been able to solve your problems?**

- Not that I recall, no. You see, we didn't think it such an important matter. What with the war – that is, with the post-war devastation and the task of restoring our country's economy, what were our little problems when compared to those facing the State? So no, we didn't apply anywhere, but, instead, took it on our own shoulders to provide ourselves with coal, for example. As I explained, we'd go to the sidings where they unloaded the freight wagons... and what harm were we doing, given that the ground was littered with coal which no one bothered to pick up? So we'd gather it up in sacks and take it home.

**- Dmitrii Nikolaevich, we'd be interested to know if during the post-war years you had the feeling perhaps that the political situation had changed – I mean whether there was any softening of the regime? And if so, how did this affect you personally and your family and friends?**

- Of course there was a softening, of course there was. Well, take 1947 for example: in that very year, the NKVD commandant's offices in the 'special settlements' – including the one where my parents lived – were dissolved. My parents were issued with passports and were allowed to move freely across the country. [From August 1946 to January 1952, the MVD decreed the release of some 408,000 "former kulaks" from internal exile and the closure of the local MVD commandant's offices in 'special settlements' across 26 regions of the USSR.] So yes, the situation did change – quite dramatically, in fact.

**- So 1947 was the year of rehabilitation for your family?**

- Yes, yes. Although no one actually rehabilitated us: that was a word which we had no idea of back then. We didn't know that the terms [of exile] had ended and that we... You see, when we were evicted from our native village, no one told us anything about these terms... But, as I was saying, we and many other people did sense that these changes were going on. For a start, the commandant's office in our 'special settlement' was removed and we didn't have someone keeping an eye on us all the time any more. We became free. And we also received passports – anyone who wanted to could get one. My parents did and they were able to set off for their native region. But do you think there

was anyone waiting for them there? There wasn't – at around that time, my sister was completing her studies at the Agricultural Institute in Kurgan, and after graduating in 1949, she was sent to work in Cheliabinsk Oblast – in the south of the region, where the forest-steppe begins. Well, and my parents went to live with her and her family for a while. She'd been allocated a flat there, you see, as she was working as an agronomist. So my parents moved there, but later they came here to live with me, after I'd received a flat of my own. Yes, here in this wing of the flat... So, on the whole, one can't deny that the situation really did improve drastically. And, moreover, it wasn't just in that sense, but also economically that people felt this atmosphere of change... Yes, even though the minimum wage was just – do you know how much it was? – it was just 30 rubles [per month]. That's what it was throughout the 1950s: 30 rubles. Or, rather, not 30 but 300 rubles, 300. It was only from 1961, when under Khrushchev there was this reduction of wages by a tenth, that this minimum wage became 30 rubles. [In accordance with the currency reform announced by Khrushchev in May 1960, "all prices, wages and other money incomes" were reduced to one-tenth of their former value as from 1 January 1961. As in the 1947 reform mentioned above, old rubles were thus again re-valued at one tenth of their face value. However, the 1947 reform had not affected wage rates as such – that is why Dmitrii Nikolaevich's study grant had nominally remained at 300 rubles during this period, although its buying power was just 30 rubles]. This wage was paid, for example, to people doing heavy work in foundry workshops – that's what the women in the workshops at the factory where I was employed would get, I know that for sure.

Cassette nr. 2, side B

In the Stalin period, you know, there were hardly any pensioners at all. That is, there *were* pensioners amongst the workers in the cities and towns, but the pensions they got were very small – just a mere pittance. Mama, for example, started receiving a pension from 1946 – my brother Stepan died that year, you see. He'd been the one maintaining Mama whilst Father was in the 'labour army'. So after his death, she started receiving a monthly pension of 13 rubles [before the 1947 currency reform!]. Father, on the other hand, wasn't awarded a pension – in spite of returning from the 'labour army' with a category II certificate of invalidity, they still didn't give him a pension. He only started receiving one after Khrushchev introduced changes to that pension reform: that's when millions of people again became entitled to a pension, and Father too qualified for a pension of 25 rubles per month. People did manage to get by on such a pension, you know.

**- Could you please tell us how you and your parents reacted to the news of Stalin's death? What were...?**

- I couldn't say how it was for them, because they hadn't joined me yet. As you know, I was living here on my own in Perm, and people were certainly – how shall I put it? – aggrieved by his death. Many cried. For Stalin had passed away... Stalin, who for thirty years had been at the helm of the State. And under Stalin everyone, in the last couple of years, had come to expect improvements. There you have the answer to your question about how we reacted to his death: don't forget that under Stalin, every year, in March or in April, people would expect a reduction of [food] prices.



**- Did that actually happen?**

- It did. Every year after the war, there was always a reduction of prices – not too spectacular perhaps, but, all the same these reductions did take place. Every year without fail. And people were very glad about this – and they believed, they believed in Stalin. They just couldn't imagine, they didn't know that he was capable of doing such a monstrous crime... They believed him. I, for example...

**- You too?**

- Yes, I believed too. And everyone in my family believed in him – and not just in my family: ordinary people, ordinary workers, engineers, technicians... they all believed, too.

**- What memories do you have of the general mood in those days – the 3rd of March and...**

- On the 3rd of March, they announced Stalin's death. Or, actually... is that right? was it the 3rd? I think I've forgotten on which day it was announced.

**- The 3rd or the 5th?**

- At any rate, the funeral was on the 5th – but when the announcement came, whenever that was, people cried. I actually saw people crying. I remember how I was walking to work and had to go through Perm-2 Railway Station: well, there I saw people crying. And when I was walking in that tunnel which goes under the railway tracks and leads towards the Kama River, many of the people I walked past were also crying. How were they going to live, now that this great man had passed away? People were very distressed by Stalin's death. They believed him.

**- Were there any fears, any anxiety about what the future held in store?**

- Of course, that's why... Who was going to take charge, how would life shape up from there? People asked themselves such questions. Naturally, as you can see... well, I don't know if I can describe it – we all went through these complicated feelings. For example, I too knew that... well, as we all thought, you know... because we believed Stalin, and we knew and believed that Stalin was being deceived by 'enemies of the people'. Perhaps all this... this faith we had – at least as I've come to see it now, in recent years – I wonder whether this faith may perhaps have somehow influenced our way of thinking – that is, of those who were punished in Soviet times. Perhaps it was a way of deceiving oneself. But it was easier for us to endure... I mean, believing in Stalin's rightness, it was easier for us to endure those punishments which fell to our lot, and it also took away a bit of our fear. That's how I see it, anyway.

**- And it never occurred to you that your family and other people were suffering unjustly because of Stalin?**

- We never thought that, never. All we thought to ourselves was why Stalin didn't know what was going on? Well, we did surmise a thing or two, but the question was always why? After all, these great scientists - Vavilov, for example, [Nikolai Vavilov (1887-1943), the eminent botanist, was condemned in the late 1930s of upholding the "bourgeois pseudo-science" of genetics by the crackpot 'agro-biologist' Lysenko, who enjoyed the support of the Party leadership and had risen to become President of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences. Vavilov was eventually arrested and died of malnutrition in a labour camp] or other ones like Ramzin, [Leonid Ramzin (1887-1948), a notable thermal engineer, had made a significant contribution to the GOELRO nationwide electrification project in the 1920s and was a member of 'Gosplan' (the State

Planning Authority), but in 1930 he was arrested and, together with several other distinguished engineers and economists, accused of “wrecking”, membership of a clandestine anti-Soviet “Industrial Party”, and abetting plans by the imperialist powers to “intervene” in the USSR. At the conclusion of this early show trial – the so-called Industrial Party Trial – Ramzin was sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted to 10 years’ imprisonment. Whilst in prison, he worked in one of the first *sharashki* (‘special construction bureaus’ where imprisoned scientists and technical specialists were put to work), and invented the straight-flow boiler in 1933. He was eventually amnestied, in 1936, and awarded the Stalin Prize in 1943] and all these various engineers – they were all Bolsheviks who belonged to Lenin’s Old Guard. So how could they suddenly be...? Of course we asked ourselves this question, but we didn’t discuss it openly. Because we knew that it was something we weren’t supposed to do and that we would be taken to task if we did. We knew that, but we believed Stalin nonetheless. It wasn’t self-deception, this... The people believed Stalin. There’s nothing you can do about that. That’s the way life is. Because, you see, we live in time, we are children of our time, and if, from your very first days at school or in the Young Pioneers – although I wasn’t a Pioneer myself – they keep drumming on about one and the same thing: “this is a great man, this is the Great Leader, this is a great... and so on... the Coryphaeus of Science”, [a popular phrase, originally used by Sergei Vavilov (1891-1951), President of the USSR Academy of Sciences, to describe Stalin in the post-war years] if that’s what you hear all the time – in school lessons, in lectures at university, on the streets, in the newspapers, on the radio – then how can you *not* end up believing it?!... Everyone believed it. You see, we are all people of our time. That’s something you can’t get away from – we are, as they say, children of the time in which we happen to live.

**- Dmitrii Nikolaevich, after you enrolled at university, did your past – I mean the fact that your family was dekulakized – ever get in your way again? Did it still make itself felt?**

- Oh, it always did – all my life. It always made itself felt.

**- And in what ways did this manifest itself? Could you give some examples?**

- Of course I can: I always felt myself to be, well, a second-class person. Always. I always thought that there must be someone following me... shadowing me, and that I had to be extremely careful, extremely vigilant. Yes, this was an idea which never left me. Well, take this for example: I was in the last year of my degree course, I’d written my thesis, and, well, they even wanted to send it to Moscow for a... You know how they’ll sometimes send a thesis somewhere for... hmm... so that it receives a... oh, what’s the word I’m looking for – can you help me out?...

**- To receive what? To have it published somewhere, perhaps?**

- No, no. Not for publication, no. Oh, what’s the word? when they collect all the best degree theses and... well, in my time they were all sent to Moscow. Yes, and as one of this group it was decided that my thesis would also be sent to Moscow. I didn’t even have to defend my thesis. You see what I mean, my work was considered so... My thesis was judged to be excellent, and so I didn’t have to defend it. I was excused the defence of my thesis.

**- Exempted?**

- Yes – exempted, that sounds better. I was exempted from having to defend my thesis, and what’s the... yes, I’d done a good job of my topic. I was even commended by... none

other than Professor Ostroumov, [Prof. Georgii Ostroumov (1898-1985) made significant contributions to the fields of radiotechnology and acoustics in the 1920s and 1930s before being appointed, in 1945, to head the Faculty of Physics at Perm State University, where he founded the Perm school of hydrodynamics. His lectures in Perm, where he taught until 1958, were very popular with students.] for having done a very good, competent, and comprehensive job. They wanted to send my thesis for a competition, if I'm not mistaken. Well, I'm not entirely sure. But later I did find out that the topic I'd written my thesis on... that my research topic, but this was later, though... I read in the journal *Uspekhi Fizicheskikh Nauk* (*Advances in Physical Sciences*) – this was a journal which came out back then [and still does] – that my research topic had been elaborated by Academician Ageev. [Dmitrii Ageev (1911-1997), a specialist in radiotechnology, he made important contributions to the theory of communications.] I'd been working on exactly the same question... Well, I won't talk about this here – it would take up too much time and it's probably not so relevant to what you're asking me about. So to cut a long story short, Professor Zubarev decided that I... [Boris I. Zubarev (1875-1952), a professor in the Faculty of General Physics at Perm State University].... Yes, thanks to him I was allocated to work in a radio engineering factory in Novosibirsk, but I wasn't able to work there in the end because they didn't provide me with a flat. You see, [at the factory] I was given the right to delay taking up my post until I'd found myself a flat, even though the order had already been issued appointing me Deputy Head of the factory's Technical Inspection Department. That was a very big... It was an important post – and, moreover, one involving great responsibility. But in view of the fact that I wasn't able to find a flat – the factory hadn't provided me with one – the director said to me: “Well, there's nothing we can do about it – if that's what fate has decreed. So don't worry, try and find yourself a job somewhere else and a flat. I'm ready to help you, I'll pass on your documents to wherever you want to apply.” So I went here and there, amongst other places to the Novosibirsk branch, or, rather, the Siberian branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences. There, I was told: “Oh, we definitely need such specialists!”, which I was delighted to hear. Then they said: “We've got a vacancy here, so look: here's an *anketa* [questionnaire] for you to fill in – and this is where you have to write out your *avtobiografiia* [curriculum vitae]. You can come again tomorrow, once you've done this, or, if you prefer, you can sit down here and fill it out now.” And so I set about filling in the *anketa*. Now, in every situation I'd always write everything [about my past] – but if back then I'd had the experience which I have now, I certainly wouldn't have written all that. I mean, I've been coming across all these cases – for example, at the ‘Memorial’ Society I've met a lot of people who concealed this [i.e. their ‘social origins’]. But I didn't conceal anything – everywhere I went, I put this down on my *anketa*, and the following day I'd invariably hear: “Sorry, the vacancy has been taken.” But I understood what they actually meant by these words: “the vacancy has been taken”! Well, and then I went to the... you see, I'd decided that, everything else failing, I could still go and work as a teacher. And, besides, my wife had come with me [to Novosibirsk]. We didn't have a kopeck to spare: all that we had left for the two of us to live on was just 50 rubles, and I still hadn't been able to find any work! That's why I went to the Department of Education at the Tomsk Railway headquarters [which was based in Novosibirsk], where I was offered a flat and a job as a maths teacher at a secondary school in the [*inaudible*] district of Novosibirsk. My wife was also offered a post at that

school – as a biology teacher. She graduated from the Faculty of Biology [at Perm State University], you see, and had been working for ‘Rybtrest’ [a fishing industry trust] here in Perm. So, yes, we agreed and moved there. We were allotted a little room of about this size, [*marks out with his hands part of the room in his flat where the interview is taking place*] and we stayed there and took up our teaching jobs. After a year, we had a welcome addition to our family: our little daughter was born. Now, this happened during the school holidays and I decided to send her with my wife to Perm. After they’d left, I had a good think and came to the conclusion that there was no point in staying on in Novosibirsk – I mean, the school had already given me this letter of recommendation for that branch of the Academy of Sciences I told you about... hang on, I’ve just noticed that I mixed everything up a few minutes ago!... It was actually after teaching at the school that I started applying for a post in that Siberian branch of the Academy. But I got that rejection, and that’s why I decided to go back to Perm. As the saying goes: East or west, home is best! So I arrived here, but again I couldn’t find any work! I dropped in at the university, to speak to Professor Zubarev, who’d been my teacher, and he said: “Of course, you must come to work in our Faculty.” – “I would love to do that, Boris Innokent’evich,” I replied; “but, you know, they won’t take me!” However, he said: “I’ll go myself and...”... You see, he too had been punished once: he was the son of a Petrograd writer, a literary scholar. And he was himself a professor, but then in Soviet times he’d had his title taken away from him, although it was later restored. Now, before [the war]... I know this because he supervised me when I was [preparing to] defend my degree thesis... [before the war,] he was again stripped of his professorial title. And it wasn’t until 1951, when I returned from Novosibirsk, that he was reinstated as a professor in the Faculty. So there you are. Yes, and he said: “I’ll go and push through your application myself.” I just nodded: “It won’t be any use,” I said. So again I wrote in the *anketa* and in my CV statement what I’d written before – these things were all obligatory back then – and, of course, my application was rejected. Well, Zubarev apologised later; he said: “Too bad. You were right. Nothing came of my efforts on your behalf.” And so I started going round various places, looking for work, but everywhere I went, I was seen off with the same reply: “We don’t have any vacancies.” If I insisted and said that I knew that a post *was* available, they just shrugged their shoulders and said: “No.” And I remember how on one of these occasions I went to the personnel department in some organisation – I’ve forgotten what its name was – and the head of this cadres department looked at me and said: “You’re drunk!” I replied: “No, I’m just angry.” – “What are you angry about?” he asked. “Because I can’t get a job,” I explained; “even though I want to work and I know that there’s a vacancy available, no one will give me a chance.” – “Well, what’s going on? Why is this...” – I told him everything, and, despite his show of sympathy, he also just said: “I’m awfully sorry, but we just don’t have any vacancies.” Well, eventually my wife’s sister suggested to me: “Why don’t we go to the factory where I work?” I did, I went there and was received by the factory director, a former official in the Party *obkom*. He actually hailed from Leningrad but had been evacuated to Perm during the war. Anyway, I told him everything, too, and added at the end: “Look, I’m telling you fair and square: I want to work! If you’re willing to give me a chance, then do so! I’ll work hard and honestly, and I won’t be any trouble.” I’d told him everything. This is what he said: “All right, let’s give it a go then, shall we? I’ll take you on.” And indeed, he gave me a job – he phoned the personnel department and asked them

to take me on the factory staff as a foreman. I agreed. The salary was 790 rubles, which wasn't particularly high for those times, but at the same time wasn't low at all, if you consider that a worker would get 300 rubles. The factory director's salary was 1,400 rubles. Well, so I began my job there and was soon promoted to the post of Senior Engineer, which meant that my salary went up to 980 rubles. Now, after working there for three years, you started getting a bonus of so-and-so percent on top of your salary in your fourth year at the factory. So after five years there, I was earning these 980 rubles plus a bonus of a few percent, which meant that my monthly income was above 1000 rubles. Yes, after this pay rise I was earning about 1,100 rubles per month. And so I stayed there for the rest of my working life – I didn't try to look for any other employment elsewhere. Now, here's something else which is also relevant [*inaudible*]... I was soon elected a member of the trade union factory committee. Not long after that, I was also appointed an agitator and was given the assignment of teaching Stalin's work *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* [which came out in the form of a booklet in 1952] to our factory's engineering and technical staff. You've heard about that work, haven't you? Yes? Well, it was something which everyone had to study in those days: engineers, technicians, factory directors, everyone! And students too, by the way. When I was a student, for example, we'd all studied it. [*sic* – this cannot be correct because Dmitrii Nikolaevich completed his degree studies before 1952. It is likely that he is confusing this work of Stalin's with the *Short Course*, referred to above.] I remember that when I was working on my degree thesis, I also had to study this work and pass an exam on it before taking my finals. I'd studied it in great detail then and so it was that I now started teaching it to others. It was also around this time that the following question presented itself to me: "Why don't I write an application for admission into the Party?" I saw that only there was it possible to... that only by being a member of the Party could one achieve something useful. Otherwise, you'd just stay on the same level you were before. Well, and so I drew up my application – this was shortly before the Nineteenth Party Congress [in October 1952], the last congress called by Stalin before his death. And would you imagine: I talked to all the members... that is, to most of the members of the bureau of our factory's Party committee, and, of course, with the bureau secretary. They decided that I could apply, and so I wrote my application. Now, when I filled in the *anketa*, I wrote once again that I'd been in exile. And this is what happened as a result at the Party bureau meeting during which my application was discussed. The first question I was asked was to give an account of my life. So I fulfilled this request and told them about myself, and after I'd finished, the head of one of our workshops, who was a member of our factory's Party committee, got up and said: "Exploiters of the labour of others cannot be admitted into the Communist Party!" I retorted: "Are you sure you've thought through what you just said? Because when, I wonder, and where have I ever been an exploiter?! If we start talking in these terms, then you're an exploiter yourself, because you've got some two hundred and fifty workers labouring under you! So tell me: when did I become an exploiter? I was born in 1918, when the Soviets had already come to power! So where and in which moments of my life did I have the opportunity of becoming an exploiter?!" It's downright silly, isn't it? But another member of the Party committee also got up – the one who'd written a testimonial on me... you see, one had to have three recommendations accompanying one's application... And he said that he wanted to retract. His name was Shishkin, Nikolai Ivanovich. The head of the workshop

whom I'd given a taste of his own medicine by styling him an "exploiter" was called Nikiforov. Yes, so this Shishkin retracted. Well, and that was it.

**- He retracted his recommendation?**

- That's right, he withdrew his recommendation. Well, that was it, as far as I was concerned ("Oh, what we went through then!" – *interposes Dmitrii Nikolaevich's wife*). This whole business caused me so much anguish. I didn't know how I would... I was really desperate and [*inaudible*]... And this stayed with me for the rest of my life.

**- Does that mean that for you, joining the Party was the supreme goal?**

- No, I... I didn't... Well, I wanted to, I was 'for' [*sc. the Communists*]. You see, Father too had said to me: "There's no reason why we should go against Soviet authority." It [the Revolution] had evidently been a crucial moment... in history... it was something inevitable. And I believed... All of us in our family believed in Soviet authority. And so, given this historical turning point... I wanted... I believed that being a Communist, I'd be able to give more help or be of more use... What was I thinking?, you may ask. Well, I don't deny it – it may just have been presumptuousness on my part... Anyway, I really did suffer a lot after my application fell through – it was a... it stayed with me for the rest of my life, for my subsequent... I knew that fellow-students of mine – for example, one whose brother was a Hero of the Soviet Union and who wasn't a particularly bright student: well, all the same, he got a post at the Sverdlov [Aircraft and Rocket Engine] Factory here in Perm, and had a whole laboratory put at his disposal. He had every possible opportunity, whilst I... Why couldn't I have the same? I'd been a better student, so why didn't I have such an opportunity? Yes, there you see how all this kept stinging me for the rest of my life and... ("But you've forgotten about the second time you were..." *interposes Dmitrii Nikolaevich's wife*) Well, and the second time round it was like this – a couple of years had passed and some people started trying to persuade me: "Come on, join the Party!" You see, by that time I was already Chairman of our factory's trade union committee. Now, of course, the chairman of a trade-union factory committee was supposed to be a Communist in every respect. I wasn't one, but, still, I was elected. So that's why they kept pressing me: "Come on, you've got to apply!" I tried to get away by replying: "But it's way too early for me. I'm not mature enough yet. Let me wait a bit more." However, they refused to let me off and they just continued stepping up the pressure – because that's what it really was: "Come on, come on, join!! If you don't, what will that look like?! You've got to apply!" – "Well, if that's how things stand," I replied; "sack me from this post! There's just no way I can go through a second time all that I had to suffer then." I refused, but then our Party bureau secretary came to have a word with me and said: "Listen, I've talked to some people in the Party *raikom*. You'll be admitted, so do put in an application!" And I did write an application – namely, with this condition: that at the Party *raikom* I was already... And that's how I was finally admitted without any hitches... ("But you were rejected twice, weren't you?" *interposes Dmitrii Nikolaevich's wife*) No. Only once, only once. The second time, I didn't actually have any intention of applying. As I said, I refused to make a second application. It's just that I was persuaded in the end. And that's why I submitted a declaration, and I was admitted without any of these... The factory's Party committee approved my application unanimously. So all that remained was for the Party *raikom* to ratify it as well. But it so happened that the Secretary of the Party *raikom* – who, by the way, later became our factory's new director – that the Secretary – he was the one who'd promised that my

application would be accepted without any ifs and buts – happened to be away at the time! He'd either gone on leave or been sent somewhere on some official business – I don't know what it was exactly, I've forgotten. But, anyway, when I turned up at the *raikom* bureau, it wasn't him who was presiding [the meeting to examine my application], but the Secretary for Ideology! My heart sank when I saw this, because it may all have been fine by one person, but now that someone else had taken that person's place, what would happen now?... However, I needn't have worried so much because everyone at the *raikom* approved my application and I was admitted into the Party. About a year and a month later – or, rather, what am I saying! a year and seven months – the secretary of our factory's Party committee left to take up an appointment as Chairman of the *raispolkom* [District Executive Committee] for Dzerzhinskii District [in Perm], which was based in that house which had once been a student hostel – I lived in it for two years, you know, but then it was taken over by the *raispolkom*. Yes, so our secretary went off to become Chairman of the *raispolkom*, and the question naturally arose: "Who shall we have for our secretary?" Well, and my candidature was put forward, and I was indeed elected Secretary of our factory's Party organisation – of the Party committee, as it was called. However, this had to be ratified by the Party *gorkom* [the Perm City Party Committee], that is, by the Party *nomenklatura* in the *gorkom*. So, again, I was on tenterhooks, because I'd always [written the truth about my past] everywhere – how could I start lying now? No, there was nothing for it: I'd just have to say the truth. But, as it turned out, when examining candidatures at this level, the officials at the *gorkom* don't actually ask you to give an account of your life. They just leave that out. They do ask you other questions, however! For, according to the rules [of the Communist Party], the Party committee secretary [at an institution or enterprise] is supposed to be someone who is both a Communist and who has been a Party member for at least one and a half years. So they asked me: "Let's see, Comrade Streletskii, have you been in the Party for one and a half years?" I said that I had – and in fact, for a month or so more than the minimum required. So I was elected or, rather, my election to this office was confirmed. And that's how I became Secretary of our factory's Party committee! But nevertheless... nevertheless, I still had this... this inner feeling that I... that there was this burden hanging over me all the time. It stayed with me all my life.

**- So this feeling never actually went away?**

- That's right, it never did – until I received my full rehabilitation in 1993. That was something I actively sought.

**- What was your reaction when you were granted this? I mean, was it only in the 1990s that the rehabilitation process started in your case, or did it begin earlier – under Khrushchev, say?**

- Under Khrushchev, I just read about it, but...

**- But this process didn't affect you?**

- That's right – it didn't, and I couldn't really bring myself to believe in it.

**- You didn't quite believe in it? You had your doubts?**

- I had my doubts, yes. [I was afraid] that I would be repressed. Because, you see, I already knew by then that millions of peasants had been repressed. And I ask you: is that possible? I mean, humanly speaking, is it possible to conceive of such a thing? Can it really all have been such a dirty business that...?

**- In other words, you were afraid that the repressions might repeat themselves?**

- No, there was no way they could. The peasantry wouldn't. [*sic*]

**- Were you so sure about that?**

- No, I suppose I wasn't sure... But what I really did doubt was whether it was possible to somehow vindicate millions of people – that is, to establish that they were all innocent and that the authorities had gone too far in this matter. (“They suffered unjustly!” *interposes Dmitrii Nikolaevich's wife*) Yes, but I did know that already, you see – that millions of people had suffered undeservedly. Of course. But then, you see, I read that all these political figures had been rehabilitated, and that the Marshals too had been rehabilitated. [The three Marshals of the Soviet Union who perished in the Great Purge M. N. Tukhachevskii (1893-1937), V. K. Bliukher (1889-1938), and A. I. Egorov (1883-1939)]. But as to rehabilitating all these millions of people – how could there be any point in this? I mean, how could the [Soviet] authority have illegally repressed its own people, millions of persons? It was something I just didn't comprehend... And, besides, [as to the Soviet government] acknowledging its error and reinstating [all these people]... I just didn't accept it.

**- How did you come to know that there had been millions of people who had suffered repression?**

- Oh, that was from the literature on the subject which started coming out in the 1990s. And then, you know how that commission was set up – when Gorbachev was still around – that commission under the direction of Iakovlev... [In fact, the Russian Presidential Commission for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression, headed by Aleksandr Iakovlev (1923-2005), was created by Eltsin in 1993. However, given Iakovlev's close association with Gorbachev during the years of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, it is understandable why Dmitrii Nikolaevich should give Gorbachev the credit for that commission too].

**- So you found out about it in the 1990s – but what about the 1960s, then? Didn't you say that in those years...?**

- But in those years I didn't even think of the possibility of rehabilitation. I mean, back then, hardly anyone was rehabilitated. You'd just hear of isolated cases in the press – in the newspapers, that is. Because all this [rehabilitation] only really started under Gorbachev. Whereas under Brezhnev, on the other hand, they restored all that and again started to raise the authority of Stalin. And, besides, people didn't talk or write about it if some former 'enemy of the people' had been rehabilitated – this was never publicly shown anywhere. That's how it was under Brezhnev, and even in the last phase of Khrushchev's rule. Because, you see, after 1962, that very 'warming' (*poteplenie: sic*) [i.e. the thaw] was frozen up again. After those events in Novocherkassk. Remember what happened? That was precisely in 1962, you know. We just heard some faint echo of it all, but officially nothing of that had happened. There was nothing [in the press] about the shooting, nothing at all about the demonstration. All there was were just rumours. And these rumours... I actually believed those rumours then, but officially nothing at all had happened anywhere. Moreover, for a long time I virtually didn't know anything about... You see, I did hear about the report [*sic*] on the unmasking of Stalin's cult of personality – about Khrushchev's report at the Twentieth... or was it the Twenty-Second Party Congress? The Twentieth? Yes, I heard about the report at the Twentieth Congress. But I didn't read anything official about it anywhere, you know. As Communists and, moreover, as Party committee secretaries, we were summoned to the *raikom*, but the



thing is that they didn't read the whole report to us – just a number of separate features of the report. In fact, we weren't read out any passages from the report as such – it was simply a lector summarising [these features] for us.

**- How did you react to this information?**

- Well, positively of course. Because, after all, this information gave us certain hopes that we too might be rehabilitated at some point. Not millions of people [at once], but on an individual scale. That's how I saw it.

**- What about Stalin's 'cult of personality', did it somehow...?**

- That did exist, yes...back then.

**- No, I actually meant under Khrushchev – what I wanted to ask is whether your attitude to Stalin changed in some way after you'd heard those snippets from the report?**

- Yes, it did change, it changed – but not in everyone's case and not always. For example, I had a good friend once, a very loyal friend [Iurii Sukhov]. We'd both studied together, we'd lived in the same room at university – he was a mathematician... and had fought in the war. Well, he was unquestionably, as they now say, a 'Stalinist'. But he didn't have that... I really do think that he didn't know about all that... He died back in the 1980s... still in the Brezhnev era, and in those times it was generally forbidden [to question Stalinism]. Now, we had this conversation once, and I told him about this corruption [*sic*] of Stalin's; that he hadn't always been decent and honest; that he was cruel...

[Interviewer's note: "This anecdote was recounted above"]

**- Sorry, in which year was this conversation?**

- It was in 1979... 1978 or 79.

**- Could you please tell us about your rehabilitation in the 1990s?**

- Well, yes, the 1990s began, and I already knew about the commission headed by Aleksandr Nikolaevich Iakovlev. So I started going about a way of... My wife, on the other hand, said: "Just forget it! Don't bother about it. It's pointless, and you'll just end up doing yourself a lot of harm." You see, I was already ill then. (*Dmitrii Nikolaevich's wife interposes something which is unintelligible on the recording.*) All this application business was, of course, bound to agitate me somewhat, and, as my wife was well aware, I was already suffering heart illness: I was already struggling with coronary heart disease. Twice or three times already, I'd been hospitalized – in the cardiology ward. That's why she said: "You'll just cut short your life that way!" Because she knew, for example, how much it had upset me when my application to join the Party was rejected the first time. "Forget it, don't leave the house!" she said. But I'd made my mind up all the same, 'come what may'. And so I went... I chanced upon a meeting of 'Memorial', I just dropped in and... 'Memorial' had already been set up then, you see. And I'd somehow heard about it from someone or other, so that's why I decided to drop in. And I happened to do so on a day when there was this meeting – I've forgotten what it was about, but the person who sat down next to me turned out to be the Deputy Head of the Perm Oblast Internal Affairs Administration: his surname was Gerasimov. I could tell that my neighbour at the table was someone high up because I saw that he had these colonel's shoulder-straps. So afterwards, during a break in the proceedings, I addressed him: "Excuse me, may I have a word with you?" And he said: "Go ahead." So then I told him about the circumstances of my case – who I was, what the matter was, and so on – and asked him whether it was all right if I filed an application. "Come to my office tomorrow," he said; "I'll see that

you're shown in to my office." (*Interviewer's note: "There follows an account of how Dmitrii Nikolaevich was able to acquaint himself with his personal dossier and how he finally obtained his rehabilitation."* )

## **From Interview 2**

[...]

**- Could you please try to recall how your father reacted to the news that his brothers – your uncles, that is – were dekulakized?**

- Who knows, who can tell how he reacted? It was probably... I don't even know, as a matter of fact.

**- Yes, but there must have been something...**

- Well, honestly, I... Well, it was tragic. Of course, it was a tragic event, and, clearly, he must have reacted accordingly. But in front of me, it... I just don't remember. I'm really not able to recall anything. What I do remember, for example, is that when they were dekulakized and transported from our village, we followed them and tried to get food parcels to them as often as we could... And also when they were in Kurgan, imprisoned in this large, cold building... And then we wrote them letters, too. After all, they were our closest relatives after Grandfather. And, of course, my father couldn't look on all this approvingly, but he never said or did anything against Soviet authority. Nothing of the sort! He didn't nurse any grievances. And that's why he himself went into exile so meekly. He also thought that it was just a mistake.

**- That what was a mistake?**

- That he'd been rounded up.

**- That he'd been dekulakized?**

- Yes. Although, properly speaking, he wasn't actually dekulakized. You see, none of us was ever dekulakized as such. Our house was never searched. They just came and said: "You're going on the next transport!" There was no inspection or calculation. They simply came and said to us: 'You are going.' Serkov, the chairman of the village Soviet who deported us, explained: 'I have received an order [from the district party committee] to find 17 kulak families for deportation. I formed a committee of the poor and we sat through the night to choose the families. There is no one in the village who is rich enough to qualify, and not many old people, so we simply chose the 17 families. You were chosen,' he explained to us. 'Please don't take it personally. What else could I do?' Well, and that was all.

**- And how did that conversation of yours actually end?**

- The way I've just told you.

**- Just like that?**

- Yes, exactly.

**- And against that person you never felt any...?**

- Never, never! Never! What was he to blame for? He was in the same boat as us. You know, he got 10 years [in a labour camp].

**- Is it the same with you now? That you still don't feel any anger?**

- That's right – even now, when I think of him, I don't feel any spite and I don't have any grievance whatsoever against him. And I didn't have any back then, either. I'd even forgotten his name [when I came across him during my visit to my native village in 1948]. And after our conversation, I just said: "Well then, God speed you!" But hang on, no – in those days, we wouldn't have mentioned God. So I don't know what I actually said to him, but we just went our ways.

**- Sorry?**

- We shook hands, as I said – we shook hands to say goodbye and then just went our ways. And I didn't ever see him again and he never saw me again, either. That was the end of the matter. We never met again.

**- Now, did your father say anything at all about the dekulakization campaign?**

**Whether it was bad or good?**

- Of course he said things. But as I just said, our family wasn't dekulakized. It was simply just... we were deported; they said that we had two hours to get ready. Or was it one a half hours? I don't remember that any more, but I've got it written down somewhere in my papers, you see. Yes, so they said we were to get ready; that we couldn't take this, that we couldn't take that with us. They took away something that belonged to Mama... I'm not sure if I remember correctly what it was – some silver or golden... some sort of neck-chain... that's what they confiscated. Yes, and they also took her golden wedding-ring – they snatched it off her finger: "You can't take that with you," they said, and that's all really. Everything else remained in the house. All our possessions remained there. That is, those things that belonged to the *kolkhoz* were confiscated, but as for our house... Well, our sledge had been taken away some time before, but everything else was left in the house that day. And what remained... So was this really a dekulakization, I wonder? Oh yes, and a day or two before we were evicted, they came and boarded up the [windows and entrances to the outbuildings of our homestead], and declared our house under boycott.

**- Who was it who boarded up your house?**

- Why, the village soviet. They came two days before [our deportation]. We had a cow and some... you see, the *kolkhozniki* [were allowed to keep a few animals], so we had a few sheep left – two or three. They sealed the windows, they sealed them with planks... Actually, no – not the windows, but the doors – they boarded up the doors, so that no one could enter our house and so that we couldn't go to see anyone, either.

**- What impression did this leave on you? Did you ask yourself what was going on, why this was being done?**

- I wasn't there. You see, I only got home on the day they ordered our eviction – that's when I arrived from school, at the neighbouring settlement. So all that happened in my absence.

**- So how did you find out about it later?**

- Well, that's pretty obvious, isn't it?! From what I was told!

**- Who told you?**

- My family – Mama told me, Father told me: "This is what happened, this is what happened." And I'd also seen those planks for myself. They were fastened with nails, these planks that they used to board up the doors.

**- And what did you think of this, when you saw these planks?**

- Well, that it was a mess of some sort. What's there to think of there?

**- I mean: whether you asked yourself what was going on?**

- Oh, who can say after so many years? How is one supposed to feel about that? I don't know.

**- But back then, I mean, in those years when...**

- Of course it was...

**- ... when you were... Well, how old were you actually when that happened?**

**Fourteen?**

- Yes, I was fourteen then. No, I mean I do remember everything distinctly; I saw it all with my own eyes... But what can I say about it now? What I made of it then? Well, of course it was a bad thing. And, besides, the following morning, on the 25th of March, they dragged two carts up to our house – and told us we were being evicted. Well, what thoughts is one supposed to have in such a situation? Is there really anything one can think about? Apart from... I don't know... well, for example, what we were going to take with us? And we ended up taking just the clothes we were in, what we wore every day. Whereas everything else was left behind in the house. We set off [to the station] just in those clothes.

**- Sorry, could I just ask again: what you mean is that your family wasn't dekulakized, but simply evicted, is that right?**

- Yes, simply evicted.

**- So what did you feel about those peasants who were dekulakized? I mean, perhaps there actually were real kulaks amongst them?**

- No, no. In our village there wasn't anybody who owned wayside inns, or who engaged in the carrying trade, [Like the employment of hired labour, ownership of a horse-drawn cart – whether or not it was used to carry goods commercially – was for the Bolsheviks another indicator of membership of the 'kulak class'] or anything like that. They were just peasants, peasants. We didn't have any wealthy peasants... or any of these – what do you call them now? – of these spongers... No, what's the word? *Derzhimordy*? [Derzhimorda (*lit.* 'Keep your mug shut') is one of the policemen in Gogol's *The Inspector-General*; he appears only once, but what is said about his brutality on duty and about his drunkenness was sufficiently expressive to make his name a byword for a certain type of oppressive petty official in the Russian and Soviet bureaucracy]... No, what do you call them nowadays? I don't know, but the point is that we didn't have anything of that in our village. That is, the only case I know of was... You see, there was this farmer called Tushin, who owned a mill by the Tobol River. Well, as far back as in 1928 – way before all that, before the *kolkhoz* was set up [in our village] – he'd actually already sold it. That was when they started imposing those high taxes [on the better-off peasants], in 1929, I think. And in our village they went for this Tushin. So that's why he suddenly decided to sell [his mill]. He really did own many granaries and farm-buildings, and kept a lot of cattle. He also employed a number of farm-hands, and at the mill he had some labourers, too. Yes, he paid them wages. And he also had his own, hired shepherds. That's why already in 1928 – that is, either towards the end of 1928 or in 1929 – he sold off everything and left our village.

**- But even if there weren't any kulaks in your particular village, perhaps there were in other villages you may know of?**

- Not that I remember, no. I don't know... We didn't have any where we were. There really weren't any peasants of that kind. Well, I mean, is it fair to call someone who's

well-off a 'kulak'? We did have well-off families. But, you know... Yes, there were families who lived well and had plenty to eat – but, on the other hand, consider how they dressed themselves! Because, you know, we peasants never had any money to spend on such things; all the clothes we ever had were home-made! For example, we'd sow hemp and then extract a coarse fibre [bast] from it which you could spin and weave into this rough cloth. And we also grew flax – every peasant family sowed flax right up to 1930! Until the *kolkhoz* was set up... We used the flax to make linen and clothes for ourselves. Grandfather had these velveteen trousers – real velveteen *sharovary* [baggy trousers worn on festive occasions by the better-off peasants in Old Russia], as they were called. I mean: velveteen trousers. I'm not sure what kind of a material this velveteen was, but they were very shiny. Yes, and Grandfather actually wore them for his wedding and handed them on to one of his sons, Ivan, when he himself married in 1924. Yes, Uncle Vania wore exactly the same *sharovary* when he got married! So there you are, that's how we 'kulaks' lived! Because people like us were just peasants, dependable folks who knew the land, who loved it, made sure that it was in good condition, and worked it. Day and night, you know! Because a peasant's work could run through all night long [in the haymaking and reaping seasons]. And what he did manage to reap he'd have to store and use up at home, mostly – a part of it for his own sustenance in the winter months, and another part as fodder for his livestock. The rest, if there was actually anything left, he'd sell and buy himself something for it.

**- But were all peasants as honest, fair-minded, and decent?**

- How can you ask such a thing?!... I mean, listen to this – my Grandfather once said in front of me: "I've never, ever had to go to the *starosta* [village elder] to render account for anything. Because I've never done anything wrong!" The *starosta* was also a peasant, you see. So everyone lived honestly and decently.

**- So in general...**

- We never, ever had to lock our doors from anyone. I tell you, it really was like that during my childhood – for example, when we moved [in 1927 or 1928 to a new house, in the same village but closer to the Tobol River], we never had to secure the latches on the doors [in our new house]! During the day, the doors would always be open. Because that's how it really was back then. It's only nowadays that you have all this metal junk and all these iron doors! But back in those years, you could just leave everything open! So in that respect... Oh yes, and here's something else I've just remembered: I went fishing once – we all went on this fishing trip and... You see, in the summers Grandfather would often suggest that we all went to the lakes to do some fishing – there were lots of lakes in our region – and so we'd harness the horses, place our sweep-net on one of the carts, and off we would go to one of the lakes, where we'd set our net. Now, I remember that whenever we reached the lakeshore, there'd always be some other family's net hanging from a tree branch, or some fence- or basket-trap [for crab fishing] leant against the tree. Because, you see, it just wouldn't have occurred to anyone to go and pilfer someone else's things. On the shore, there were also these upturned boats, with oars lying under them – and, again, no one ever stole any of these implements. In this particular respect, everyone was honest and decent.

**- In that case, why was this dekulakization carried out? For what reason? How did you yourself interpret it back then? And, in general, what did you think of the dekulakization campaign?**

- Oh, who knows how it was back then! You talk about thinking, but... just how was I supposed to think anything back then?

**- But you could try to picture yourself in that situation – and perhaps you’ll recall how...**

- Look, all I can do is this... What happened at the time – *that* I can tell you. But as for what we all thought to ourselves back then – the devil knows what it was! Now, of course, we know all that was going on back then, what it all meant, and why... Isn’t that so? But, evidently, these readings don’t suit you! You seem to want to hear something else – am I not right?

**- But, Dmitrii Nikolaevich! – in what sense... What readings do you mean?**

- Well, I mean the answer to your question as to “why” this dekulakization took place! Because it was a policy of the Party, wasn’t it? – collectivization and rapid industrialization. I mean, that’s true, isn’t it? But here you are going on about what I thought back then!... What can a person – a grown-up person have possibly thought about the reasons for his dekulakization whilst he was being dekulakized?! Who can tell that?! How do you expect me to be able to tell you that now?

**- Yes, but your thoughts now on the matter, your present opinion – that is all of great interest to us, too.**

- Well, if it’s my present opinion you’re after, then that shouldn’t be new to anyone!... That it was all a mistake. That it was an act of utter contempt for the [Soviet] people! I mean, just look at what was going on! Both in the countryside, and in the cities. Because it certainly wasn’t just in the countryside. Everyone suffered! Party leaders suffered, as did soviet [government] employees, Party workers, the military. Before the war, Stalin had 40,000 members of the armed forces shot.

**- So it is Stalin who you think was responsible for this?**

- Who else? It was, after all, he who was giving instructions – he supported this policy.

**- But back then... in those years, you didn’t think that, though, did you?**

- Of course not! We just didn’t know anything! I mean, it’s only now that we’ve found out this. Back then, we didn’t know that, of course... Who knows what actually did take place then? How can one possibly explain anything of what happened there? I mean, why does an honest person, a hard-working person, who helps and gives grain to the government, suddenly find himself being dekulakized? What had he done wrong? That he hadn’t joined the *kolkhoz*?... But there you are, he’s dekulakized, he’s evicted, and what’s the reason of it all?... That very Serkov, the chairman of our village soviet – he told me: “I was assigned 17... That is, I received a telephoned telegram which said: ‘prepare 17 families for eviction as kulaks’. We’d run out of *edinolichniki* [individual peasant farmers], you see. The rest of them weren’t at all suitable for eviction. They were just grandparents and toddlers, really. So that meant we had to evict a couple of *kolkhozniki*. So whom did we choose, then? The Bobrov brothers, the Streletskii family...” I’ve forgotten who else was evicted together with us – well, there was someone called Evgraf, who was also from our village... Evgraf, but I don’t know his surname. Then there was also one called Vasili...

**- Sorry, let me just interrupt you – this was in 1948, wasn’t it?**

- No, in the years 1932-1933.

**- No, what I mean is this: you met Serkov...**

- Yes.

- ... and this was still before Stalin's death, wasn't it?

- Yes, yes.

- And Serkov told you about this directive to evict 17 'kulak' families from your village...

- Yes?

- So after finding out about that, it surely must have got you thinking?

- Ah, but I kept quiet about it. I already knew about it, you see. That was when I was already a student. But I kept quiet about it! It wasn't something you could talk about. That would have been dangerous.

- Yes, all right, but when you were on your own, didn't you come to any conclusions about all this?

- I did! I came to this conclusion: Keep quiet!... That's all.

- But why "keep quiet"?

- Because, you see, to do otherwise would have been impossible. It really was impossible. For example, when I was a student, we had this seminar once, and one of my fellow-students said: "If I were..." No, the way he started was like this: "Stalin," he said; "isn't entirely..." Let's see, how did he put it?... Yes: 'modest' – that's the word – "Stalin isn't entirely modest," he said; "I mean, surely one can't permit this?! If I were in his place, I would definitely not have permitted these farmers to bring out a cart filled with dung, shouting at the same time: 'Hurrah for Comrade Stalin! This is a disgrace!' he said; "I would not have acted in such a way." Yes, it was precisely in these terms that he spoke out at our seminar. Well, he was immediately hushed by everyone present – and then... After that, someone did denounce him in the end. And I was summoned, too.

- Where? By whom?

- [*gives a heavy sigh*] I was summoned to the militia station which was on Dzerzhinskii Street [in Perm]. I got this summons from Comrade... now, who was he?... I've forgotten, but that's not so important... Anyway, I was shown into his office, and he asked me: "Were you at so-and-so a seminar?" – "I was, yes." – "Did you perchance hear the conversation I've just shown you on this sheet of paper?" – "No, I didn't." – "What do you mean you didn't hear it?! You were there, weren't you?" – "Yes, I was. But, you know, there were all these conversations going on. It was a seminar: we were all divided into discussion groups, we had to go through our lecture notes. Everyone was talking loudly. So I certainly didn't hear any conversation like that." I denied that I'd heard it. Because if I had replied: "Yes, I did hear it" that would have made me into an informer! I would have been guilty of landing a fellow-student in jail! Anyway, he actually wasn't removed from the university in the end. By the way, he later became a well-known journalist – I met him in Moscow several times when he was working as a journalist for *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*. Yes, we met up there quite often. And these last few years, whenever I travel to Moscow – apart from this year, you see, I've always gone to Moscow for the New Year – I've always dropped in on him. Only two years ago, for example, I visited him. To this day, he is still a Communist: he still has a Party-membership card and pays his Party dues.

- He's a Communist, is he?

- Yes, he's a Communist – very much so. He was even... Well, in Soviet times, he was a correspondent for *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, and then, towards the end of his career, he was trans... he was appointed to a very senior post at the *Glavizdat* [Chief Publishing

House] for one of these Ministries – the Ministry of the Polygraphic Industry, or something like that. Yes, he was the Head of *Glavizdat*, and any book which came out was under his jurisdiction, so to speak.

**- Sorry, wait a second, please – you said earlier that if you’d replied that you had heard that conversation, that would have meant you were an informer...**

- Well?

**- But you didn’t go there on your own initiative!**

- Where?

**- To the militia station.**

- No, I was summoned. I received a summons.

**- But why were you summoned, anyway?**

- Well, someone obviously told them who’d attended that seminar. Well, and I just denied having heard that conversation. And so did this friend of mine – Vania Bykov – he also denied it. He’s dead now, sadly.

**- Which year was this and where did it happen? At which institute?**

- It was at the university here.

**- At the university.**

- Yes, and I think it was either... if I’m not mistaken, it was either in 1946 or 1947.

Thereabouts. I’m not entirely sure.

**- But it was still when Stalin was around, right?**

- No... What am I saying! Yes, of course it was! Yes, yes, yes! It was in 1946 or 1947. I can’t be any more exact.

**- Now, after your family was dekulakized or, rather, deported, did your attitude – that is, yours and of your parents – did your attitude towards members of the Party change at all? And what about your attitude towards Stalin?**

- Listen – we never had any conversation of that kind. As for Stalin, we believed him – we believed Stalin. We thought that he didn’t know about it. And that’s what Father said, too.

**- Your father also said this?**

- Yes, Father said: “Stalin doesn’t know, so that means that sooner or later we’ll get out of here.”

**- In other words, you believed that you were innocent?**

- Yes, we believed that we were innocent. We believed in our innocence. Father did, and so did everyone else. And we all believed that this matter would sort itself out.

**- But why were you so sure that Stalin would find out? Did you write any letters, perhaps?**

- No. Our family didn’t write [any petitions]. Because seeing that... You know, it really was a complicated affair – and dangerous, too. It really was advisable not to say anything. But I think I’ve already told you about this, haven’t I? No?

**- What exactly was dangerous?**

- Well, it was dangerous to say anything, I suppose – well, for example, to say that they were wrong to have deported us.

**- And you didn’t talk about that anywhere?**

- Nowhere – nowhere whatsoever. And we didn’t write to anyone, either. But we thought that... and, as I said, Father also reassured us... we thought that Stalin would find out! Because, after all, this was something that was going on everywhere and [affecting]



thousands of people. We'd seen them with our own eyes – there'd been thousands of people together with us [on the transport from Kurgan to Perm Oblast]. And, yes, there had been conversations about why and through what possible fault of ours [we'd been deported]. "Stalin may not know about it now, but he will find out! He hasn't been able to yet, but he will. This is all being done without his knowledge, they're deceiving him." Yes, that's one conversation I recall.

**- But on the other hand consider this: you've said a number of times that you believed the Soviet authority, right?**

- Yes, we all believed in it.

**- And you believed Stalin, yes?**

- Yes, we believed Stalin.

**- But your family was, after all, deported. So that would mean, wouldn't it, that they can't have deported you just like that, for no particular reason?**

- But that's why we said amongst ourselves that someone was acting behind Stalin's back... that Stalin didn't know, and that all this was being done by... exactly, by these people. That there really were enemies and they were being deported... Yes, we did talk about these enemies. We talked about these enemies.

**- Sorry, I don't quite understand – what did your family say about the enemies?**

- Well, that there really were these 'enemies of the people'! And that it was they who were responsible for this.

**- So you thought that it was 'enemies of the people' who had...**

- Yes, who were doing these disgraceful things, who were rounding up the people. Because, I mean, who else could have [arrested] Bliukher? A hero of the Civil War – it just didn't make sense! How could Bliukher possibly be an 'enemy of the people'? No one, you see, could believe that!

**- So you too didn't believe that, right?**

- That's right, we didn't believe that. But for us it also remained a fact that Stalin was being deceived. And that as a result... It's only now that we know how they did in a Marshal of the Soviet Union – even without Stalin's knowledge. But back then we did believe it – we sincerely believed that it was enemies who were doing all this.

**- And who were these enemies, then?**

- That is.... Who knows who these enemies were? Those who surrounded Stalin, evidently.

**- In other words, his innermost entourage?**

- Of course! Most likely. Because, you see, at the time we just didn't go into such fine details as to who it was. What mattered most to us was to... Our thoughts turned on the hope that all this would pass, that we had to hold out – to survive this difficult stretch, and that afterwards everything would be all right again.

**- So you thought that...**

- That's what I'm saying: we thought that holding out was what we had to do. And Father also said this to us.

**- You mean: survive as such, that is...**

- Yes, to survive – to stick it out for as long as this lasted. To hold out, to survive.

**- Not to die, in other words?**

- Yes, exactly – not to die. Because there was a famine and we didn't have any proper clothes for the winter.

**- Were you particularly afraid of starving to death?**

- I was – what else do you expect? I mean, I couldn't go up to the first floor on my own – my legs were all swollen from hunger. I couldn't even... You see, in Pozhva [the settlement in which Dmitrii Nikolaevich's family was put up until the 'special settlement' of Novochemozskii had been constructed], we lived on the first floor of this wooden house, and I just couldn't manage to go up the stairs. Well, my legs were swollen – I'd lost all my strength, I was all swollen from hunger. They just gave us 200 grams of bread – nothing else apart from that! 200 grams of bread. And, besides, they didn't give you this ration on a daily basis – what they did, rather, was to hand out straight away all the bread you were entitled to for 15 days. That's 3 kilograms of bread for 15 days – that's what they'd give you. Now, it wouldn't have been particularly hard to eat it all up in one week – but then what would you do? You see, if it hadn't been for Mama keeping an eye on us, we children would probably have eaten it all up in two days! And what would we have done then?... We even ate these... I wonder if you'll believe me, but we actually ate ... you see, the first grass hadn't sprung up yet, but the snow had all melted, so what we did was to gather up the leafy tops from the potato tubers that had overwintered, which were just weeds, really. And we'd dry these, grind them in a small mortar, sift it out a bit and... Now, what did Mama knead it with?... Oh yes, it was with linseeds of some sort – I remember how Mama and I would go and barter some of her needlework for these linseeds. You see, she was always knitting or sewing various drawn-thread table-cloths or napkins. So that's how we got hold of some linseed, and Mama would also dry these seeds and crush them in her mortar – and then she'd mix this paste together with the ground potato tops. And we'd stuff ourselves with this paste – after which you'd be on the verge of throwing up for quite a while. It was terrible to live through this! To live through the famine. In the winter of 193... that is, in the autumn of 1933 and the winter months of 1934 – it really was terrible! And so we...

**- Well, you did somehow manage to survive – so why was this? I mean, how did you manage to, and what helped you to hold out?**

- I'll tell you what helped us to survive – it was like this: when we were exiled to Pozhva, Mama stayed there with us children all the while Father was put to work building the settlement. I mean constructing the special labour settlement. And when this settlement was ready, in the autumn, we were all transferred there and reunited with Father.

**- Who actually took the decision of transferring you?**

- Why, the commandants, of course. The NKVD commandants. That's all.

**- But did your father perhaps ask them for permission so that you could join him there?**

- No, no. They were all over there [the able-bodied men], working and building the settlement, whilst the families were living separately in Pozhva. But in the autumn, they put us all on a boat and transported us there. It was all organised: they told us we'd be setting off, and we did. We packed everything up and left Pozhva. That's how it was. Now, Father, when he was helping to build the settlement, was housed in a nearby village called Karakoska. And the neighbour of the peasant in whose house Father was put up, happened to work at the cattle abattoir in Chermoz. So Father came to an agreement with him – he asked him first: “What do you with the blood after you've slaughtered the animals?” – “Oh, we just let it drain onto the floor and into these cellars.” – “Well, would you mind saving some up for me? I mean, you could put a bucket or a small keg under

the processing line, couldn't you?" – "I don't see why not – we've got some kegs," he said; "so I'll put one there and you can drop in on us in a week's time, when it's filled up." And after that, we'd go there every Sunday – that was when Father had his rest-day – we'd walk to that slaughterhouse. And then on this hand sledge we had we'd drag home some three or four buckets of this blood. Mama would simply bake it – or cook it, or whatever, and we'd eat that. That's how we survived! A great deal of people died of starvation. Very many in our settlement. Yes, in that winter, when we were already living in the settlement. The winter of 1933 and 1934 was a very harsh one... Actually, no – in the winter months [i.e. January – March] of 1933, we somehow managed to get by all right... What I mean is the autumn of 1933, when we moved there – yes, and the winter started in December, so, as I was saying, the 1933-34 winter was very tough for us in terms of finding anything at all to eat. But after 1935, though, they abolished ration cards, you know, so we could actually buy bread again.

**- Dmitrii Nikolaevich, may I nevertheless go back to something I asked earlier: after you were deported, didn't you ever have any thoughts about... or perhaps conversations with your father or mother... about, well, whether your family had, after all, done something wrong in the eyes of Soviet authority? Did you ever feel guilty in some way?**

- No, we didn't, we didn't. I knew about it already then. No, we never felt guilty. I knew that Father had fought against Kolchak, in Shorin's army. I already knew that at that time... And, later, you know, in 1938, that very Shorin was arrested as an 'enemy of the people'. The commander of the Third Red Army. I think it was, in fact, this Third Army which captured Perm. Or am I wrong?

**- I don't remember which army it was.**

- Well, that's a pity because I myself don't remember, either.

**- But perhaps... precisely the fact that your father had fought in Shorin's army...**

- No, it can't have been that, because Shorin was executed in 1937 [*sic*].

**- Oh yes, so I suppose...**

- Whereas we were exiled in 1933.

**- Yes, before that.**

- But still... No, I mean my father did tell us about Shorin. Because, you see, he'd actually served in Shorin's headquarters, as a gunner, so he'd been able to see him at close quarters. And... No, we never thought ourselves guilty. That never happened with us.

**- But perhaps it was bad, after all...**

- Father was convinced that it was some kind of mistake – a mistake on the part of the *kolkhoz*. Because, you know, there was so much disorder. In the *kolkhoz*, I mean.

**- Disorder in what sense?**

- Well, in the sense that they hadn't laid in enough hay, for example – and so all the livestock was dying... We had a roof made of... you see, when we moved [to a new house in the same village], when Father decided to set up on his own, we had this roof: Father had it made out of rye straw which had been threshed with flails beforehand. That's to make the straw more straight and tidy. And that's how our new house was thatched. In our village, we had master thatchers who knew how to apply the straw in such compact layers that the roof never leaked. The overall thickness of the thatching was probably some 70 centimetres. Now, this straw... our house was thatched in 1927 or

1928, but in 1933 – that is, after the straw had lain there for six years, they took it down in order to feed the *kolkhoz*'s live-stock. The straw was already half-rotten, so this was completely senseless. How could the animals live on this stuff? And yet they took the thatching down and carried away all the bundles of straw as fodder. The live-stock, however, perished. Horses, cows, and sheep. A lot of sheep died then. Was my father supposed to take the blame for this on himself? No. What other option did a *kolkhoznik* have?

**- You mean your father...**

- That was never the case: Father didn't think that [he was guilty of anything] – rather, he felt himself unjustly aggrieved – unjustly exiled. That's all. And he thought that it would happen – that Stalin would find out and redress everything. Yes, there was this [hope]. We believed Stalin.

**- Yes. Now, in the last interview you said that back then you believed in the existence of 'enemies of the people'. And this is something you've also been referring to now, isn't it? That you believed that there really were these 'enemies of the people'?**

- Yes.

**- And you believed in the trials at which they were arraigned, yes? You said that...**

- Well, yes, we did believe in them. We really did believe in them, you know! In this respect, there's something I remember... I mean, how could one *not* believe in them?! How could one not believe [in the validity of these trials], given that they themselves confessed? The only thing that surprised us, though, was why. Yes, and I remember how we talked about this at home once – although we didn't just talk about this amongst ourselves, but also with our neighbours. Yes, we did talk about this – about why and how it could be so that these people, who had gone through the Tsarist *katorga* [penal servitude in Siberia] and held out there firmly, were now suddenly acknowledging their guilt? Why couldn't they just have refused to do this? Why did they admit their guilt openly? Yes, that was a conversation we had once.

**- And what conclusion did you come to in this conversation?**

- Oh, who knows! I mean, even today it's still an incomprehensible thing.

**- So you did believe that they really were 'enemies of the people'?**

- Well, how could we not? Given that they themselves had confessed. I mean, just look at what was written about them. Take that Kol'tsov, for example. You don't remember who Kol'tsov was? The journalist and foreign affairs specialist? I've forgotten what his first name and patronymic were, but, anyway, he wrote some feuilletons in *Pravda* about these 'enemies of the people'. Later, though, he himself ended up as an 'enemy of the people' and was actually arrested – in 1937 or 1938, I'm not sure. But before that, you know, he'd written about Bukharin, about Rykov, about Erengol'ts [Dmitrii Nikolaevich is almost certainly thinking of the Old Bolshevik Rozengol'ts who was tried at the same time as Bukharin and Rykov], I think – but I'm not sure if I've remembered the latter's name correctly. [Mikhail Kol'tsov (1898-1940) was one of the most famous *Pravda* journalists of the 1930s whose feuilletons were especially popular. For a while he enjoyed the patronage of Stalin, who sent him as his personal emissary to the Spanish Republic. Kol'tsov was also a member of *Pravda*'s editorial board during the period that the newspaper covered the Moscow show trials (1936-38): he himself wrote a savage, mocking article on Bukharin in the dock, entitled 'Ubiitsa s pretenziiami' ('A Murderer with Pretensions', *Pravda*, 7 March 1938). In December 1938, however, he was arrested

and eventually executed as a 'spy' in 1940. Reference: [Wikipedia entry](#) & Russian articles available online.]

**- In that case, have you considered this? I mean, your family was exiled to a special settlement... so that would mean that you too were counted amongst the enemies' camp...**

- Yes, and all my life I was... Listen, this stigma weighed on me all my life. I knew and understood that. Because, you know, they wouldn't give me work. I wasn't able to get a job anywhere for a long time.

**- Well, and what did you consider yourself at the time...**

- I mean, even after having graduated from university, I couldn't find work anywhere. I kept being turned down.

**- Yes, we'll go back to this issue at some point, but could I ask what you considered yourself back then? Also an enemy?**

- Yes, what else could I...

**- So you did consider yourself one...**

- But that wasn't just me, you know. I mean, the local population had this attitude towards us! A hostile attitude.

**- There you are: now do you see why I'm asking these questions? I just want to try to understand the atmosphere of those times. That is, to understand your way of thinking, your neighbours at the time, and so on. Because I wasn't around then, of course!**

- Yes.

**- That's why I was...**

- Listen – I mean, this...

**- And you just said that you also felt yourself to be an enemy.**

- The atmosphere?... I did also feel like that.

**- That you were an enemy, yes?**

- Here, there, and everywhere – I constantly felt this. That is, I didn't feel myself to be an enemy, but, rather, an outcast. At school, for example, when I'd say to myself: "Here I am, sitting at the same desk as my class-mate, but I'm a completely different person to him. He's a local lad, he's untainted. Whereas I've got a father who's an exile – and I'm in exile, too, and I'm not just a bad person, I'm..."

**- But surely this amounts to the same as being an 'enemy'? Doesn't it?**

- Yes. Exactly the same, I suppose... And, you know, that's how we were seen by the local population.

**- Could you perhaps give some examples of how you were treated by the local population?**

- Well, yes. For example, I remember that in the holidays after completing the seventh form, I went to look for work, to earn some extra money for my family. But the question was where would I be able to find any work? Well, I went to the villages... I went round the houses, offering to do some mowing for someone... Actually, not mowing because I didn't really know how to hold a scythe properly – what I offered was to help with raking in the grass, since I did know how to use a rake. Yes, the idea was to find someone whom I could lend a hand to. So I reached this village called Ust'-Niva.

**- Oh yes, I know the place.**

- You know it?

**- Well, I've just heard about it.**

- Yes, so I reached this Ust'-Niva... Ah, but I forgot to mention that before that, I'd gone to the village nearest our settlement, where there were a few small huts – but I hadn't had any luck there. Anyway, I walked into Ust'-Niva and offered my help to the first villager I met. He asked me: "Where's you from, lad?" – "I'm from the special settlement," I said, and then he just turned away: "No, don't need any help." Then I went to another house, where the peasant was whetting his scythe, so it was obvious that he was going to do some mowing. I asked him, too, but he just said: "Na, don't bother." Finally, though, I came to a house, and the woman who was in charge of the household said: "Well, you don't look so sturdy, so I wonder if you're really up to the job?" – "But I can help you to cart away the hay." – "All right," she said; "let's go then." So we went to the meadow – I had thought she'd give some breakfast first, but she didn't. Anyway, we raked up the hay into the cart, and after dragging it back home, she bade me sit down at her table and gave me something to eat: milk and potatoes and a couple of other things. Oh yes, and there was a little bread, too. Now, there were still some windrows left on the meadow, so she said: "Well, tomorrow you can also give me a hand." So I stayed there for the night and helped her again the following day: we gathered everything up and brought it all to her homestead. So that's how I got myself something to eat, but she didn't give me any money whatsoever. However, I was grateful for the food she'd given me. That just goes to show that people's attitudes could vary quite a lot: some treated us with contempt, whereas...

**- And on the whole, which attitude prevailed?**

- Well, at first, a negative attitude, of course. Yes, a negative one. I remember how I joined that school in Chermoz, in the seventh form, and how everyone looked at me sort of askance when they found out that I was from the special settlement. Yes, askance. And, moreover, none of the children really wanted to sit next to me at the same desk. But later, after a while, all that passed, and by the end of the year they'd accepted me.

**- But how long did they give you these mistrustful looks for?**

- Listen, I've long since forgotten that. But it was unpleasant. I really did feel quite miserable, and they treated me with hostility. Well, for example, they didn't want to sit at the same desk as me. That does hurt quite a lot, you know! And then, when they played games in the school-yard, and I sometimes tried to join in, I always had this feeling of being unwelcome: "Push off – we'll get by with you." When it was time to go home, there were some children who had to go in the same direction as me. Quite a few lads, in fact. And they all kind of stuck together in their little groups of friends, whilst I always either walked in front of the rest – and no one ever tried to catch up with me – or I'd trudge along behind them all. That's how it was. But eventually, though, I did start making friends.

**- And how did the teachers treat you during this time?**

- Kindly. Yes, kindly.

**- So the children were nasty towards you, whereas the teachers...**

- No, not nasty! I'm not saying they were nasty to me. They didn't tease me or bully me, or anything.

**- No, but still, they did ignore you, didn't they?**

- Well, it's true that I did sense this for a while. They didn't consciously try to hurt my feelings, but I could sense that they were ignoring me. Whereas the teachers, they were kind to me.

**- Were they all like that?**

- Well, who can tell such things? Whether it was all of them or not?! All I can say is that, for example, our physics teacher – Anis'ia Timofeevna – to this day I feel such gratitude towards her... Unfortunately, she's already dead. She taught us physics. At our school you could get some breakfast if you wanted to, but it cost 10 kopecks. As I didn't have these 10 kopecks, I couldn't buy myself any breakfast, even though I was hungry. So she would sometimes – because she knew that I was always the last one to leave the classroom during the morning break – she'd sometimes wait until all the other children had rushed off to the canteen, and then she'd take three rubles from her wallet and place them on my hand like this. It's quite possible that she also whispered a few words of encouragement whilst she gave me this money, but she never said anything aloud, and I didn't say anything either – I didn't say: "Thank you", but I did have this feeling of gratitude towards her and she understood this.

**- But why didn't you say: "Thank you"?**

- Because the other children might hear it! You see, I understood that. And if they heard me say that, they would start asking me: "What were you thanking her for?" I didn't want all this to get talked about. You see, I did understand that, too.

**- But who could hear you, if, as you say, everyone treated you all right? I mean, what did it matter if they actually...**

- Well, anyone could have heard. There'd always be someone passing through the corridor. You see, she'd usually wait for me – I'd get up from my desk, and she would be standing in the doorway. I'd step out of the classroom, and she'd put the money into my hand. What good would it have done to say anything? Well, I mean, perhaps I did whisper something, but she wouldn't have heard it anyway... I just didn't say anything to her, and she didn't say anything, either – but I always felt this gratitude towards her, and she could sense that.

**- I see... Were you perhaps afraid of putting her in an awkward situation?**

- Of course I was! Of course!

**- So there was this danger, after all, in your school?**

- Danger... Well, who knows? Perhaps it wasn't danger with a capital D, but we – the children of exiles – had seen enough of danger as such and didn't want to take any risks.

**- But it wasn't just once that she gave you this money, right?**

- No, it wasn't just once, that's right. It wasn't just once. But 3 rubles, you know – that lasted me a whole month! Breakfast cost 10 kopecks. At home they didn't confiscate this money from me or tell me off – my parents said: "Yes, do get yourself something to eat." But there was just no way that the 10 kopecks for the school breakfast could come from home. You see, Father did earn 70 to 80 rubles [per month] – he worked as a carpenter and didn't earn too badly. But he lived separately from us – we were in the settlement, whilst he was over there. It was just on Sundays that he could come home to us on leave. So yes, Mama did regularly get some money to buy food for us children, but you must bear in mind that after he'd taken these 80 rubles home, we all still had to pay taxes. If you kept a cow, you had to deliver milk all the time. If you kept hens – and even if you didn't – your household had to deliver 40 eggs. And so on and so forth. I don't quite

remember if the quota was 370 or 240 litres of milk [per cow]. I've forgotten that. But what we did was to buy butter – when it cost 3 rubles a kilogram – and deliver that instead of the required milk.

**- In which years was this?**

- In the 1930s.

**- Could you be more specific?**

- Well, in 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939. Well, these years, I mean... Yes, 1939 and 1940 as well. During all these pre-war years that's what we had to deliver.

**- But you were still living in the special settlement, weren't you?**

- Oh yes, in the special settlement! The local peasants and the 'special re-settlers' all had to deliver produce – after all, the latter were also living in a rural area. Even if you didn't keep any live-stock, you still had to deliver [these taxes in kind]... Now, what I don't remember is whether we also had to deliver wool, or not? I think there was a wool quota, too, but I'm not entirely sure. At any rate, we didn't keep any sheep ourselves – but what I don't know, what I don't remember is whether we did have to deliver wool anyway. My memory's already a bit... and there's no one I could ask... But I am pretty sure that one had to hand over some wool, too. Later, I mean, you had to deliver the hide of a pig – even if you weren't keeping any pigs at all. That's what they demanded of every peasant.

[...]

**- Dmitrii Nikolaevich, if it's all right with you, let's go back a little bit: could I ask why you wanted to get away as far as possible from Perm and Sverdlovsk and as deeply as possible into Siberia?**

- I think that was a perfectly natural impulse... I mean, to avoid arousing suspicion, I suppose.

**- What suspicion?**

- Well, so that I didn't get arrested, I suppose. It's difficult to say exactly what now, but I just had this feeling that... that I had to get away as far as possible from these places of confinement [*sic*].

**- Did you actually feel yourself to be guilty of anything?**

- No, there wasn't anything I felt guilty of. But all my life, I considered myself a second-class person – even after graduating from university, I still considered myself a second-class person. I was always faced with mistrust. And I understood that. It was always the case – everywhere... that's why none of the factories, none of the important ones wanted to employ me. I was turned down at the Dzerzhinskii [Machine Construction] Works, and at the Sverdlov [Aircraft and Rocket Engine] Factory here in Perm. I wasn't taken on by the Western Siberian branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences, either, even though I'd been encouraged to go there and told that they needed specialists like me. My application to work at the university here also fell through, in spite of the fact that the professor who'd supervised me when I was preparing my degree thesis [Prof. Zubarev] went in person to recommend my appointment. Another rejection! So it's only natural that I felt that something wasn't quite right – that I was a second-class person – because that's the attitude I always encountered. It's only natural... and it was always like that ever since becoming a 'special re-settler'. Because, you know, the 'special re-settlers' were



disfranchised persons... even though in 1936 we were able to vote. No, I mean... Yes, all right, we did vote, but, all the same, [Soviet] authority didn't trust us.

**- So you simply wanted to get away?**

- Yes, to get away as far as possible!

**- To hide?**

- Of course.

**- In that case, why didn't you try instead to conceal this in the *ankety*?**

- Because I thought that sooner or later it would come to light. I thought that if I gave honest answers, if I conducted myself honestly, then it would be all right. Whereas if I had tried to conceal this and it came to light later, what would I've done then? Where would I've dared to show myself?

**- You were afraid of being punished?**

- There was a sense of shame and my conscience and... it wasn't just a matter of punishment, but precisely this.

**- But you were nevertheless also afraid of being punished, right?**

- Who knows? I had my doubts, yes – I had my doubts. There wasn't any fear as such, but I did have these doubts that...

**- And that they might punish you, yes?**

- That they might punish me and all the rest: they could sack you from work wherever you happened to be employed, whatever you happened to be doing. Yes, of course, there was this fear. That's why it was better to tell the truth. And I always did. In recent years, to my surprise I've met several people at 'Memorial' who – like that Chief Engineer of the Dzerzhinskii Factory [*Interviewer's note: "the person he means is Saltykov, Leonid Konstantinovich"* – his interview is available in the Russian section of this website] – who concealed everything! And, as a matter of fact, I've now understood that if I too had concealed [my family's eviction], nothing would have happened to me. Because, you see, I later wrote to our village soviet, which had been responsible for our eviction, and asked for my documents: there, it was written that I was a "middle peasant", that I was from a family of "middle peasants". In other words, that I wasn't a 'kulak'. No one actually considered me a kulak! And they wouldn't have, either, even if I had concealed [the fact of my family's exile].

**- But you found this out later, didn't you?**

- Yes, later. That was later...

**- When you were applying for rehabilitation...**

- Yes, exactly. Now, when I started writing to various places regarding my rehabilitation, it actually turned out that there weren't any documents on me anywhere. Neither here, nor there. There was absolutely nothing! The Perm Oblast Prosecutor later told me that I needn't bother to look further, since all these documents had been destroyed under Malenkov.

**- Could I ask whom or what you were more afraid of: the NKVD, the special settlement's commandant? Were you afraid of them?**

- Listen, there wasn't any fear as such.

**- No, but you did say that you wanted to get away from...**

- As far as possible.

**- From the special settlement.**

- As far as possible, yes. To get away as far as possible.

**- Now, in your special settlement the main person was the commandant, wasn't he?**

- That's right, the commandant. I don't know, but... [*laughs*] I wasn't actually afraid as such. Although in the summer of 1937, I'd steal away to a straw-stack at nightfall, to sleep there, so that if they did come to arrest me, it would happen in daytime, rather than at night. Yes, I'd slip away to this straw-stack and sleep there.

**- Where was this?**

- In Chermoz [district]. In the [special] settlement. You see, after they arrested our neighbour, I started doing that. Well, someone or other would come with me, too – there'd usually be two or three of us sleeping in the straw-stack. Because it was very near, you see – some 100 metres: the straw was piled up right there.

**- And how long did you hide there for?**

- The whole summer. Yes, July and August.

**- Was this before you started the tenth form?**

- No, I was still in the tenth form. It was when I was in the tenth form.

**- When you still had school classes? Do you mean you were still at school in the summer months?**

- Yes, yes, yes. I was still attending school then. But in the summer, though, we didn't have any classes [*sic*].

**- But you said earlier, I think, that in the summer after completing the tenth form, you went off to apply to university?**

- Yes, I think it must have been in 1937 when I finished. Then I did indeed go off to Perm to...

**- You mean you finished school then?**

- Yes, yes, when I finished school. Now, I took my school-leaving exams in June and I was free in July and August. It wasn't until August, you see, that I set off to take the [university entrance] exams. But after that I didn't go back to Chermoz. So it must have been around May and June when my friends and I went to sleep in the straw-stack. Yes, in May and June, evidently.

**- And perhaps it was precisely because of this that you decided to study, to apply to university, so you...**

- Well, I did have this long-standing wish to apply to university, to obtain a higher education, you know.

**- Since when did you have this wish?**

- Since school – I was already nourishing this wish when I was at school. And then it became even stronger – when I was in the 'labour army'.

**- But what I was actually asking was whether your decision to go to Perm after completing the tenth form was perhaps also connected to these arrests?**

- Oh, who knows what...

**- In connection with your precaution of going to sleep in a hay-stack...**

- No, no. I think that in this case it was the result of Father's influence. Because he always said to us: "Work hard at school, boys! That's what's good about Soviet power: that it gives you an education. So study hard! Make the best of it!" Yes, so it's very likely that it was, after all, Father's influence.

**- No, I'm not denying that. Your father's influence was undoubtedly very important in this matter, but nevertheless – you did say yourself that you were frightened.**

- I was afraid of being arrested. I knew that they always came at night. Our neighbour, for example, was taken away at night. And I'd also heard that they'd arrested a number of other people... But I didn't know them myself. However, I did know that they'd been arrested at night. So that's why I'd steal away as soon as night set in – yes, it must evidently have been in May and June when I did this.

**- Did you yourself make this decision to go and hide at night-time, or were you...**

- It was my own decision! My own! I decided to by myself... I'd take with me... That is, I didn't take any pillow or blanket – I didn't have anything of that, I didn't take any such things with me. I'd simply steal away – at first, together with a friend of mine called Grisha Sukhorukov... The two of us would steal away and sleep over there in the straw-stack.

**- Did your parents know about this?**

- Oh, God knows... I'm not even sure I can... It's difficult to say. But I suppose that Mama must have known.

**- What about your father, then?**

- Well, as I said, Father was living separately from us. He worked far away and would only come to us on Sundays. So it's quite possible that he didn't know, in fact. He may well not have known. But Mama did, that's for sure.

**- Weren't you afraid that they might come and arrest someone from your family?**

- You know, a lot of people were arrested. They arrested a lot of people at the time, especially in 1936... or, rather, beg your pardon, in 1937.

**- So there was this fear of...**

- Yes, very much so – and if the worst came to the worst, I wanted them to... And do you know why [I was afraid]? Because I had a non-Russian surname. Streletskii isn't a Russian surname. As far as I knew – and Father had told me this, too – it was a Polish one.

**- A Polish surname?**

- Yes, yes, a Polish one... So I wanted them to arrest me at day-time.

**- You actually thought that they might come and arrest you?**

- They very well could have, you see, because they arrested a lot of people in Chermoz. For example, in 1937 the Chairman of the District Executive Committee was arrested – I know that for sure. And many others, too – people I didn't know. In our settlement there were also several arrests – Ivanov, as I said: our neighbour Ivanov. They arrived [in a truck] at night. And there were others, too – I just can't remember their surnames. So yes, people were being arrested!

**- The NKVD arrested them, right?**

- Exactly. They'd come at night. The knock on the door.

**- So why then did Nevolin, the NKVD commandant decide to help you, if it was precisely then that this...**

- In 1937.

**- Yes, if it was precisely then that these mass arrests were taking place. And besides, in those years, the so-called "Polish operation" was also being carried out.**

- Yes. What Polish operation? The Polish operation was in 1939, I thought.

**- No.**

- But there were Poles: yes, yes, we did have Poles in the area. Not in the special settlement, though, but in Chermoz. There were quite a few Poles in Chermoz.

- **Who were arrested?**

- Who weren't working. They were forced to work because they were on strike.

- **Why was that?**

- I don't know why. Although people did talk about... You see, I didn't actually come into contact with these Poles myself, but I heard people saying that the Poles weren't working out of protest.

- **In which years did this happen?**

- Oh, in 1937... or, between 1936 and 1937.

- **No, what I meant was simply that in 1937 and in 1938 the NKVD carried out this "Polish operation" across the whole territory of the Soviet Union, arresting ethnic Poles.**

- I see – I must say I hadn't heard about that before. You're the first person I've heard this from. But, anyway, I was afraid because of my surname... Now, where I did hear this? It's quite possible that I did hear it somewhere, but I just can't think of where at the moment. So that's why I'd steal away to the straw-stack – and I didn't spend just one night there, but probably about twenty or so nights – hidden inside the straw.

- **But don't you think that what you did then – that is, to go to the NKVD commandant – was terribly risky? I mean, especially considering that you were afraid they might arrest you?**

- But I never did go to him! Ah, but hang on... sorry, did you mean Nevolin?

- **Yes.**

- Well, no. You see, it was with a clear conscience that I went to see him! Why should he have arrested me?! And besides, they [these commandants] didn't arrest people. They could detain you, that's right – but it was others who did the arresting, you know.

- **All right, but what if he *had* detained you? Because, after all, he too was from the NKVD!**

- Well, I suppose I wouldn't have been able to do anything if that had happened... I don't know, that thought just never occurred to me at the time. I just went to see him to ask him for permission. I hoped that... You see, I was the first of all the 'special re-settlers' there to finish a ten-year school! See what I mean? Perhaps it was Father who instilled this idea [of going to university] into me – or perhaps someone else – but it certainly wasn't without the approval of my family that I went [to see the commandant about this matter]. And I simply gained their sympathy when I told them about my views, my... about my intentions. Yes, I gained this... I don't know whether it was as an NKVD commandant or simply as a good person that he decided to help me, but the point is that I received his support. It's difficult to... I received help and I'm grateful to him for it. He helped me out in terms of money, you see. Because although I hadn't actually asked for any financial assistance, he gave me 100 rubles. 100 rubles! All I did was to write this application, as he asked me to – he let me write it then and there, seated at his desk: "Please give me some financial help in connection with my journey to..." That was all I had to do.

- **Dmitrii Nikolaevich, let's now talk about the 'labour army'. How did you end up there?**

- We arrived on the 22nd of January... and we were...

- **Of which year?**

- 1942. On the 21st of January, 1942, we were told that...

- **The 21st of the 22nd of January?**

- We were told on the 21st that we were supposed to pick up our work books, and then we went to this... Have a look at my notes, if you want [*suggests to the interviewer that he should consult his memoirs*]... On the 22nd of January, we left Chermoz in the evening, all geared up and thinking that we were being mobilized into the Red Army. Well, and it was some 150 kilometres to Perm, so we marched through the night and all day long, effectively, until we reached Perm on the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup>. And it was only then that they announced to us that we weren't going to the army, but to Lys'va, to join the *trudarmiia*

**- Tell me, when you were called up into the Red Army, were you glad of that?**

- Well, how is one supposed to be glad there? I don't know. There wasn't any gladness, no, but [this notion] that we were going to defend the Motherland.

**- Is that what you felt, then?**

- Yes, that's what we felt all right. There was no sense of fear or anything. All we felt was this certainty that we were going to defend the Motherland. And in my case there was also a certain satisfaction, knowing that despite everything I too was marching there – that at last I'd been admitted on the same basis as everyone else. So no, we didn't experience any fear.

**- I see – so on the contrary, it was...**

- There was no fear at all. What we felt was this satisfaction at being able to join the army.

**- You felt that you had been admitted with... that they had recognised you as having equal rights with everyone else?**

- Yes. What else do you think?! I mean, going to the army! How could this not... Of course, they'd recognised us! And it was this that gave us this sense of satisfaction.

**- So you now felt as if you weren't guilty of anything, is that right?**

- Of course, seeing that they'd called me up! It was the end of that past life! A new life was beginning. We all felt this – all of us – and we talked about it a lot. We were all marching cheerfully – there weren't any depressed faces amongst us. However, when we found ourselves behind barbed wire, in the 'labour army' – that's when we all got depressed.

**- But when they announced to you that you were going to the 'labour army' instead, did you actually know what a 'labour army' was?**

- No.

**- You didn't?**

- That's right, no.

**- And what did you expect to find?**

- Well, God knows what... I suppose I just said to myself: wait and see. I didn't really think anything to myself about this. It was just a question of wait and see. And when they took us to Lys'va...

**- Wasn't there any disillusionment at first?**

- No, no disillusionment... Although that's not quite true: we *were* disillusioned – I mean, why weren't we going to the Red Army but had instead been assigned to this *trudarmiia*? Yes, there was this mood. After all, the very name: 'labour army' implies [manual] labour and as such... Well, it was clear that we'd have to make something with our hands instead of fighting.

**- And you didn't want to, right?**

- Of course not.

**- You wanted to fight?**

- Of course, to go out and defend the Motherland!

**- So in other words you wanted to expiate your guilt with your own blood, is it fair to say that?**

- I didn't consider myself guilty. I considered all that to be some kind of mistake.

**- Yes, all right, but others did consider you guilty.**

- That's right, others did. So that's why this [being called up] put me on an equal footing with the others. With honest, decent, free people.

**- You mean the fact that you'd been called up into the army?**

- Of course, of course. So we arrived there and...

**- You wanted to prove to the others what you were worth, right?**

- Yes, to prove this, and if need be even to prove it with my own blood – to prove that I was just as much a person as all the other, free people. It was just that. There's nothing surprising about that, is there? And during my time in the 'labour army', I actually did write a number of applications [volunteering for the front], but... Once I was even seen by a medical board and I passed the physical fitness assessment. However, just before I was going to entrain, some guards came and led me away. I hadn't even got into the wagon because they hadn't finished making up the train yet. So they marched me out of the station and I spent the night in a jail. The following morning, I was sent back to work again. Well, first to have some breakfast in the dining-hall, and then off to work.

**- Why were you so keen to go to the front?**

- Well, we were always half-starving – do you see what I mean? We were always half-starving in the 'labour army' – even though they gave us 800 grams of bread [a day] plus three hot meals. But, even so, that wasn't always enough for our young bodies, and we really felt half-starving. Do you know what I mean? We never really managed to eat our fill. And as for the wages we received, these were... Well, to start with, there were all these deductions for the food we got and everything else – and then there were our voluntary contributions to the Defence Fund. So all in all, we'd get just a few rubles. Perhaps something of the order of 20 rubles. So, as you can imagine, we sometimes felt like laughing at how meagre our take-home pay was. For example, there were these rolls of light tobacco. You know, it was more or less like this: say, you're smoking a home-rolled cigarette – well, and when you've finished, you go and offer me what's left over, and I've got to fork out 15 rubles for it. That's how it was. But what were they called? These... hmm... the leftovers of these cigarettes? ("Cigarette stubs" *suggests Dmitrii Nikolaevich's wife*) Yes, cigarette stubs. So you had to pay 15 rubles for one of these cigarette stubs! In other words, our whole monthly earnings were just about enough for one cigarette stub! Those were the kind of conditions we lived in – so who wouldn't want to leave for the front?! I mean, some people were ready to commit offences, in order to be put on trial and be removed from the 'labour army' – because if you were convicted, they'd give you a sentence of three years which was immediately converted to front-line service – and these people would be sent to 'penal battalions'... Take my own work brigade, for example – I don't remember why I stayed behind that day, because I would have gone along with them [my fellow brigade members], too, but I must have been held up at work for some reason. This was when I was already working as a welder. So I was held up somewhere, whilst they all went to the *sovkhos* [state farm] – the Lys'va *sovkhos*

– in order to dig up some potatoes. They knew very well that they had to carry off at least one kilogram, or a kilogram and a half, in order to get themselves arrested. So what they did do? They reached the *sovkhos*, dug up various ridges, and left in full view of everyone, so that the guards soon arrested them. They didn't put up any resistance, of course. Well, there they were, caught red-handed with all these potatoes, and they were immediately put on trial. The courts worked very fast in those years! Within a week they'd been sentenced – that is, their sentence was converted to front-line service. They all got three years – and off they were packed to the army.

**- They were handed down 3 years in a labour camp, right?**

- No, imprisonment.

**- Imprisonment.**

- That's right – imprisonment, which would then be converted to front-line combat. And they were all sent to the front. They ended up in a 'penal battalion'. As a matter of fact, they took part in the capture of Königsberg, in Eastern Prussia. They were all thrown in to face the German bullets and they were all killed – except for Tsvigun, our brigadier. Tsvigun had been in charge of our work brigade, you see. He was just wounded severely and recovered in the end. He sent us a letter from the field hospital where he was recovering.

**- Tell me, why were you, though, assigned to the 'labour army'?**

- Because we were the first draft. You see, the 'special re-settlers' weren't moved into the army. Although in the first days of the war – or, rather, in the first months, the situation was dismal and many soldiers and people – around 5 million – were captured. But, still, they wouldn't have us for military purposes – us, the first draft, that is. We were the first amongst the 'special re-settlers' who... we had "RKKA" [Workers' and Peasants' Red Army] written down in our work books... But, since they didn't want to have us in their ranks, we were sent to the 'labour army' instead. The later drafts, on the other hand – the second, the third, and so on – they actually were mobilized into the army.

**- So it seems as if there was a lack of co-ordination – because at first you were...**

- No, I don't think so – there was co-ordination throughout. They just distrusted [us] from the very start; they distrusted us.

**- But in your work book it does say: "RKKA", doesn't it?**

- Yes, "RKKA"... but this may well have been a mistake, you know. I mean, the person who wrote RKKA may have done so inadvertently... Although, on the other hand, I was sure that I was going to join the RKKA – because it had actually been announced to me that I was going to the RKKA. So I suppose it can't have been a mistake.

**- That would mean, then, that there was a lack of co-ordination?**

- Oh, who knows what it was! Perhaps it was a conscious deception on the part of the [military] leadership all along. I mean, the military registration and enlistment office must have known, after all, whom they wanted to have and where these forces were going to be deployed! But the point is that they did tell us we were going to the RKKA. It was when we were on our way to Perm – that's when they told us. However, when we'd actually reached Perm and were being transported [in trucks] to Perm-2 Railway Station, we suddenly heard that we were going to Lys'va instead, to join the 'labour army'.

**- And so when you arrived there and found yourself behind "barbed wire"...**

- Behind barbed wire, yes. There was a settlement there, in Lys'va, with a number of two-storey buildings. Quite a few of them were enclosed with barbed wire. Before us, they'd

already started filling up with Uzbeks, Tadzhiks, Ukrainians from Western Ukraine and Belorussians from Western Belorussia, Jews, and Germans – who'd been removed from the front [or the front-line territories]. Yes, there were Germans who'd been deported from the front-line zones. And all these people were housed in no more than four or so barracks – which were all surrounded by barbed wire.

**- So you understood that you...**

- I understood where I had ended up.

**- Where?**

- Where? Why, in confinement – yet again! Because, I mean, barbed wire... Do you get that in the regular army? Of course not! There's no barbed wire there, but what we had around our barracks were definitely barbed-wire fences. They were taken down a few months later – that's true – at the end of 1942, or perhaps not until 1943... I'm not sure. But the point is that we were living behind barbed wire for quite a while – at first...

**- How did you feel when you were there – in terms of...**

- Lousy – we felt utterly lousy. What else do you expect?

**- Well, compared to the 'special settlement', was it worse?**

- It was worse.

**- Or better?**

- Initially, it was worse – you felt worse in the sense that... Well, in the 'special settlement' you were still free, after all: you could move freely from one place to another. In the 'labour army' camp, however, you couldn't go anywhere. You had to march to the dining hall for breakfast, then march out of the dining hall to work; then from work back to the dining hall for lunch; after that, you'd march back to work again; finally, in the evening, you marched from work to the dining hall for dinner before the final march of the day – to the barracks! And you couldn't go anywhere else.

**- So that's how you...**

- And there was always a roll-call.

**- So how did you perceive the...**

- It was just like being imprisoned.

**- ... perceive the way they treated you?**

- Exactly, exactly!

**- Let's just get this clear: how did you perceive the way they treated you? Did you feel it was a punishment again?**

- Yes, that's right – it was like being punished again.

**- And that they were treating you with mistrust?**

- Yes, mistrust, punishment... How else was I supposed to perceive it? How else should I've taken it? I mean, just think about it: we were behind barbed wire, had to march in a column; there was roll-call all the time. The commander of the platoon you were in would call out: "So-and-so-and-so-and-so... Everyone there? Right, off we go!"

**- Now, you said that when you were told you were going to join the Red Army, you felt yourself to be like everyone else at last...**

- Like everyone else, yes. Yes, it really was like that: this sense of going to fight together with all the others.

**- And that you were being trusted again...**

- Being trusted, that's what it was, yes.

**- You were given the same rights as everyone else.**



- Yes.

**- But then, all of a sudden...**

- All of a sudden I was being put behind barbed wire again.

**- And what did you feel, what did you experience in these moments?**

- Oh, God knows how I felt back then!... Of course, it was depressing – it was terribly depressing. I had to... You see, I clung to this idea that I had to withstand this, stand my ground, hold out, and survive! Yes, that's the way I felt. And I'm pretty sure it was the same for the others. That we had to stick it out again and show once more that we could survive this!

**- And what did you think of the way the authorities had treated you?**

- But we were behind barbed wire. There weren't any authorities except for the platoon commander.

**- No, what I mean is this: the fact that you'd been officially allocated to serve in the Red Army, but instead of that you found yourself in the *trudarmia*.**

- Yes, in the 'labour army'. Well, so what? I knew that I'd have to work hard – that I had to work there, too. And that I had to stick it out and survive. At first, you know, they marched us out to... Yes, and my comrades told me: "Tell them you're a metal worker." These were lads from 'special settlements', too, and they'd worked there felling timber. Or, rather, I should say that they hadn't all been lumberjacks: one of them had been a metal worker, so that's why he gave me this advice: "Say that you're a fourth-level metal worker!" So that's what I did, and this was, in fact, the first time I ever played cunning, so to speak. I claimed to be a fourth-level metal worker and was sent to the tool-making workshop in a factory. Well, I mean: I did know a thing or two about metal work – I knew how to use files, drills; I knew how to cut a screw thread properly. And the first assignments I was given consisted of precisely this: cutting the thread of screw-bolts by hand, using a die. I did this for about two weeks, and then... [*inaudible*] we were also assigned to do excavation work. If I'm not mistaken, it was in February – yes, towards the end of February, we were sent to excavate a foundation pit. So with shovels we cleared the snow from the site and tried to break up the surface of the ground with some crow-bars, but it was all so frozen that... You see, the first winter of the war was particularly harsh, and the ground had frozen through to a great extent... I'm not sure I remember what the purpose of this was... Although, actually, I think the aim was to dig the foundations for a number of buildings. Anyway, before starting to do any digging, we'd kindle some small pieces of firewood – which we got from the Belorussians, the Ukrainians and Jews, who also worked elsewhere in forestry brigades. We'd make these small bonfires and let them burn down until the surface had thawed up a bit. The trouble was that only the thin topsoil layer thawed up into a muddy slush, whereas the soil below remained as hard as rock! So I'm not quite sure, in fact, why the authorities let us make these bonfires... Although, I suppose, it was to allow us to warm ourselves a bit... At any rate, we couldn't get by without using crow-bars all the time! First you had to pound the soil with a crow-bar and then shovel the earth out with your spade. Or sometimes, you'd work two by two: one man pounding the soil, the other shovelling out the frozen lumps of earth. Taking turns, of course... so in the course of a day's work, you'd have had several goes with the crow-bar and done a fair bit of shovelling, too. When you'd eventually dug down to the melted soil layers, the work at least got easier and you had some protection from the wind, so it wasn't so cold as at the beginning. But, unfortunately, all this work

turned out to have been in vain. Yes, in vain. Because when we'd dug out the required volume of earth, the whole pit was just left to snow up. So during our time there... The turbo-generator plant [for which this foundation pit had been dug] didn't start production until some time after the war. When I was demobilised from the 'labour army' in November 1945, all there was at the site of the projected factory was the foundation pit we'd excavated and nothing more! I don't know if our pit was eventually used or not. Now, in another brigade – made up of Germans, then these Jews, West Ukrainians and Belorussians – they were put to work excavating a huge foundation pit for an open-hearth furnace. They had to dig very deep – I'd say to a depth of about 15 metres! So some of them would be in the deepest part of the pit, in the centre, wearing these gum boots – you've got to have these because of the water that seeps through down there – each man would fill a shovel with earth, then throw the whole shovel up to someone on the next highest level, and so on until the shovel could be passed on to a worker on the ground level who'd unload it onto a truck and then return it. There were several levels – it was a really huge pit. But I didn't work there myself, though. I was already doing pipe-fitting and metal work, bending the pipes and founding them. Yes, I was already working as a welder by that time.

**- Forgive me, but I'd like to clarify one very important point which we've already touched upon. I mean your reaction at discovering that you'd been allocated to the 'labour army' instead. What did you see in this? Was it a punishment, was it a...**

- It was as if nothing had changed – as if this burden hadn't been lifted from you, and you were still a 'special re-settler' as before! That's what it was! But there was something else, too: this determination to hold out, to survive! There was also that. I remember that very well. Whatever the work they decided to set us, I knew that we had to do it and hold out. And we did work, you know, we worked damn hard!

**- Now, could I ask when and why you were released from the *trudarmia*? How did that actually happen?**

- Well, after the war was over, the rumour spread that all school teachers would be taken out [of the 'labour army'], that they'd be released. But then, in August, the Soviet-Japanese War began, so the whole business of our demobilization was held up again. And it was only some time after the conclusion of the Japanese War [on 2 September 1945] that I received permission [to leave the 'labour army']. I don't quite remember how it came about: whether I went myself to ask for my release, or whether I was simply told I could go back home. But, at any rate, I was released as a school-teacher. That's how it was.

**- Did you tell them that you were a school-teacher?**

- Yes, yes – in my identity documents it did say that I was a school-teacher, and when I was drafted into the 'labour army', they must have been aware that I was a teacher – since it was recorded in my documents.

**- When you were called up into the Red Army, were you actually working as a teacher at the time?**

- Yes, they drafted me when I was working in a village school. All this was recorded clearly in my documents. So, as I was saying, I was released in November and then I returned to the university here...

**- In which year?**

- In 1945. I started attending my course lectures after the November holidays – that is, not in September like everyone else, but in November.

**- And did you have to sit any entrance exams?**

- Oh, but I'd already passed my exams – for admission to the extra-mural department.

**- When was that?**

- In 1941 – yes, in 1941. You see, my first passport [for travelling to Perm] was confiscated in 1938 – but in 1941, I was able to go to Perm again. They issued me with a three-month passport and I arrived here and successfully sat the entrance exams for the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics. However, soon afterwards the war started and we were all standing there, listening to Molotov's radio address. On that day, the 22nd of June, we were told that there was going to be a government broadcast. And we heard everything. We stood there next to the loud-speakers – these black dishes mounted on poles. A great crowd gathered around them. And at 12 p.m. we heard the broadcast – or, rather, at 2 p.m. [the local time in Perm Oblast: Moscow time + 2 hours]. We heard it all. Later, in the evening, the rector of the university, Aleksandr Il'ich Bukirev summoned us all to the assembly hall and suggested that we should all return to our native regions. He said that the war had clearly started; that it would be an arduous war, and so he recommended us to return to our native regions. The lectures would be suspended, he said. Well, and so we all left Perm – all of us who weren't from the city. That's how it was.

**- Let's now...**

- So that's why I already had the entrance exams under my belt when I was released from the 'labour army' in 1945 and turned up at the university's extra-mural department. There, they told me: "Yes, of course you can study here." What they meant was the extra-mural department, but I asked them: "What about the full-time course? Are there any places left on that?" – "Yes, we can certainly transfer you to the day-time group, if you wish?" So that's how I was re-registered as a full-time student. I didn't have to take any entrance exams.

**- When you went off to apply to university in 1941, where did you get your passport?**

- I received my three-month passport in Chermoz.

**- At the commandant's office?**

- That's right: at the commandant's office.

**- And there they...**

- Well, not in the... I mean it was again at the district commandant's office. But Nevolin wasn't there any more – I don't know why. Someone else had evidently replaced him. Anyway, I was issued once again with a three-month passport.

**- Without any hitches at all?**

- Absolutely none at all. I just went to this office, wrote an application and said who I was and explained the purpose of my visit. That's all there was to it. Well, it's possible that I also got some help from that Bezgodov [the headmaster of the school in the 'special settlement' where Dmitrii Nikolaevich lived with his family]. I don't know for sure, but... I hadn't addressed any specific requests to him, but it's quite possible that he did put in a good word for me. He knew that I wanted to study... and he'd advised me to definitely do that. I remember we had some conversations about this, and that I'd asked him a couple of times: "But will they let me go?"... So perhaps he did have a hand in the

successful outcome of my request at the commandant's office. He may well have said a good word for me... Actually, no! What am I saying! No, he wasn't in our 'special settlement' any more. At that time, he was actually already in Mongolia.

**- Who? Bezgodov?**

- Exactly, Bezgodov – he was serving in the army in Mongolia. He was drafted in 1940, you see. So when I made my application to study in 1941, he wasn't around any more.

**- So who helped you, then?**

- Well, no one, I suppose – Everything was evidently in order, and I received this permission without anyone having helped me. I just turned up at the commandant's office, asked for the necessary form, wrote my application, and it was accepted: I was issued with a three-month passport allowing me to travel to Perm.

**- Was it that easy to get your passport?**

- Oh, God knows how easy or otherwise it actually was! I don't know, but what matters is the fact that they did give me a three-month passport.

**- Let's now talk about the period after you had completed your studies: could you remind me where you were working when you tried to join the Party for the first time?**

- In a factory.

**- Which one?**

- The 'Kommunar' [Machine Construction] Factory.

**- I see, you were working in the 'Kommunar' Factory...**

- That's right. This was before the Nineteenth Party Congress.

**- So in which year did you make your first application?**

- Well, it must have been... When was the Nineteenth Party Congress?

**- In 1952.**

- Yes, so that means I put in my application in 1952. But it wasn't just my initiative, you know. I was encouraged to – amongst others, I was encouraged by the secretary of our factory's Party organisation. You see, back then, Stalin's works had to be studied by the engineering and technical staff in all our country's factories. Now, as you can imagine, in the immediate years after the war, most factories were staffed by old workers. And there weren't any people with a sound education. I mean in the smaller factories. Maybe there were in the big factories – the Sverdlov Factory, say, or at the various Motovilikha works [which produced machines and heavy armaments] – there, they probably had properly educated workers [i.e. who had been working as technical specialists at these factories before the war]... Our factory, however, [during the war years] hadn't come under the system of "exemption" [from military service]: [so all the young, qualified workers had been drafted into the army – and probably very few of them returned after the war]. Only those factory workers who were directly involved in military production qualified for "exemption", you see. The others didn't get any "exemption" at all.

**- In the other factories, right?**

- Yes, in the other factories, including ours – not everyone was granted "exemption" [i.e. even if they had advanced technical qualifications]... So because of that, in 1952 the factory I was working at still had very few properly educated engineering and technical staff... I remember how I went to... You see, in 1951, when I was trying to get a job, I went round very many factories and establishments. And I was effectively turned down by all of them. Perhaps they were afraid that... Because I didn't conceal who I was and

what I'd gone through. So that's why it was so difficult for me to find employment. After graduating, I went to Novosibirsk but wasn't able to secure a job there. Even though I'd been recommended for a post only a few days before, literally. You see, there was this laboratory at the West Siberian branch of the Academy of Sciences, where I'd been offered a post. They'd actually told me: "Yes, do come – we'll take you on as a member of our staff." So I turned up there, filled in the *anketa* and was asked to drop in again after a few days. When I did that, this time they said: "Sorry, the vacancy's been taken." No further explanations were given! So I went back to Perm, decided to visit the department where I'd studied, and it so happened that Professor Zubarev was walking past and saw me: "Why, it's Dima! How are you doing? But why are you here, though? I'm pretty sure I heard someone say that you'd gone off to Novosibirsk!" – I explained: "Oh, I've just got back from there, after a not so pleasant experience..." – He then asked me: "So where are you working now, then?" – "Oh, nowhere really, I'm... I'm actually looking for work now, you see." – "Well," he said; "in that case, you must come to work in our faculty!" – "But they won't take me, Boris Innokent'evich," I replied; "they won't take me! Because of who I am." But he insisted: "Well, I'll go myself and sort it out." And he did go to the admissions office, but it was no use: they rejected his recommendation. And I was turned down everywhere. At the Dzerzhinskii Factory... it was the same everywhere. Even in smaller factories like the one at which I was eventually employed... Because finally I did have some luck: I went to the 'Staryi Burlak' Factory... It's quite a smallish factory, you know, but not a bad place, though – where the sections of these one-and-a-half-ton capacity cranes were welded together and so on... So I went to see the director, who was from Leningrad: he'd once worked in the Party *obkom* there but had been evacuated to Perm during the war and stayed on there. And he... Listen, Nina, what were his name and patronymic? [*addresses his wife*] I've forgotten, after so many years! [*his wife's reply*: "Petr Petrovich"] Petr Petrovich. And his surname? [*wife's reply*: "Samoilov"] Samoilov. So that's what it was! Well, I'm always having these lapses lately! I'm sorry about that! [*his wife continues*: "My sister worked there..."] Yes, that's right – it was she who suggested that I try my luck there. My wife's elder sister worked there as a bookkeeper, and she said to me once: "Why don't you come to our factory?" And that's what I eventually did – and this Samoilov, Petr Petrovich, he received me very warmly. He asked me: "Well, let's see: what's your level of education?" – "I've been to university. I'm a physics graduate." And he said something like this: "Hurrah, at long last! For once someone who's got a proper education!" Well, and I was given a job. He took me on without any further ado. And after a few months he even gave me a small room in this barracks – which wasn't at all an easy thing to do, you know.

**- Was he aware that you had been repressed?**

- He was, he was.

**- You told him?**

- I told him immediately, but he just waved his hand aside: "You've got yourself a job!" You can't imagine how happy I was!

**- Was this the first place where you were offered a job?**

- The first place, yes. After that, I didn't...

**- What did you say the factory was called?**

- The 'Saryi Burlak' Factory. It belonged to the Ministry of the River Fleet... This Samoilov later moved to Moscow where he was appointed Director of the 'Severianin' Factory.

**- In which year did he offer you employment?**

- In 1951. Yes, in 1951, in September or thereabouts. Perhaps I ought to have a look at my old work book... Yes, and in 1952, just before... Could you tell me once again when the Nineteenth Congress actually took place? I'm still not so sure if...

**- The Congress was in 1952.**

- Aha – Well, just before this Congress, I decided to hand in an application [for admission into the Party]. But it wasn't just my idea, you see: various members of staff at the factory actually encouraged me to. Even the secretary of our Party organisation and all those colleagues of mine who were Communists. The secretary even said to me: "I'll support your application, I'll give you references, guarantees and..." Oh, what's the proper word for it?

**- For what? References?**

- No, not references – I mean a testimonial... a testimonial. You had to have three guarantors, you see, who were willing to sign your testimonial.

**- When you applied to join the Party, at which factory were you actually working then?**

- At 'Saryi Burlak'. You see, I spent all my working life at the 'Saryi Burlak' Factory. That's why the only entry I've got in my work book is: "Saryi Burlak – Kommunar".

**- But what about the 'Kommunar' Factory?**

- Yes, the 'Kommunar', but, you see, it's because the two factories were merged, and they adopted the name: 'Kommunar'. Yes, two factories: ours and this nailery factory over there... You see, the 'Saryi Burlak' as such had always been a ship-repair plant – but later, from 1950 onwards, it also began to weld these tower cranes for the crane industry. And, as a matter of fact, the first... [interviewer's note: "there follows a technical account of Dmitrii Nikolaevich's work at the factory"]. The chairman of our factory committee... actually, no, sorry – not the chairman, but just a member of the committee, whose name was Shishkin, provided me with a testimonial. As did the workshop foreman Nikiforov and some other worker from our factory... So the first thing I was asked [at the Party committee meeting] was: "Give an account of your life." Well, I told them about myself – I said that I'd been in exile, and then Shishkin got up and interrupted me: "I didn't know that!" – "How can you say that?" I protested. "You know I've told you about it before. I've never hidden anything! I told you once, and everyone else knows, too, who I am and all these circumstances... that I've been in exile... So why are you denying it all of a sudden and saying: 'I didn't know'?" – But he didn't even reply to my question: "I'm withdrawing my signature!" he said. So I retorted: "Withdraw it if you want, but why are you saying this nonsense that you didn't know about my exile?" Well, and then Nikiforov got up and said – Nikiforov, the head of a workshop! – he said: "Exploiters of the labour of others cannot be admitted into the Communist Party!" And this at a meeting of the Party committee! I protested: "Excuse me, but I'd be very interested to know when and how I actually became an exploiter of the labour of others? I was born in 1918 – I spent all my childhood and youth in exile, so when did I ever have the chance to become an exploiter? How can you talk such rot?" I mean, it's just so stupid! My third guarantor, on the other hand, didn't say anything.

**- You mean the ordinary worker, right?**

- My application was rejected. I was so upset as a result of this whole affair... I really couldn't get over it, I... I don't know, I was... [*with strong emotion in his voice*] It was very difficult to get over this.

**- Why were you so upset?**

- I don't know. It was just very difficult... I took it terribly hard. You know, I was simply ill – morally ill; my soul was... I was full of this mental anguish. And some years later, in 1959, when I was again encouraged to... Do you know why they wanted me to join the Party? Because I... You see, Stalin's works had to be studied by everyone. For example, people had to study the *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* [published in 1952 – see the note above] Remember that work? Although I wouldn't expect you to because you never had to study it. We, on the other hand, did – at university, and we were actually examined on our knowledge of this work. So that's why they, understandably, asked me to give lectures on it to our factory's engineering and technical staff, and to set them tests every now and then. And that's what I did. I thought that I... that in spite of everything I would be admitted into the Party.

**- Was joining the Party actually something you wanted yourself?**

- Yes, I wanted to join! I wanted to!

**- Why?**

- I wanted to prove that I was as much a person as everyone else. No, I... I certainly didn't have any mercenary intentions, it wasn't a question of that... I just wanted to demonstrate that I was as honest and decent as any other person.

**- And this was something the Party could give you, right?**

- Yes. The Party could indeed give me that – a clear conscience. It was from this perspective that I wanted to try to... It didn't have anything to do with my career – I wasn't concerned with that... And it was just inconceivable for me to let oneself be guided by self-seeking interests of some sort.

**- So it was never a question of acquiring privileges...**

- I never had any privileges whatsoever and I don't have any now, either. That's how it is.

**- You thought that the Party could...**

- I considered myself to be working honestly, and given that this was so, that I could actually achieve something... And I was sure that by being a member of the Party, I would be able to achieve even more than if I were to remain outside it.

**- What did the Party signify for you?**

- Honour and conscience. A way of honestly... You see, Andrei Olegovich, the rank-and-file Communists were honest people. It was only over there, at the top... [*pauses*]. The rank-and-file Communists, on the other hand, were all honest people.

**- So you associated the Party with...**

- With honest and decent people, with whom... in whose midst I was working and who were working with me.

**- Did your attitude to the Party perhaps change after the Party organizer and that colleague of yours refused to vote in favour of your application?**

- No. My attitude didn't change then. But I was terribly hurt and I really did take it very hard, you know.

**- But why did you take it so hard? Why exactly?**

- Why I took it so hard?

- **Yes, why? What was the reason?**

- Because of this mistrust.

- **Because they didn't trust you again?**

- Exactly, they didn't trust me again, they didn't trust me... Here again was this mistrust. But I continued to work honestly – I... You see, a few years before I'd enrolled at the University of Marxism-Leninism affiliated to the Party *gorkom* [the Perm City Party Committee], in order to be... I'd studied there for two years and completed my course with distinction. Well, and I thought that there was no reason now why they couldn't admit me into the Party. But then all my hopes fell to the ground just like that.

- **And that was when you felt that they didn't trust you because of your past?**

- Yes, yes. I felt that I was still unworthy, that I was some sort of dishonourable person still, who can't be trusted.

- **That you were still an exile, right?**

- Exactly – that I was still an exile. Yes, and that they still saw in me a 'kulak' – something that I had never been. And never could have been. And Father, too. When had he ever been a 'kulak'? Because it wasn't until 1922, when the Soviets had already come to power, that he returned from the army – from the Red Army. And when did he ever become a 'kulak' in the years up to 1930? How could he possibly have become a 'kulak' in that time? My father, knowing who he was... And in Soviet times? In Soviet times, that just wasn't... it just wasn't... [*with strong emotion in his voice – he cannot speak and he breaks down*].....

- **Tell me, did you believe in Communism?**

- Yes, I did. I believed in it. And I still think that the Communist idea...

- **Inspires?**

- ... inspires confidence.

- **And you believed that it is possible to build a Communist society?**

- Well, why shouldn't I believe so? Seeing that I'd studied these works and all of them pointed out that: "Lenin said that in one country taken singly it is possible." [The quotation in full is: "the victory of Socialism is possible first in a few or even one capitalist country taken singly" – from Lenin's article 'On the Slogan for a United States of Europe' (*Sotsial-Demokrat*, 23 August 1915)]. I did believe in it! But what methods were used! They weren't the right methods for building [a Communist society]. But that's a different matter. I believed in the Communist idea and even today I'm still convinced that it hasn't become obsolete – far from it, I believe that sooner or later it will return. Because it's from time immemorial that people have been dreaming about this, about human happiness. How can this dream of happiness disappear? No, it can't. Sooner or later, people will come [to put it into practice]. After all, you don't necessarily have to have a Soviet form of government to achieve this. Take Sweden for example. Over there, they've got complete Socialism – or Communism, for that matter. But still there are rich people in that country. Well, doesn't this mean that... The one thing, though, that did surprise me in our country's politics is the issue of religion. I mean, why is it necessary to forbid a Communist to believe? That was something I could never really understand. Why? Why can't a person live with Communist ideas in his heart and believe at the same time, say, in God? Why isn't it possible to combine this? That really did trouble me. Why was it necessary to be against [religion]?

- **In other words, that person could...**



- An honest, decent person can believe in God.

**- Yes, so that person could believe both in Communism and...**

- Yes, he can, yes! And why should he *not* be able to build Communism and live in a Communist society? Why can't he be a Communist? Even today, this still continues to bother me.

**- But one either had to believe in Communism or in God.**

- Well, but what is Communism in the end? I mean, come to that, wasn't Jesus Christ the very first Communist of them all? For he was a Communist – in every sense of the word! ... Because if you think about it, who was he? He was someone who preached equality and help for all people. And he was against wealth.

**- Jesus Christ?**

- Yes. He was an honest person, and our... Perhaps you remember the... You see, I'm not quite sure myself, but you certainly ought to remember that under Khrushchev there was this "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism"

**- Yes.**

- You do remember it?

**- Yes, I do.**

- Well, I mean, where do you think all those precepts were taken from? They're all Christian ones! They were already said by Jesus. It's obvious if you look at it closely – these exhortations not to do harm, to love one another.

**- Did you yourself believe in God when you were a Party member?**

- I'm an unbeliever myself. Listen, I... How can I explain this to you properly?... I'm sorry, I... is this being recorded?... No, I am actually a believer. I have faith.

**- In what?**

- In a life that is inspired by goodness and sense and decency... That some day our lives will be different, that life will be just. I believe in this. I still do believe in this. So does that make me a believer, then? On the other hand, in God I... I don't go to church. But I have, ever since childhood, always remembered the Lord's Prayer, although I haven't re-read it since then. I know it by heart, though. Is it right, then, to call me a believer? Probably not, I'd say. But, all the same, I have faith... Because, you know, it's impossible to live without faith.

**- But if you were an atheist back then, what made you ask yourself such a question as to why a Communist couldn't be a believer?**

- No, what I asked myself was: why isn't a Communist allowed to be one? Why can't they just say: Let him, let him both believe and be a Communist! An honest, decent person. Because this is the way I reasoned, you see: say, if there's an honest, decent person who believes in God, who has believed in God [all his life], why can't he then be a Communist? Why can't he then build that radiant, Communist [future] which we tried to build for so many years, but with no success? Why are you adopting such a stance? Why if later, in Poland, they did allow Communists to believe in God? – and they didn't exclude believers from the Party? That's how it was in Poland, you know. Why couldn't it be the same in our country? Why wasn't it possible to admit honest, decent people, who believed in God, as members of the Party?

**- Was there anybody you discussed this issue with?**

- I didn't discuss it with anyone, no – only with myself.

**- Why didn't you want to discuss it with anyone?**

- Well, I thought that... I don't know why. But I didn't discuss it with anyone.

**- Did you perhaps think that you wouldn't be understood?**

- Maybe. I didn't talk about it to anyone. But this idea never left my mind, and...

**- Could you have been expelled from the Party for this?**

- Of course, of course. When I was the Secretary of our factory's Party organisation, I received this letter from the *raikom*, saying that so-and-so (I still know his name, but I won't say it here)... that so-and-so a worker had concealed [information on his *anketa*] and had had his child christened either in Vologda, or in Kostroma.

**- Sorry, you mean you wrote this letter...?**

- No, no – I just received it from the *raikom* – from the *raikom*, you know. Yes, and at the end of the letter it asked me to verify this fact. So I asked this comrade to come to my office and said: "Read this." He read through it and looked at me: "What does this mean? How did they find out?" I asked him: "Is this true?" – "Yes, it's true," he admitted. "But what could I do? Our *babushka* took the child to that church and had him christened. My wife and I were away on leave, and we'd left our little boy with her, so that's why..." – They were from Kostroma or Vologda, I don't remember which. – "... So how could I know?" he said. "What's going to happen to me now?" I reassured him: "Don't worry – just keep on working as you have before. Nothing will happen to you." Then I went to see the factory director and showed him the letter: "How shall I reply to this?" I asked him. Well, we agreed to say that we'd had a talk with the person concerned, that we'd summoned him to a formal interview and that kind of stuff. And it turned out all right in the end. Now, there was also a letter concerning another of our factory's workers – in fact, he was a "shock-worker of Communist labour", one of the first ones in our factory. And so I had to deal with this denunciation against him: the letter said that he was regularly travelling to Poland, that his parents and sister lived over there, and that it was necessary to keep an eye on him. So I went to the director again and said: "Listen, what's the meaning of this?" Now, our factory's director was a *raikom* secretary, you see. So I said...

**- Where was this letter from – this denunciation?**

- It was also from the *raikom*.

**- So was it the director who'd sent it?**

- What ever makes you think that? I'm telling you: I got this letter from the *raikom*, saying that this worker at our factory was visiting his parents in Poland when he was on leave.

**- I asked that because you did say yourself that you'd gone to see the director...**

- Yes, yes – I went to the director with this letter and said: "Take a look at this: it's another of these letters." I wanted to ask his advice on what steps to take. Because deciding on my own, that wasn't so... You see, I got along very well with the director – we trusted each other. I'd often go to him and ask him for his advice on some particular situation I had to deal with... So after this letter arrived, I went to him and explained how things stood: that this worker from our factory – one of our first "shock-workers of Communist labour" – had been... and so on and so forth. We both knew him to be an honest, decent lad, who was incapable of doing a thing like that. So we had to work out the best way of replying to the *raikom* – and in the end we decided – because they could very well ask the director some questions at the *raikom*, you know, and put him in a spot – so we decided to reply as follows... That is, I replied that so-and-so a worker was a

decent person and that he was beyond all suspicion in that sense. Well, and again this worked. We sent the letter to the *raikom* – in fact, I even took it there myself. And that was the end of the matter.

**- What post were you actually occupying at the time?**

- I was the Secretary of our *partkom*.

**- Of the Party committee?**

- That's right – our factory's Party committee. This was in the 1960s. But before that, though, in 1959, various people had again started suggesting to me that I should re-apply to the Party. But I just kept saying no all the time – I didn't have any intention of applying.

**- Why?**

- I told them fair and square: "I'm afraid of having to go through again all that I went through when I applied the first time and was turned down. I don't want the same thing happening again."

**- You thought that your application might be rejected again?**

- Yes. That it would be rejected again. I didn't...

**- But this time round, did you actually want to join the Party?**

- No, to be honest, I didn't really want to any more. I didn't want to.

**- Why was that?**

- Well, I'd understood that even if you weren't a Party member, you could still work honestly. And that people respected you just the same as they respected those who were in the Party. So, you see, by then I'd sort of lost interest in this and I didn't want to join any more. But I kept being plied with these intensified suggestions.

**- What do you mean by "intensified"?**

- That various members of the Party committee kept saying to me: "Come on, make your application! Come on! We'll admit you!" And I set as a condition that I'd go if... You see, after many hesitations, I said in the end: "I'll go and join the Party if the *raikom* doesn't have any objections." So the secretary of the Party committee went off to the *raikom*, talked to the Secretary, and came back saying that they'd agreed. He told me: "Write your application. We've got their agreement." And so I wrote my application.

**- But did you write it because you actually wanted to, or because you'd been...**

- Well, you see, at that point I did want to join, in fact: because in spite of everything, I did have this feeling that it was better being in the Party – that I'd be able to achieve more than if I stayed outside it. I was convinced that I'd be able to achieve more. Well, as it turned out, of course, there was always something that I didn't manage to get done; there was always something or other. I was always lagging behind with the Party [assignments].

**- But you weren't disappointed after being admitted?**

- I was never disappointed with the Party. As a matter of fact, to this day I don't feel disappointed with the Party. It's true that I became disappointed in certain individual figures, in the leaders – but that's a different matter altogether. One can condemn such people. But as far as the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* is concerned, once you've read it, does it leave you with any sense of disillusionment? Of course not! You have read the *Manifesto*, haven't you?

**- I have, but a rather long while ago – when I was studying at university.**

- Well, you probably didn't read it carefully back then – I imagine you read it just like that, without paying any particular attention.

- **You're quite right.**

- But if you were to read through it carefully, you'd definitely accept it!

- **I've got it at home, so I'll make a note of reading through it some time.**

- Yes, do read through it. You'll agree with it, I'm positively sure! I've also got it here somewhere... I ought to try and see if I can find it. I'm sure you'll agree with it all and you'll understand, too. As I said earlier, the Communist idea isn't a bad one. And so I agreed in the end to re-apply – but after having set that condition, though. And when I was told that at the *raikom* they'd agreed, I set about writing my application. And I was admitted unanimously at a meeting in the *raikom* building. A year and a half later, I was asked how I felt about becoming the secretary of the Party committee.

- **Your factory's Party committee, right?**

- Yes, our factory's. Well, as you can understand, I didn't quite believe that this was possible. It didn't seem very likely. So I tried to refuse, but I was elected at a Party meeting. So I had to subject myself to an examination by a commission from the *gorkom* [Perm City Party Committee]. And, as it turned out, the *gorkom* ratified my appointment... But first it was like this: at the *raikom* there were no problems whatsoever, but when I went to the *gorkom*, there they did raise some objections and say that I couldn't take up such a post yet. You know, according to the Party rules, to take up such an appointment, you had to have been in the Party for at least one and a half years. Now, as it was, I'd actually been a Party member for a year and seven months. That is, a month longer than the minimum requirement! *[laughs]*

- **A year and seven months?**

- Yes.

- **According to the rules?**

- Yes, the rules said that you had to have been in the Party for a year and six months – for one and a half years.

- **A year and seven months?**

- Six months! One and a half years.

- **And you'd been a Party member for how long?**

- I've just told you – for a year and seven months!

- **So it was just over.**

- Yes, a month longer than the minimum. And therefore my appointment was ratified by the *gorkom*.

- **But why did they start raising objections?**

- They insisted that I hadn't been a member for long enough. They said that I'd only recently been admitted. You see, they asked me in which year I...

- **In your case, however, as it turned out, you were actually over the minimum!**

- Exactly – a whole month longer than the minimum. But some member of the Party *gorkom* bureau started calling this fact into question – he said: "He hasn't been in the Party long enough – he hasn't been a member for one and a half years yet."

- **But why? If you'd been in the Party for over one and a half years – why?**

- Exactly – I had met the requirements. But anyway, in the end they managed to explain it to him, and he withdrew his objections – so I was confirmed in my post.

**- So for some reason he hadn't been aware that you'd been in the Party for over one and a half years?**

- Yes! He'd somehow got it into his head that one and a half years hadn't passed yet since my admission, and that according to the rules I wasn't eligible for such a post. He thought that I hadn't been a member for one and a half years yet! But they did explain it to him in the end: they told him the date of my admission and he finally cottoned on to the fact that I'd been in the Party for a year and seven months! So in the end he just withdrew his objections and my appointment was approved unanimously.

**- Tell me: what did you feel in that moment when your appointment as Chairman of your factory's Party committee was ratified?**

- Secretary.

**- Sorry, yes – Secretary. What was it like for you – I mean inwardly?**

- Oh, inwardly I was delighted, I was so proud of sensing that I was just as much a person as anyone else. Do you see what I mean? I hadn't had this feeling before that. All that still remained was to... but, you know, I'd actually forgotten about that – I mean I'd forgotten about getting myself rehabilitated. I wasn't concerned with that matter at the time. In fact, that very question of rehabilitation just wasn't an issue with me at that time. So what I felt was this relief that it was all now over... that I was a free person at last. I experienced such pride and happiness – at the fact that at long last I was the same as everyone else. That the past had been forgotten. That I too was a person like any other.

**- In other words, that you'd demonstrated that you were their equal?**

- Yes, yes. And indeed, later this... in the course of my career, I was actually held out as an example. And in *Zvezda* [a newspaper published in Perm Oblast – in Soviet times, the central press organ of the Perm *obkom*], there was even a long article by the *raikom* secretary, saying how well I was doing my work! At a district-level Party conference, I was also even chosen to take part in an oblast-level conference: yes, at this oblast-level conference where we heard various reports and elected new Party officials. So it was a complete satisfaction.

**- Could I ask one thing – in the first months after your admission into the Party, did you ever feel a bit apprehensive – I mean, that they might expel you?**

- No.

**- You never felt that way?**

- No, that was all in the past. I didn't have any such thoughts after being admitted.

**- So you had no fears at all?**

- That's right – none at all. Because I'd conscientiously and honestly carried out what was expected of me – and more than that, as a matter of fact. I was even held out as an example at a district-level Party conference – one of the delegates said: "You really ought to go to that factory and acquaint yourselves with Comrade Streletskii's method of work!" and so on.

**- You were proud of the fact of belonging to the Party?**

- I was, I really was proud of that.

**- And more precisely, of having been admitted into the Party?**

- I mean this honestly – I really was very proud of this, Andrei!

**- Do you mind if I ask you the following question – could you please try to imagine a situation like this? If after, say, half a year – or five or seven months – of being in the Party, you had suddenly been expelled, what would...**

- I never had such a thought!

**- No, but what I mean is... Yes, I understand that back then an idea like that could never have occurred to you, but I...**

- Such an idea never occurred to me – that's right – and it never could have! I just couldn't have imagined anything like that happening to me.

**- But, all the same, could you please try to imagine such a situation now. What would it have meant for you back then? What would you... How would you have reacted to this? What would you have done?**

- Well, it would have been the same as when I was rejected the first time round. I really took that first rejection very hard. I suffered terribly in that year – 1952. I was even ill: morally, spiritually I was ill. So if that had happened a second time, it would of course have been...

**- So being expelled would for you have been as heavy a blow as when you were rejected the first time?**

- Yes, the same. But I didn't think about such things. Such thoughts never troubled me – I knew that I hadn't done anything for which I ought to have been expelled and that I never would do such a thing. I just never had such thoughts.

**- Tell me, please: did your view of the Party change over the years? Did you perceive any differences, say, between the composition of the Party at various points in Soviet times?**

- Well, that's a rather difficult question, you know. I'm not sure I can answer it! I believed in the Party – I really did believe in it and thought that... It was a faith which was instilled in me by my textbooks, by my years at university, by the newspapers, by the radio – because they all extolled the Party! So how could I have thought differently?! Well, yes, there was the issue of what I'd lived through back then [in the 'special settlement']. But I considered that to be a mistake – a gross mistake. An immoral one. I mean with respect to our dekulakization, for example. Because we weren't kulaks, and I knew that. So I did consider that to be a terrible mistake.

**- Didn't you associate this act of repression with the Party?**

- No.

**- You didn't?**

- No, no. It never occurred to me to consider that the Party was to blame for these... for these repressions. It was only later that we found out – later. And that... Because, you know, the rank-and-file Communists – that is, my comrades at work, for example – they weren't criminals; they hadn't done anything wrong. In fact, they were almost certainly being sneered at... But by whom, though? By our country's leaders! And it was only later – after Stalin's death, you know – that we found out about this. From Khrushchev's report, we found out what kind of a person he [Stalin] had been and how he'd governed. Yes, we found out so many things that we simply hadn't known about earlier. How was this possible? For some reason, I remember this...

**- Did you believe what Khrushchev said? Because, after all, he had occupied high posts under Stalin.**

- Yes, he had.

**- He had himself signed various sentences.**

- I believed him – instantly. And I once had a conversation with a comrade of mine about how we'd all been reading and studying Stalin's works. And about why it had been so

that amongst the journalists and the writers there had been various hypocritical, criminal individuals who'd praised him to the skies – who'd hailed him as “The Great”, “The Coryphaeus of Science” and so on. Why, we asked ourselves, hadn't there been anyone from amongst his supporters with the courage to tell the Soviet people what kind of a person he really was, even if this meant a sure death? For it was only after his death that we found out about all this. Later, though, I did come to realise that it just wouldn't have been possible when Stalin was still alive.

**- When did you have this particular conversation? Recently?**

- No, it was a long time ago – in the 1960s, that's when. Well, and my comrade said this to me: “Don't even dare to think such things about Stalin! He was present in my mind all throughout the war, I went into battle with the name of Stalin and the Motherland on my lips! Don't you dare say anything like that again!”

**- That was Iurii Sukhov, wasn't it?**

- Yes – Sukhov, Iura Sukhov.

**- But in the last interview you said that you were talking to him somewhere around the 1970s or 1980s. Does that mean that you also had an earlier conversation about...**

- No, he died in 1980 – in 1980. Well, of course we talked a number of times in the years before 1980! What else do you think! But that's true – perhaps this particular conversation didn't take place in the 1960s... I may well have made a mistake just now. Perhaps we talked about this in the 1970s instead. But the point is that we did have this conversation.

**- And did you accept his opinion? His point of view?**

- No, no. I tried to explain to Iura that Stalin wasn't the person he made him out to be – and whom I too had once considered to be thus. I tried to make it clear that Stalin had been a completely different person to what we'd all once thought him to be. But I wasn't able to make him change his opinion by one iota! That's how Iura Sukhov was. We didn't cease to be friends or anything, but in this particular respect we didn't agree at all.

**- Could I ask: when exactly did your attitude towards Stalin change?**

- All these doubts sprung up in me after Khrushchev's report.

**- When did you actually hear it?**

- I... Well, hearing it isn't the right word... All this happened when I was already in the Party and, moreover, because of my activism at the factory I was known at the *raikom* as an active Party member, as a propagandist. Yes, the *raikom* did take notice of me – I'm not exaggerating. But all the same, they didn't let me have a look at a copy of Khrushchev's report as such: I just heard from some members of the Party that this and that had been discussed at the Congress. Now, let's see: when did I actually get to look at the report for myself?... If I'm not mistaken, it actually wasn't until the 1980s – it was only then that I was able to read it. That is, I don't remember where I got hold of it, but the point is that I did read the report.

**- So it wasn't until the years of *perestroika*?**

- No, I think it was before the *perestroika*, in fact. Because the *perestroika*, after all, started in 1985... Let's see, if you take the year when Gorbachev came to power – that was in 1985... On the other hand, perhaps it was during these years – somewhere in the second half of the 1980s. What I can say for sure is that I was able to familiarize myself

with this report in the 1980s. When exactly – that I don't know, although it's more likely that it was during the *perestroika* years.

**- And your attitude to Stalin? When did that change?**

- Oh, my attitude to Stalin – well, that changed...

**- I mean, if it wasn't until the 1980s that you read the report...**

- No, no – I already knew back then about the Twenty-Second Party Congress and that there'd been this report and that... Because, after all, this was mentioned in the newspapers – that is, the fact that Stalin had been debunked. But I only got to read the text of the report in its entirety at some point during the 1980s. Before that, I didn't know anything about the report's content.

**- So does that mean that your attitude to Stalin didn't change completely back then?**

- No, my attitude did change.

**- Completely, though?**

- Well, not completely, no – but, you see, to a certain extent we all live in the times that we live and can't get away from this fact... Your attitude can't really change completely unless you know everything, unless you've found out everything... You see, in those years we'd believed everything! And it couldn't really be otherwise, given that everyone was saying these things. I already told you how every political figure, how every public figure – irrespective of whether the post he held was a district-level one or a higher one, in the oblast or central administration – how they would always start and end their speeches with a eulogy to Stalin. So how could we *not* believe this?! We lived in this very [atmosphere]! The press, the radio, and television – they all talked about this! It was impossible not to believe it! And we did believe it – we believed Stalin. There was nothing strange about this – because, after all... I mean, Andrei Olegovich, don't forget that we all lived in Soviet times. That after the war, we knew that we were a great power! Yes, a great power! Our country. Surely it's not wrong to take pride in the fact that we... And then think of our Navy, of our submarines which were capable of diving to the lowest depths and were the fastest ones in the whole world! These are facts! Surely it's not wrong to take pride in this?! Surely it's not wrong to take pride in the fact that we were the first ones to launch a satellite into orbit, that we put the first man in space?! That we were the first to fly round the Moon and to photograph and map the far side of the Moon?!

**- But did Stalin have any part in these achievements?**

- Ah but we associated everything with Stalin. We associated everything with Stalin. And not just us, but the whole country. Journalists, writers, engineers – they all did. Scientists and academicians. I mean, pick up any journal you like from that time: you'll see that they're all filled with eulogies to Stalin. Because we did believe in this, we believed in our might. We believed that our army was one of the very strongest armies. Yes, we believed. And then consider how it was under Khrushchev: people were at last able to move out of their 'barracks'; and think how much construction was achieved after Khrushchev. And under Khrushchev, too. Because it was Khrushchev who launched these *khrushchevki* [the standard five-storey apartment houses built during the massive housing programme launched by Khrushchev]. And, you know, this was comfortable housing, with all modern conveniences! There's no way those earlier barracks can stand comparison to the new houses. Because, you see, we'd all had to live in these filthy barracks, all cooped up in them. And now we were able to move into comfortable, bright



residential buildings, made of concrete, equipped with central heating, with water. Surely this was an achievement? How could one *not* believe this? Of course we believed it all.

**- But tell me: what did you feel when you read about “The Gulag Archipelago”, what did you think about the Party then? Did you believe in the existence of the Gulag?**

- Yes, I did. And I believe that it wasn't the Party but the leaders of the Party who were doing this.

**- So the Party and the Party leaders are different...**

- They're two different things, yes. I believed... I knew my fellow Party members at the factory and at other factories, too: I knew them all to be honest, decent people. How could one ever accuse them of such a thing? They suffered themselves, they did. I remember, for example, how this old Communist came to see me once, when I was chairman of our factory committee... That is, he wasn't a Communist any more: he'd been expelled from the Party several years back. Sokolov was his name – he was already an old man. He had worked as a foreman in our factory's foundry workshop – this was long before I got my job there – and one day they were supplied with low-grade pig-iron. And the cast ingots they obtained from this low-grade stuff were, of course, also of poor quality. So the factory's director at the time was arrested and executed. And Sokolov, too, was summoned to the NKVD... or, rather, he wasn't summoned, but when he came home from work one evening and was having tea in the kitchen, two NKVD men turned up and arrested him. He'd actually told his wife: “Don't worry – I'll be returning soon. These are just misunderstandings of some sort.” He returned after 10 years. Yes, it wasn't until after 10 years that he got out [of the prison camp] and returned to Perm. Now, this was when Khrushchev was already in power and a decree had been issued ordering that these former prisoners were supposed to be given two months' pay [at their former work places] – or three months' pay, I don't quite remember. So this Sokolov, who'd been in a prison camp, came to see me in my capacity as chairman of the factory committee and gave me this application which he'd written. Now, I didn't know yet at the time that this sort of thing was allowed.

**- Sorry, can I just interrupt you: was it the factory committee or the Party committee that you were chairman of at the time?**

- The factory committee – I was the chairman of our factory trade union committee. So, as I said, I didn't really know what to make of this application he showed me. So I apologised to him and said: “Listen, I don't actually know what this is all about. But I promise you that I'll try to find out as soon as possible. So please come back in two days' time. If what you're asking for in this application is correct, I promise you that we'll pay you straight away the day after tomorrow.” So after he left my office, I phoned the... I've actually forgotten whom I phoned... perhaps it was our factory's financial department? Anyway, I phoned and found out that Sokolov had been quite right – they said: “You've got to pay him these two months' wages at the basic remuneration rate.” It was supposed to be calculated according to the basic rate... Or was it the *raiispolkom* [District Executive Committee] that I phoned, after all? I don't remember... But, anyway, the point is that we were supposed to pay him according to the basic rate for his skill grade at that time [i.e. before his arrest] Now, what do you imagine the wages were in 1937? 20 or 18 kopecks an hour – that's what people were getting back then. Now, was this acceptable? I mean, to pay a few rubles to someone who'd had to endure so much. 10

years [in a prison camp]! So I went again to my good old director and told him: “Listen, Aleksandr Filipp’evich! So-and-so a decree has been issued, and I’ve just spoken to someone who served out a sentence of 10 years and has submitted this application to me. We’ve got to pay him immediately. You see, as a matter of fact, he’s been rehabilitated. We’ve got to pay him this money. But the thing is that he’d just be getting a few kopecks! So why don’t we...” – “Well, what do you suggest we do?” he’d asked me, you see. And I said: “Why don’t we pay him [these two or three months’ wages] at the current salary rate for a foreman?” Now, in those days a foreman’s wages were 880 rubles [a month] or thereabouts. In contrast, a foreman’s wages in 1937, when this Sokolov was arrested, were 30 rubles... Or perhaps 80 rubles, come to think of it, because he can’t have been arrested in 1937 – it must have been a bit later because when he came to see me, it was in the 1950s. So, given that he’d served 10 years, that means he was arrested in the 1940s. Yes... Hang on, actually, no – he was definitely arrested before the war.

**- Couldn’t it have been simply that when he came to see you, a couple of years had passed since his release? That would explain why...**

- Yes, that’s right – he came to see us a few years after his release. Because that decree hadn’t been issued yet [at the time of Sokolov’s release]... Anyway, I suggested to the director: “Let’s pay him according to the current salary level. What do you say to that?” And he said: “Yes, of course! That’s a very good idea! Let’s do that!” So I asked him: “Well, in that case could you please get in touch with our bookkeeper and tell him about this arrangement – because otherwise I’m afraid he’ll start raising objections.” He phoned the bookkeeper, asked him to come round to his office, and in my presence explained to him how Sokolov was to be paid: “Comrade Sokolov is entitled to three months’ pay – Dmitrii Nikolaevich over here will draw up a payment slip on his behalf and I want you to pay Sokolov the sum that is stated there. I’ll sign everything.” So two days later, when Sokolov came to see me again, as we’d agreed, I was able to tell him: “We’re going to pay you these wages – but based on the current pay rate instead of the one that applied in those years.” Well, and he thanked me, and there was nothing more to it: we just drew up the payment slip as required, filling in the details from the documents he’d brought with him. Documents which referred to that decree I told you about. Then the director signed it and the bookkeeper paid out to Sokolov the sum that we’d agreed on. Yes, that’s something that happened in my time at the factory.

**- So you never associated the Party and the repressions with one another?**

- That’s right: I never associated them.

**- And you never regretted that... you were never ashamed of being a member of the Party?**

- No. I’ve even kept my membership card – I didn’t return it. There were some who tore up or burnt their cards, but I... Mine’s still lying there in a drawer in my desk. Perhaps you’re wondering why? Well, it was because my decision to join the Party, to be a member, had been fully conscious – I was working and I considered it my duty [to join the Party] – it wasn’t something I did against my will, but entirely of my own accord. What reason, therefore, could I have had to throw away my membership card? None – and so I held on to it. I have never considered the Party [to have been responsible for the repressions], because I knew all the rank-and-file Communists: they were my colleagues at work. They were all honest, decent people. How could I have possibly associated them with the repressions?

**- What's your attitude to Stalin now?**

- It's twofold – yes, there are two aspects to it. For a start, he had this firm will. He knew where he was going and what he wanted. He was at the head of our army and State during the Great Patriotic War, and we were victorious. Who knows? [If it hadn't been for Stalin] perhaps the war would have turned out differently or we would have had to struggle longer before achieving victory. And on the other hand, it's true to say that under him life started to get better. Especially after the war, whilst Stalin was alive, with every year that passed, we felt that... Well, for example, do you know how much we had to pay for our flats back then? 12-15 rubles. That was about 10-11% of my wages.

**- Was that a lot?**

- That was the sum I paid for my flat, for the television- and radio antenna, for electricity, for water, for gas – I just had to pay 12-15 rubles. If you want, you can have a look at my bills. I've kept some of them. Yes, and apart from that, we lived without having to be afraid of being robbed or anything – we didn't have to lock the door during the day. We didn't even secure the latch – and there was just one door. We got by perfectly without any grilles, without any of these iron doors. At night, we could walk safely on the streets – even at mid-night, and none of us was ever mugged or anything. It was all different back then. There were shortages, that's true – supply shortages – and it was hard to get hold of certain goods. But what mattered, though, was that life *was* getting better! Every year, in March, we could count on a further reduction [in food prices]. And it always took place! Under Stalin, there was a reduction every year. Yes, even if these reductions were just by a few kopecks, the important thing was that they happened.

**- What did these reductions apply to?**

- To all kinds of goods, to foodstuffs and so on. You must know about that?

**- Yes.**

- You have heard about it, haven't you? There was a reduction every year. We were always expecting something even better the next time. And life was improving, you know. Now, I've already mentioned how under Stalin our country was a great power, how under Stalin we had this strong army. Do you think that in those days there could have been anything at all like [the invasion of] Iraq last year? Could such a thing have ever happened when the USSR still existed? Of course not! The Americans would never have dared. Nowadays, however, the Americans just do whatever they want and force their will upon others. That wasn't the case back then. Our industry was growing, the cosmos was ours, science was thriving in our country. Take medicine for example: we received free medical treatment, we didn't have to worry about saving for a rainy day. And after retiring [from the factory], I received a pension of 120 rubles [a month], which was increased to 132 rubles after I'd worked a bit more [after my official retirement]. It wasn't just enough, I tell you! It was enough and to spare! We could invite guests round to our place, we could go to visit friends in other parts of the country. We'd all write to each other regularly. I had friends I corresponded with all over the country. I'd send out some 60 postcards to friends each time that a public holiday drew near; I'd write to all of them and I received letters from all the cities and towns you could care to mention! I wrote to people in the Ukraine, in Armenia – I got letters from all the Republics. Even from the Far East I'd receive letters from friends. There were always so many letters arriving. I really was in touch with the whole country! But nowadays, to send a letter costs 10 rubles – which is beyond my means, so I've had to stop all this letter-writing. I

don't even know how my comrades are getting on now, whether they're still alive or not? I just don't know. Whereas before, I was always in regular contact with them. Not under Stalin, that is, but in the years afterwards. I mean, just consider this... how after... What do they call the Brezhnev era?

**- The period of stagnation?**

- Stagnation! Well, as it so happened, during this very stagnation, we were all able to dress all right; our lives were more or less fine. We could travel to health resorts, for example. Do you think that an engineer nowadays – an ordinary engineer, let alone a factory worker – do you think that he would be able to afford such a thing? Of course not! Whereas back then, we were travelling to these places in our hundreds, literally – I mean, from our little factory alone there were hundreds of people who'd regularly go on holiday to health resorts, to sanatoria. To receive medical treatment... there were these wonderful holiday homes... And as for our children, well... You know, our children were able to visit the most picturesque spots in our country, they could spend their summer holidays in Young Pioneer camps. And the smaller children? Why, they could go to these nursery schools and crèches – we didn't have to worry whilst we were at work because we knew that they were being looked after well. We'd pay just 10, 11 rubles a month for each child. And there were lots of special benefits and concessions. And don't forget the public transport, either! A ride on the tram cost 3 kopecks, a bus ticket would cost you 5 kopecks, and a counter to travel on the metro cost just 5 kopecks, too. A train ticket from here to Moscow would set you back by no more than 20 rubles: for a seat and a berth in a sleeping-carriage. Yes, we could travel there for just 20 – or perhaps it was even just 15 rubles! Every year, I'd go to Moscow to visit our son... So we lived quite tolerably, to say the least.

**- But you said that your attitude to Stalin was two-fold, right?**

- Yes, it was a two-fold attitude, yes. On the one hand, Stalin had done everything so that... But then, on the other hand...

**- Sorry, he'd done everything so that what?**

- So that life got better. But, on the other hand, there was his struggle for power, when he had the whole Bolshevik Old Guard – Lenin's comrades-in-arms – when he had them all executed or thrown into prison. And then those repressions. It was later, though, that we found out about this. So what can one say? Well, of course, he was a bad... an evil genius.

**- And what do you think: could there have been one without the other?**

- Well, yes – take Lenin for example. I know that people say that Lenin started the repressions – and it's true that somewhere he does say that a revolution must be able to defend itself. Isn't that correct? You can't get away from this fact. The French Revolution too had its victims – and so did ours. But this passed away and... The Civil War finished and life did start picking itself up again. There was the New Economic Policy. And behold: people's lives started improving, trade kicked off again; the peasants were allowed to breathe freely again; they were given land to work. Illiteracy was liquidated. If Lenin had been around in those later years... Well, I mean, there were repressions under Lenin, but we don't really know if there were that many of them. We don't know what sort of repressions these were and what Lenin was actually targeting. And besides, these took place during the Revolution, which is quite a different matter – surely he didn't continue with these repressions after the Revolution, in the 1920s? In 1921, in 1922?... In

1923, of course, Lenin was already ill... So all this goes to show that it is possible to build life without repressions. Whereas Stalin – how did Stalin go about building? On the basis of repressions. Just consider the terrible famine there was in 1931-32! And then the ration card system. The grain was requisitioned and taken away [from the countryside]. It is true that it was needed for the industrialisation that was being carried out. I understand that in order to build these factories, they had to be equipped properly and [bread supplies] had to be bought up [to feed the workers in the towns], and that there wasn't any money, any gold, that could have been used for this. It was necessary to secure grain deliveries, but never should it have been done to such an extent as to leave people starving! Because millions were left without bread and starved to death. And in this too Stalin had his hand! The very same Stalin who was strengthening our country and doing good things. But there he did do something foul; he caused harm to the Soviet people; he carried out these repressions. Just look at all the people he repressed: workers, peasants, the intelligentsia – they all suffered. Just think of what...

**- Dmitrii Nikolaevich, tell me, please: when did you actually tell your children that you had been an exile?**

- Oh, I don't actually remember when exactly. But it was certainly after they'd grown up.

**- When was that, then?**

- Yes, when they were already adults. You see, they forced me to – they said: "Write down everything about your life!" So I did, I wrote down what I could. (*His wife interposes*: "But you were always recounting how we lived in those earlier years and all that...") Yes, I did often recount these things, but only after our children had already grown up. It was when they were adults, you see. (*His wife interposes again*: "You didn't talk about it with them, though, but with friends who came round to us – when the children were still at home.") Well, yes, I did talk about it. I didn't try to hide it or anything.

**- You actually told your friends that you had been in exile?**

- Of course. I didn't conceal it. And when I was applying for work, I'd always write it in the *ankety*. I never tried to... I was convinced that honesty means precisely that – being honest and truthful. So I never tried to hide it. (*His wife interposes*: "He always talked about his hard childhood and what it was bound up with – and about all these privations...")

**- But couldn't you say approximately when you told your children? Was it in the 1970s, or in the 1960s?**

- I just don't remember that any more. I'm sorry, Andrei Olegovich, but it's just something I can't remember.

**- Was it, however, before the *perestroika* or afterwards?**

- Before the *perestroika*. Yes, before the *perestroika*. Let's see, now: my son finished his ten-year-school in 1974. My daughter two years later, in 1976. But by that time they already knew about it, you see.

**- They already knew about it?**

- Yes.

**- You mean they knew about it when they were still at school?**

- Yes, when they were going to school – yes, they did know about it then.

**- When your parents were still alive, did you ever talk about these things with them? I mean about your life back then?**

- You know, after 1942 I stopped living with my parents – yes, in 1942 – and I didn't really return to them afterwards. Some years later, though, when they were already quite old, they came to live with me here. And, you know, even then we didn't have any such conversations. It wasn't something we wanted to rake up again. They knew about it of course, and so did I. But they could see for themselves that I'd managed to find myself a job and that I enjoyed the esteem of my colleagues at work. And I was already... After coming to live here, Father always said: "Well, there you are: we *have* lived to see the day when we are honest and free again!" That's what Father said on a number of occasions – although, in general, we didn't talk that much. Of course, when I was working on these memoirs of mine, I did say to myself: if only Father and I had talked more about these things!

**- In which year did you actually write these memoirs?**

- It was in the year before last. In the winter months of 2002: in January and February.

**- Is it all right if I ask: what do you regret most in your life?**

- What I regret most? That's something I've never asked myself, really. And why should I have? Given that I've lived my life honestly – my life has been honest throughout.

**- Well, I mean... perhaps you do regret some particular moments or periods in your life? Or maybe certain actions?**

- I'm not aware of having done anything that would cause me to blush. I mean this, honour bright! I've never done anyone any harm, I've never caused anyone any trouble. There are no actions in my life which I'd have reason to be ashamed of. None at all.

**- No, I don't mean things which one might be ashamed of – what I'm trying to get at is whether you've ever regretted having acted in a particular way. Which doesn't necessarily mean having acted dishonourably, but just having acted in that specific way.**

- To be honest, I can't think of anything like that. I lived in accordance with the times.

**- Are you satisfied with your life?**

- Yes, I am – I am satisfied with it.

**- Despite having been in exile?**

- I've got two kind and able children who've managed to make their way in life: my son's getting on well and... Quite recently, he...

**- Are you proud of your son?**

- I certainly am. I am proud of him. He's a kind and decent person. You know, as soon as he found out that I'd fallen ill, he took the earliest flight there was and came here. And he left me money to pay for my operation, and a bit later he sent me some more. Quite recently, in fact – he sent me 15,000 rubles for my operation and so on. For everything, for the costs of the operation. I am satisfied with my son, and with my daughter, too. They're both kind and understanding people. And not just that. My son's got himself a family which may God grant to everyone. Yes, may God grant to everyone such a family! His wife Lida, our daughter-in-law – she's a kind, decent, thoughtful woman. We always go to stay with them – we've done so every year... It's only this year that I haven't been able to go... But otherwise, we always go there for the New Year and stay with them for a whole month. Everything's in order in their house, everything's going fine.

**- That's splendid!**

- It is, upon my honour it is!

**- And you're satisfied with life despite the fact that you were an exile for a number of years?**

- I am satisfied with life, I am. Yes, I'm satisfied with life! Especially in the last few years. For example, not so long ago it was our 50th wedding anniversary, and the children... We didn't want any celebration or anything like that. But our daughter got in touch with her brother over the phone and arranged for his whole family – that is, our granddaughters, our daughter-in-law, and Iura – to come over here. The only one who couldn't make it was our daughter-in-law's father: I think he was in Norway at the time. Otherwise, he too would have come. So that's how we celebrated our 50 years of marriage. Well, isn't that enough reason to be happy? Of course it is!