Vieno Zlobina

Their Ideals Were Crushed

A Daughter's Story of the Säde Commune in Soviet Karelia

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To the memory of my dear parents, Elis and Emma Ahokas

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Professor Peter Kivisto, Augustana Collega, USA

The migration of Finns from both Finland and North America to Soviet Karelia is an episode in migration historiography that did not receive serious scholarly attention until the 1970s. The first scholar to pay sustained attention to the topic was University of Turku historian Reino Kero (1975), who initially suggested that as many as 10,000 Finns took part in the Karelian Fever that swept the Upper Midwest and Ontario during the 1930s, but subsequently as he engaged in further research, he reduced that figure. His major work, published only in Finnish, constitutes a landmark contribution to this topic and has held up remarkably well even though he published it before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent opening (at least for the time) of the Russian archives (Kero 1983).

In this post-Soviet period, the late Varpu Lindström from York University in Toronto and Irina Takala, a historian at Petrozavodsk State University began a productive collaboration that benefitted from access to research funding from the Canadian government. A number of scholars came into the orbit of this research enterprise. The first published fruits of the collaboration appeared in the *Journal of Finnish Studies*, edited at the time by Lindström. That journal issue was subsequently published in book form by Aspasia Books, a publishing house run by Lindström and Börje Vähämäki (Harpelle, Lindström, and Pogorelskin 2004). The book's thirteen articles contain five chapters on the North American experience and eight on events in Karelia. Four years later, a conference hosted by Takala in Petrozavodsk resulted in a second edited collection, also with thirteen articles, published both in Russian and English (Takala and Solomeshch 2008).

Taken as a whole, these two collections added considerably to our understanding of the transnational practices of Finnish immigrants (Kivisto 2014). Takala and her colleague Alexey Golubev continued this project for the next several years, culminating in what will certainly be the most significant study on the subject for the foreseeable future, *The Search for a Socialist El Dorado: Finnish Immigration to Soviet Karelia from the United States and Canada in the 1930s* (Golubev and Takala 2014). They link the movement of North American

Finns—the number of which they estimate to have been in the 6,000 to 6,500 range, with the upper figure being probably closer to the mark—with that of Finns emigrating from Finland. Estimates for that cross-border movement range from 22,000 to 28,000 if one combines both political and economic migrants (Golubev and Takala 2014: 44, 8). This book is not only rich in detail about Soviet policies, but also makes extensive use of first-hand accounts of living conditions both before and after the Stalinist purges began.

Complementing these historiographical studies now spanning four decades, a small collection of memoirs has appeared that serves to provide concrete details about these years, along with reflections on how decades after the event people still tried to make sense of the Karelian experiment. No doubt the best known of these memoirists is Mayne Sevander, who wrote more than one book about her experiences, but the most poignant is *They Took My Father* (2004 [1992]), an account of her family's decision to leave Brule, Wisconsin for Karelia in 1934. What makes her account of particular interest is that her father, Oscar Corgan, was one of the two leaders of the Karelian Technical Aid Committee, the organization charged by the Kremlin to recruit North Americans for Karelia. Corgan took his family to Karelia late, after having wrapped up his recruitment activities. In a few short years, his life and that of his family spun out of control. Once favored by Soviet officials for his recruitment work, he came under suspicion during the Stalinist purges, was arrested, and subsequently executed—a fact that, typical of the time, the family would not know for certain until the 1990s.

Kaarlo Tuomi's story was quite different, it being the stuff of Cold War drama. Born in Ishpeming, Michigan in 1916, his family migrated to Karelia when he was a teenager in the early 1930s at the initiative of his leftist stepfather. After serving in the Soviet military during World War II, Tuomi was recruited by the KGB to become a spy in the United States. When his cover was blown, he became a double-agent working for the FBI. In the end, his last years were spent in Florida, a haven for many retired Finnish Americans (Tuomi 2014 [1984]).

Lawrence and Sylvia Hokkanen were raised on Sugar Island in the St. Mary's River near Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Caught up in the fever, they departed for Karelia in 1934 and in a matter of a few years were enmeshed in the purges. Unlike so many others, they managed to survive and to return to America. They discovered that many of their leftist acquaintances who did not migrate were in a state of denial about the Stalinist terror and ostracized them for speaking opening about the horrors they had witnessed. At the same time, conservatives were suspicious of them, wondering for example whether

they were spies sent by the Soviet Union. They decided that it was best not to speak to anyone, including their own children, about their experiences. The silence was broken decades later when in their later years they decided to write about their time in Karelia (Hokkanen and Hokkanen 1991). Their silence was, in my estimation, quite common. Indeed, when I was writing my dissertation on the Finnish American left in the late 1970s and early 1980s, someone from the Copper Country of Michigan's Upper Peninsula contacted me about his father, who he thought would like to talk to me about his years in Soviet Karelia. After several attempts to set up a meeting, each of which was cancelled at the last minute, we finally managed to set up a date. I drove 500 miles to meet with the individual only to learn that he had had a change of heart. In short, I never interviewed him and assume that he took his story to the grave. Similar anecdotal accounts suggest that in an effort to avoid stigmatization, silence was preferred by many returnees.

Vieno Zlobina's memoir is our most recent addition to this small collection—and given the age of survivors, one can assume it will be one of the last. It is unique in two regards when compared to both the scholarly accounts and the memoirs just noted. First, the family emigrated from Canada, not the United States. Second, what we know as Karelia Fever is usually seen as specific to the 1930s, when migration was a mass phenomenon. In Zlobina's case, the family left during the 1920s, a small cohort. They did so, as Nick Baron (2007) notes in his book on Soviet policy, after Lenin had identified Karelia as a potential showcase for Soviet planning and development, a model that would reveal to the world the potential of communism. Their commune, Säde (Ray) was to become an exemplary development during its early years, during which the region was granted considerable autonomy. But all that changed when Stalin came to power, and the commune had to increasingly grapple with the intrusions of government bureaucrats into their operations. But, of course, this was only a prelude to the horrors that would follow.

Zlobina recounts the experiences of her family, idealistic communists who emigrated from Canada in order to help build the Labor Republic. It does so from the vantage of an old woman reflecting on events—painful ones to be sure, but also pleasant memories—from long ago. This is a narrative of decent people who dedicated themselves to building a workers' paradise in the rugged and undeveloped nation that had promised with its successful revolution to create a world free from capitalist oppression. It is also a narrative of betrayal, for what they encountered was far worse than North American capitalism, however exploitative it was.

Zlobina's parents, Elis and Emma Ahokas were twice migrants, having first left Finland for the Ontario mining town of Cobalt. There they worked hard and raised a family, but were drawn to the promise of a better future in the Soviet Union. Elis, in particular, was an idealist drawn to communist ideology and to the basic notion of cooperation. In the end, despite being victims of the terrorist state created by Stalin, neither he—who was executed in 1938—nor his daughter abandoned their fundamental belief that a better, more cooperative society was possible. In addition, as the following pages will reveal, the capacity of Zlobina to persevere despite the countless obstacles she encountered along the way is nothing short of remarkable. Her life story adds to our capacity to understand everyday life in a repressive dictatorship.

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I was consigned to live in the Soviet Union for over 60 years before I succeeded in returning to my native land, Canada. When I told my life story to my Canadian friends they wondered, "Why haven't we heard anything like that before. You should write your story about those courageous Canadians who left their settled life behind and headed for an unknown future." This idea stuck in my mind and I started to feel a need to engage the subject. I decided to do some research work to find out if any kind of material concerning those first movers from Canada to the Soviet Union was available but sources were scarce. However, I learned that after the Soviet Union had collapsed some books about the remarkable experience of thousands of North-American Finns who moved to Soviet Russia in the 1920s and 1930s and their tragic fates had been published by persons closely bound to those disastrous events. At last the world had become conscious of the crimes committed by the Stalinist regime.

The events I am writing about have mostly passed unnoticed in the history of Canada and the Soviet Union but they have had an immense impact in the destiny of people who were involved in them. My goal is to describe the good intentions of a small group of Canadian Finns from Cobalt, Northern Ontario, who left for the Soviet Union to carry out their dreams of Brotherhood, Freedom

Members of Säde at the beginning of 1930.

and Equality and to take part in building a humane Workers' State. Nobody was able to predict the trials which were awaiting these strong believers in the workers' cause in a faraway unfamiliar Soviet Union. I'd like to stress the point that I am not a historian. This book is based on the oral history of my family and I discuss the course of events as I experienced and personally witnessed them. My narration is a truthful account of those particular years of my life, memories of life lived decades ago.

My Parents

My parents, Emma and Elis Ahokas, arrived in Canada from Finland in 1917. Father was born in rural community of Viipuri on the Gulf of Finland in 1883; mother was a native of Savo, in the Eastern part of Finland, born in 1881. They were of the same background: their parents belonged to a class of farm laborers (torppari) who didn't own land but rented it from landowners, paying off the rent by working on their fields a given length of time. The terms were usu-

ally crushing. How miserable their life was can be seen from the saying: "The Moon is torppari's Sun", which means that they could tend to their own fields only at night especially at harvest time. This injustice was abolished in Finland by a land reform act in 1918.

As my mother recalled, her parents worked very hard to make ends meet. They were engaged not only in working the land, but earned extra money in their spare time by making handicrafts. Grandpa had been clever with his hands, carving wooden objects: spoons, butter knives, toys, sleds, and skies. It usually took a long time to finish these items, which granny often pointed out. Her comments were answered with a sensible response, "Nobody asks how long it took to make it, but everybody asks who made it." Grandma had been skilled in using a handloom. Early in the morning she sat at it weaving colorful textiles or rag rugs to sell on the local market. Mother recalls that they had lived by the big lake Saimaa and whenever grandma had been able to break away from her household chores she would go fishing. She used to sit on a big rock some distance from the shore, her hems wet, landing big perch. Her catches had made a substantial addition to their everyday meals. Deep in granny's mind were her childhood memories of the enormous famine of 1860 which had hit Finland, so she was happy to get anything edible for their big family.

My parents didn't have a chance to attend a regular school, but they gained literacy taking classes in an Ambulatory school (Finn. kiertokoulu). Confirmation classes were also held for all children in their early teens. Mother left home at a young age to lighten her family's burden. Seeking employment, she wandered

My parents are joined in marriage.

until she ended up in Viipuri district. There she found a job as a domestic. Not far from her place of service was my father's home. They used to take part in the same activities at the community hall and got to know each other. They dated for some time, fell in love, and married. These two country youngsters didn't have many possessions, so they started their married life empty-handed. Fortunately everything turned out well in the end: they succeeded in finding a suitable place and a permanent job as estate caretakers for a Russian retired colonel who mainly lived in St. Petersburg.

Since 1809, when Finland was proclaimed a Grand Duchy of Russia, tsars presented officers who had been noted for heroism on battlefields with land. Those gift lands were principally located in the Karelian Isthmus near to St. Petersburg. The owner of the estate was one of those heroes. My parents took good care of the place and the colonel was pleased with such eager beavers. The place wasn't far from Portinhoikka, the administrative center, where the community hall was situated. After their marriage my parents didn't lead an isolated style of life, but continued to participate in various activities from sports to politics. Soon they became enthusiastic supporters of the labor movement.

The first two decades of the twentieth century were troubled times for the Russian empire, including Finland. Russia was thrown into political turmoil and was on the verge of civil war. People weren't sure about the future ahead of them. One day the colonel arrived from St. Petersburg and told his workers that he was selling the estate. My parents had to move away. They found themselves in a difficult situation: it wasn't easy to find a new job. They began pondering on moving abroad. The rumor had it that Canada was a country where one could make a living. Some neighbors had already left for Canada and their letters were encouraging (the Census of Canada reports that the Finnish-Canadian community in 1921 amounted to 21,494 people). My parents had nothing to lose. They made up their minds to set out for Canada. Some other young couples joined them. The local community hall arranged a farewell party for them and the very next day they left their native country. They had to stay in Norway for a couple of weeks waiting for their delayed documents. They wondered how to manage not knowing the language of the transit country. Although a farm laborer, my father had always been interested in languages. He had a smattering of Russian and English, but Norwegian was all Greek to him. There was nothing to do but learn some essential words and phrases in Norwegian and so father bought a primer. Thanks to his inquisitive mind the group was able to get the necessities of life. At last those disquieting documents arrived and they set off on a ship towards the North American coast. When the Statue of Liberty appeared on the horizon, they were relived, realizing that much of their exhausting travel was behind them. On Ellis Island their health condition was

examined, the disembarkation fee collected, and they were free to get on the train bound for Canada.

Arriving in Cobalt

Immigrants from Finland mostly settled in the northern parts of Ontario which reminded them of their home country. Cobalt, North Ontario, was one of the spots where Finnish immigrants headed. This small mining town had been dubbed "The capital of Canadian Finns". At the beginning of the twentieth century rich silver veins were discovered in Cobalt and mining had commenced. It is said that Cobalt is the town that silver built. My parents had heard about Cobalt and they decided to settle there. It became their domicile for the whole time they stayed in Canada. By the time they arrived in 1917 Cobalt was no longer as famous as it had been earlier. Many of the mines had run out of silver, but there were some mining companies that needed workers. My father got a job at a Nipissing mining company.

Most of the Finnish immigrants worked in mines and lumber camps. It wasn't easy for them to grow accustomed to these new kinds of employment. Most of them had come from rural areas where farming was dominant. However, thanks to their diligence and common sense they coped with their strenuous work as lumberjacks and miners. The Finnish character and culture have been shaped by forests, lakes, a challenging climate, and soils hard to work, so Finns developed enormous capacities for endurance. "Sisu" is a word in the Finnish language that aptly describes the Finnish character. This word is sometimes translated into English as stamina, "guts", pride, temper, and persistence, all integrated into one concept. It reveals how Finns apply all their energy and bare their souls to reach the goals they have set.

In Canada these heart of oak people didn't shun hard work and difficulties which immigrants encounter. Mining wasn't an easy job: many operations were manual and the work environment wasn't safe. Pneumatic drills, which workers called "widow makers", threw up clouds of dust, and there were many injuries and deaths caused by work-related accidents. Miners had their meals in the shaft. For that hard labor miners were paid $3 to $5 a day. Sometimes they were given bonuses. For example, before Christmas companies provided miners with turkeys.

Fowls were brought in big boxes to the mine grounds, and men coming out of the mine and lined up to get their bird. Father recalled how his humorous partner said getting to the box, "I don't waste time choosing the bird, I'll grab those big shanks, and there are the big ones for you too."

Edvard Otto Vilhelm Gylling 30.11.1881-14.6.1938.
Sculptor Leo Lankinen, Veikko Huuska´s collection

Step by step the adversities my parents had faced were overcome. Father had permanent work. Although the pay checks weren't high, the family managed to make ends meet. Mother contributed to the family budget as a cleaning woman and doing laundry for well-off neighbors. At that time there were no washing machines, as the only help in laundering was a hand operated gadget to wring water out of the clothes. As I can remember the clotheslines were stretched all over our yard.

Father was very active and communicative. Working with English-speaking partners he steadily improved his English, while mother having few contacts with Canadians and moving mainly in Finnish circles never learned to speak English well. After a two-year trial of endurance, they felt ready to have a baby. I was born September 18, 1919 on 97 Earl Street. My mother was then thirty nine years old, and the forceps delivery was very hard. Doctor Taylor had to stay at our place for hours. My mother recalled him as a kind and caring person.

Later on we moved to a house for two families at 77 Helen Street which was provided by the mining company. This is the home I remember. It was a poorly made wooden house. We had a living room, a bed room and a kitchen. Rooms were sequential like in a three wagon streetcar. There were no proper stoves in the house. The living room and the bedroom were heated by a coal stove that stood in the middle of the living room. One night we could have died if I hadn't started to cry and vomit. My father had understood that we

were poisoned by coal gas (carbon monoxide) and had tottered to open the front and kitchen doors. The coal had been damp, and to set it on fire in the morning, they had shoveled coal into stove to get it dried out. That night the coal caught on fire, but because the damper had been shut the coal gas had spread throughout the house.

There were silver mines and abandoned shafts in the vicinity of our street. Kids were strictly warned not to go there. Nevertheless, Douglas, a couple of years older than I was, took me to that deserted area. He was curious to see what he could find there and needed a companion. We roamed there for hours and got lost. Our parents raised the alarm; the whole neighborhood searched for us. When we were found my mother got mad with me and I was given a good spanking.

There weren't many children who were my age living in our street, besides Douglas. I remember only one other playmate, Melvin, so I spent much of my time playing alone with my dolls. In the winter I took them out in a red doll's sledge, and when snow melted I drove my dolls around in a little gray buggy. How I missed my toys afterwards in Russia.

Next to our house lived a Finnish family. Their daughter had a piano. I loved to listen to her playing and dreamed of having a piano of my own. Father promised me to buy one on my tenth birthday. But he could not keep his promise in Karelia. Nevertheless, when I turned ten, father brought me a birthday present – a mandolin.

I liked to go shopping with my mother. On our way to the grocery store we used to drop into the drugstore to have an ice cream cone. Once on a while we went to Lang Street, the main shopping street in Cobalt. There were Syrian vendors who, as a rule, didn't let the first customers leave the store without purchase. One could strike a good bargain. When we needed some articles of clothing we went early in the morning to Lang Street to be the first customers and save some money. Mother kept the household in good order. She liked to get things done properly. Showing me how to do different chores around the house, she demanded good work but her advice was scanty. I learned to mend stockings and socks but I showed little interest in knitting and embroidery.

A peak of my day was meeting my father on his way home from the mine. I proudly carried his black tin lunch box. Sometimes when father felt very tired and his back was aching he laid himself on the floor, I got on his back stamping it by my feet. Father called me his masseur. I started school at the age of 6 in 1925.The public school was not far from our home on Cobalt Street. I didn't manage to finish the first grade because in spring we left for Russia.

Cobalt's immigrant population was composed of numerous different ethnic heritages, including German, Polish, Italian, and Russian. Community halls were

where each of these groups held social gatherings in their own languages. They had choirs and orchestras, and they staged plays, held athletic events and went on picnics. The Finnish community had its hall, too. It was a secular cultural establishment, a centre of social and political life. Their own choir and orchestra performed at the social gatherings, amateur artists staged dramas which mainly portrayed life in Finland and episodes from Finland's Civil War. In this war two political fractions – rightists, called "whites" and leftists, called "reds" fought against each other. Early Finnish immigrants were mostly leftists, and the plays at the hall were chosen according to their political views.

I used to read little poems at the gatherings. Once I was to recite a poem after a play where a fight between "reds" and "whites" had taken place. It had been a suspenseful performance, and I struggled to pull myself together to get on the stage. Father encouraged me behind the scenery. While reciting I was stealing glances in the direction where the "whites" had retreated. As soon as I had finished the poem I ran to my father crying: "Daddy, daddy, those 'whites' didn't come back". The audience had a good laugh.

Community picnics took place in the summer. There weren't many car owners among the Finns, but everyone eager to go got to the site one way or another. Participants took great pleasure in swimming, community singing, and enjoying their packed lunches outdoors. Recalling those picnic events at a later date in difficult circumstances in Russia, my mother chuckled: "I remember some amusing moments about those outings. Usually we began by singing the socialist hymn, the Internationale:

> Arise ye starvelings from your slumbers,
> Arise ye prisoners of want.
> For reason in revolt now thunders,
> And at last ends the age of cant.

I think we didn't go carefully into those words – baskets full to the brim of food and drinks were beckoning to us to finish with singing and start eating.

At the community hall children could learn the rudiments of the Finnish language. Classes were conducted by Kalle Siikanen. I attended those classes, and still remember the ABC book with a red rooster on its cover. As mother told me, that red rooster symbol reminded her of her own spelling book in Finland. Every time I learned my lesson well I found a piece of sugar between the pages. My mother told me, that the rooster had put it there as a reward. I asked my mother why that red rooster was on the cover. She replied, "As you know, the rooster's crow early in the morning awakens people. So this rooster on the cover tells how important it is to be literate to know what's happening around you."

It should be remembered that the educational system in Finland has deep roots coming down from the Middle Ages. Schools were governed by Catholic churches and monasteries. Instruction was in Latin. The first ABC book in the Finnish language was written by Michael Agricola in 1542; the first primary school was opened in 1649; the first rural primary schools around the country instructing children and adults played an important role in the education of the nation.

Local authorities and churches directed and supervised the literacy process; everyone, young and old, had to learn to read and write. Illiteracy wasn't tolerated; even to get married people had to be literate. Aleksis Kivi, a prominent Finnish writer (1834 – 1872), in his novel Seven Brothers ("Seitsemän veljestä") describes in a jocular way how these grown up rustics tried hard to become literate in order to get married.

Finns have been a sporting nation from early times. Because of the long distances to shop for necessary household items, to attend church services, or even to visit neighbors often required the use of skies in winter and rowboats in summer. Finns of all ages are good skiers; this ability seems to run in their blood. Sport was widely cultivated in the Finnish community in Cobalt. A sporting club called "Sport Chaps" organized athletic events of every kind in both the summer and winter. My father was fond of skiing. He won several prizes in skiing competitions in Canada and before that in Finland.

The Almighty Sauna

After a hard work day or sporting competition, there is nothing better than to relax, and the sauna is the best place to do that. Sauna has belonged to the Finnish culture and life style from ancient times. The original sauna has two chambers: a room for changing and the other for steaming and washing. A sauna stove topped with large stones sits in the corner of the steam room. Heated up stones emit a blistering steam when water is thrown on them. Close to the stove are benches where bathers sit naked, getting steamed tossing a dipperful of water on the burning hot stones. When you break out in a sweat, it's time to pound the body with a switch bundled up of leafy birch boughs. The heat on the upper bench can rise over 100 C. Those who take a really hot sauna use mittens to protect their hands. My father was an eager bather. Few could compete with him in staying on the upper bench. The fragrance of the leaves and the tingling caused by vigorous pounding is very comforting. Vapor baths have healing properties – they raise heart rate lower blood pressure, let the body rid itself of toxins, and make the skin soft. Relaxing on the sauna

verandah and drinking beer or other beverages make socializing easy and gives people a sense of well-being. Saunas are usually built on the bank of a river or lake. It's a pleasure to plunge into water after taking the heat. In winter some run out to roll in snow to get cooled. In times past the sauna was in Finland was a distinct structure where besides bathing main life events were performed: babies were delivered, folk healers gave treatment for illnesses and the deceased were kept there before burying. Today saunas have spread worldwide. They are constructed with regard to modern conveniences, but the Finnish word "sauna" has remained.

In Cobalt a public sauna was owned and run by Kalle Lahti. The place where it was located was named Saunamäki (Sauna hill). There were ladies, men and family sections. The sauna was also a place where burning issues, local gossip, and politics were discussed. Sometimes even squabbles took place. Some sauna stories were going around the town. One was a story about two men who had had an argument which had gotten personal. One mocked the other's wife:

"Don't you earn money enough to feed your wife? She is as lean as a skeleton".
"No need to worry – the nearer the bone the sweeter the meat".

Talking Politics

The Finnish Hall brought together people who were interested in labor unions and socialist party activities. One of the most notable branches of the Socialist Organizations of Canadian Finns operated in Cobalt. At its hall left-wing speakers delivered speeches on the internal affairs of the country, the working conditions in mines, the state of international affairs, all from a socialist political orientation. Attention was also paid to the cooperative movement. Numerous newspapers published in Canada and the United States such as Vapaus ("Freedom"), Työmies ("The Worker"), Eteenpäin ("Forward"), Toveri ("Comrade") aimed to serve the same cause.

The tsar of Russia, Nicholas II, was overthrown in 1917. The Russian Socialist Revolution and the course of events in the young workers' state were issues debated often at these social evenings. In 1921 Russia was struck with famine. The most important Russian granaries in Ukraine and at the mouth of Volga River suffered from incredible drought and crop failure. People wandered aimlessly along Russian roads chewing roots, leaves and bark. The International Red Cross and Fridtjof Nansen (an organization named after the Norwegian Arctic explorer) arranged a widespread aid campaign intended to rescue millions of people, including supporting orphanages inhabited by skeleton-lean

children. More than five million people perished in this disaster. The Finnish community in Cobalt launched a donation campaign in which money and a lot of clothing was collected to help starving Russians. My mother recalled that the hall had been full of every kind of provision. This occasion was an impressive demonstration of the internationalism of the community.

Agitation Is Beginning to Bite

In the 1920's more and more publications concerning the Soviet Russia started to appear in the leftist papers. These stories pictured Russia as a "Workers' Paradise" where people were equal, everyone had work, lived well and were treated with respect. Agitators delivered inspiring speeches in the Finnish hall encouraging people whose desire for equality was very strong and who were attracted to the ideals of the October Socialist Revolution to immigrate to the Soviet Union. The agitators' fiery speeches depicting a just and full of zest life in the Workers' State created sparks of interest from a portion of Finns in Cobalt. They decided to put their lives in perspective and started to think about immigrating to the Soviet Union. "But where shall we go and what shall we do there," they pondered. These questions were soon answered when they learned that the government of Karelia was inviting skilled laborers from Canada and the United States to immigrate to Karelia, a part of the Soviet Union adjacent to Finland.

"Now we know where to go – we shall help Karelia to improve its economy and be proud builders of the workers' state," declared an enthusiastic group of Cobalt miners. Exchanging views about their line of work Kalle Siikanen interjected, "Haven't we worked too long below ground inhaling coal dust. Maybe we should think about jobs above the ground." This opinion was accepted unanimously: on no account would they be miners again. All of them had been farm hands in their motherland Finland. They still longed to till the ground. The memories of the freshly ploughed land, the songs of the birds, white summer nights made clear that engaging in agriculture might be the way to get on with their lives in Soviet Karelia. "Farming requires costly equipment, none of us can privately afford it," somebody uttered hesitantly." "We could set up a cooperative," was the reply. Indeed, the cooperative movement in Canada had given them some practical experience in mutual understanding and partnership, and the decision was made: they will create an agricultural commune, a collective enterprise of farmers. Their ideals of working together in favor of the whole society could come true, so they thought.

Attempts to create socialist communes had been tried before. The first attempt by Finns to build a free democratic community took place in 1792 when

August Nordenskjöld, a Swedish arctic explorer, born in Finland, took a trip to Sierra Leone to establish a utopian socialist society. In Canada in 1901 Finnish immigrants with left-wing political views led by Matti Kurikka started up a community on Malcolm Island, British Columbia, named Sointula (Place of Harmony). Later ventures took place in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, and the United States. These communities had their ups and downs, their own stories of successes and failures, but in the end they didn't manage to function as planned and gradually broke up.

After the Russia Revolution, socialists in North America found out that there was a country where their ideas of Brotherhood, Freedom and Equality could come true. Construction and agricultural cooperatives were set up and moved to Russia to take part in building the socialist nation. The first agricultural commune founded in North America in 1922 was "Kylväjä" ("The Sower"). Our neighbors in Cobalt, Aino and Jukka Tuomi, joined it and left for Russia. The commune was given an estate expropriated from a landowner in the south of Russia. Members of commune "Työ" ("The Toiler") emigrated from North America to a place near Leningrad in 1927. The Soviet Government assigned them a ready-made estate. A fishing commune named "Pohjanpoikien kommuuna" ("The Northern Guys commune") settled in 1922 in Knäso, North Karelia. It is estimated that about 100 members of different cooperatives moved to Soviet Karelia in the beginning of 1920's.

The Idea of Setting up a Commune Is Acted on

The initial meeting of the agricultural commune of Cobalt's miners was held on August 8, 1922. The commune was named "Säde" ("The Ray".) The bylaws were approved and the initial capital goal was set. The membership fee was $105, and every member was supposed to loan money to a machinery fund, giving as much as could afford. In other words, many were sacrificing their all savings. According to the plan, after arriving in Soviet Karelia every member was to work for two years without payment, receiving instead free housing and meals. Afterwards adults would be given ten rubles a month and children thirty rubles per annum for clothing. Stipulations were rigorous: high ethical standards and devotion to the cause of socialism were required from the members.

Plans for the future were depicted in the regulations, as well: the elderly would be taken care of, children would be given a good up-bringing and education; and school, health and cultural services with professionals were to be established. It's amazing how far into the future the dreams of these sincere and credulous workmen reached. Doesn't this sound wonderful!

The founding members of Säde

Kalle Lahti the first chairman of the commune Säde (Lauri Luoto, Lakeuksien Aunus).

Portraits of Elis Ahokas and Kalle Siikanen painted by a Leningrad artist Olga Zhudina.

The members of Säde worked overtime to earn more money for the commune's machinery fund, as well as to buy clothing for two years and pay travel expenses. A campaign for fundraising was advertised, donations and

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money arrived people who supported the cause. Money was also raised also by raffles and fees collected during social evenings. The management of the commune browsed through technical magazines to find bargain prices for agriculture machinery. It took three years before the members were ready to carry out the plan.

By that time the machinery fund amounted to $14,000, and the necessary equipment had been ordered. The membership consisted of 10 families. However, some of the members had second thought about leaving Canada and ended their memberships. How lucky would we be if my parents were among those cautious people, but fortune didn't smile on us. Mother was dubious, "I think it will be something hard, maybe harder than it is here." Father was ready to reply, "Haven't we worked hard all our life but consider what a great future we are going to have ahead of us in a land of working people where all men are equal and free. Sad days behind, brighter days ahead." Father was determined to go and mother had to remain of the same opinion.

Karelia, the Promised Land

Karelia, where "Säde" members were planning to move, is situated in the northwestern part of Russia close to Finland. At the beginning of the 1920s Karelia had gained a status of an Autonomous Republic. The idea of organizing the

internal affairs of Russian Karelia on an autonomous basis was proposed by a Finnish left wing politician, one of the leaders of the Finnish labor movement and a Doctor of Philosophy in economics, Edward Gylling.

The life and fate of Russian Karelians, a kindred people to Finns, had always interested Finns and now, when a large number of Red Finns, defeated in the Civil War, had retreated to Soviet Karelia, the situation there drew even more attention. Gylling sent his proposal to Lenin. He was familiar with Finland, having hidden from tsarist persecution in the Grand Duchy. Gylling was asked to come to Moscow to submit his plan. He arrived there in April 1920 and was received by Lenin, who found the proposal to form Karelia as an independent experimental economical area appealing. Yrjö Sirola, familiar with the meeting, recalled that Lenin had listened to the presentation intently, asked many questions and in the end decided to put the idea into practice.

As a result of this meeting on August 4, 1920 the All Russia Central Executive Committee (the chairman M. Kalinin) and the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, the chairman V. Uljanov (Lenin) issued a resolution on the formation of the Karelian Workers' Commune. Three years later, on July 25, 1923, the Karelian Workers' Commune was transformed by the resolution of the same authorities into the Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic incorporated into the Russian Federation. Thus the Soviet leadership considered that it had kept its promise to grant Karelia autonomy given in the Tartu Peace negotiation of 1920. Gylling was elected chairman of the newly formed Karelian Council of Peoples' Commissars, which was equivalent to being the. Prime Minister.

The foundation for building a successful economy in Karelia was very unfavorable: agriculture and stock rising were underdeveloped, industrial enterprises were few and the standard of education was low. The situation had been worsened by Civil War. Indeed, it demanded courage and power to overcome the backwardness of this remote tract. Gylling and his government, which consisted of well-educated energetic Finnish immigrants and local politicians worked out a large-scale plan for developing Karelian industry and reshaping agricultural policy. The aim was to elevate both the Karelian economy and its culture.

Autonomous Karelia had some advantages compared to other Autonomous Republics of the Russian Federation. The Government was entitled to run the economy and cultural policy independently. It had the right to trade with foreign countries on its own. Foreign exchange provided an opportunity to purchase agricultural machinery and pedigree livestock in an advantageous way. This privilege was given on condition that Karelia hand over to central powers 75% of foreign currencies, to be paid for by the ruble. The Karelian government was allowed to use its tax revenues and was provided loans. Farmers were allotted

extra pieces of land cut from the state. In return, Karelia was expected to pay its share of nationwide expenses.

At the beginning of the 1920s Karelia, especially the northern parts, suffered from food shortages. The government received 800.000 rubles from Moscow to deal with the problem. The government initiated negotiations with Finland to purchase grain. The stock was supplied and people were rescued from starvation.

A New Economic Policy (NEP) adopted in Soviet Russia in 1922 to improve the economy was a suitable background to realize the Karelian Government's ambitious plans. At the very beginning Karelian authorities were confronted with a serious issue: what language should be used as the official state language, Finnish or Russian. Karelian wasn't a written language, so it was not part of the language debate. During their long history Karelians hadn't succeeded in developing their own written language as their tribesmen Estonians and Finns had done. Karelian was a spoken language composed of different dialects spread all over the territory. If prescribed as a state language it would have had to be developed into a written language. The matter of creating a Karelian written language went nowhere because there were so many competing dialects. To see how difficult this might be, one has only to recollect the formation of the Finnish written language which lasted from Mikael Agricola's times (the beginning of the 16th century) to the late 19th century. The desire of Karelian leaders was to introduce an illiterate population to literacy and culture within the short course of time. Thus, the question of creating the Karelian written language was put to a later date.

The issue of a state language was brought into question at the First All Karelian Congress of Soviets in February 1921. It passed a resolution which stressed the importance of educating people by means of the written language most suitable for them; for Russians it was Russian, for Karelians, Finnish or Russian depending on their own choice, but the other one should be taught as a second language. It was also pointed out that teachers should be able to speak the local dialect to deal with residents and educate them. Karelians who weren't able to speak neither Finnish nor Russian were free to contact officials in their own dialect.

Incidentally, instruction in Finnish wasn't anything new in Karelia. There had been Finnish schools in Repola and Porajärvi, and a Teachers Training College had been opened in Repola in 1918; in Viena Karelia Finnish was taught since tsarist times. People in these areas were anxious to get instruction in Finnish. However, overall opinions were divided concerning Finnish as the other state language. The discussion ended in the winter of 1922 when the Peoples' Commissariat of Nationalities of Russia, complying with the proclamation of the young Soviet state nationality policy, supported the

Karelian government in its decision to introduce Finnish and Russian alike as state languages.

The First Communards Depart for Karelia

It was late summer of 1925 when the delegates Leonard Holm, Kalle Lahti, his wife Rauha Grenberg and son Eino left for Karelia to find a site for the commune. Their freight consisted of a tractor, frame-and circular saws, some necessary tools and personal belongings. On their way to Karelia they had to stop in Leningrad to formalize their documentation. Officials made them an offer to settle in the outskirts of Leningrad; they would be given one of the abandoned estates. They declined the offer to take a ready-made place; their mission was to find in Karelia a piece of virgin land to till all on their own and in so doing to help the Karelian people build a new life. The delegation arrived in Petrozavodsk (Petroskoi), the capital of Karelia, in October. They were given a warm welcome by the Ministry of Agriculture and it was suggested that they settle in Olonets (Aunus), 156 kilometers from Petrozavodsk, 27 kilometers from the East coast of Lake Ladoga. Olonets was an old town, founded in 1649.

The arrival of these foreigners dressed in unfamiliar clothing was sensational in this small place. When they were descending the horse-drawn cart at the Executive Committee of the Olonets region, all eyes turned to them. The delegates met the Chairman who had already arranged housing for them in a village. It was a two-story wooden house. The owner had fled the country after the revolution. When everything had been arranged and their travel exhaustion overcome, they were ready to look for the place where the commune could be established. The delegates walked around in the neighborhood of Olonets, and to peoples' great amazement, they chose an uncultivated swampy wasteland, where juniper bushes were growing.

This place was between two villages—Yllönen and Sudala—and not far from the centre of Olonets. The officials shrugged their shoulders, peasants sniggered at them, but also resisted: they didn't want to lose the area where they pastured their cows free of charge. The commune was assigned 260 hectares of this wasteland and 6 hectares of an old field as a place to begin. It has often crossed my mind whether or not this was a well-thought-out-plan. To say nothing of the barren soil, the landscape was stark, and there was no natural source of water – there was no lake or river, even a brook in the vicinity, only puddles after a rain. Wells were the only source of water.

It was very trying to dig the wells: the vein of water was deep in the ground and the soil was clay. It turned out that the well-water was very hard; the depos-

its of iron and lime made sediments on pots and kettles. Women collected rain water to wash their hair. This hard water wasn't suitable for doing the washing either. Afterwards, not far from the location, two small ponds were found. They had been formed from clay pits of an old ruined brickyard. A shack was built there and a caldron was installed in the hearth. Thus the problem with laundry was solved.

During the winter and spring of 1926 Kalle Lahti and Leonard Holm with some hired hands stockpiled about 3000 logs and stakes. Two horses were bought to transport these materials to the site. On the other side of the ocean the members of the commune were preparing for the trip. While we were packing mother was very constrained: she had to choose what to take and what to leave behind. There was restriction on the baggage: only one trunk per person was allowed. A lot of pain was caused by the new carpet that we had to leave behind. Afterwards mother regretted that they hadn't thought to wrap it round the trunk.

We Are Leaving Canada for Good

In 1926 we were ready to leave for Russia. A send-off-party was held at the Finnish hall, as we bid farewell to our friends and neighbors. I was excited about the voyage: the thought of crossing the ocean by a big beautiful ship was fascinating. There were eight of us: Elma and Kalle Siikanen with two sons, two-year-old Norman and seven-year-old Douglas; Väino Toko whose spouse and daughter had stayed in Cobalt promising to come later, but they never arrived, and our family.

In Halifax we got off the train, boarded the ship, and our voyage began. We had paid the cheapest fares, so our cabins were in steerage. There wasn't much space, berths were two-storied, and the windows circular portholes that cast little light into the cabin. There was neither toilet nor washstand in the cabin.

It took nearly two weeks to cross the Atlantic Ocean. The sea was calm when we got on board. On those still days we went to the deck, father told stories about the sea while we watched the track of foam left by the ship, drifting ice pieces, and tried to locate icebergs. The calm weather didn't last for a long time, and soon the sea got rough. Mother suffered from seasickness the rest of the time we stayed on board. The boat rolled so hard that in the dining room they had to raise side railings on tables. I spent most of the time in the children's' room playing with other children; our favorite toy was the rocking horse.

The first port on our way was London, where we spent some days waiting to board the ship navigating the North Sea. Those were rainy days and we had to buy rain coats. It was a blessing in disguise to get them, as it turned out there were no raincoats in Karelian shops. My garment was a beige cloak with a frilled cap and I liked it. But afterwards, at school, I became a laughing stock in that cloak, and learned that fascinating is not always admirable, so I refused to wear it.

Crossing the North and Baltic Seas went smoothly. We landed in Riga, the capital of Latvia. The sea voyage had come to an end, we continued on our way by train to Leningrad. It was late night when the train arrived in the city but it wasn't dark because light summer nights in this northern city were at their best in May. Descending from the train was quickly accomplished. People on the platform were running and speaking loudly in an unfamiliar language. We had to collect our luggage quickly, and in this turmoil my doll was left behind. Militia surrounded us and didn't let people get near us. The representatives from the Finnish social club were supposed to meet us, but nobody had arrived, we had to cope with the situation ourselves. Somehow my father succeeded in asking the militiamen to help us to get to the hotel. They found two cabmen to drive us to the hotel Moscow. It was far away from the Baltic station where we had arrived.

The big beautiful buildings along our way and the wide streets were amazing. We were all eyes during this long ride. Nevertheless, the clatter of the hooves on a silent cobblestone street soon rocked me to sleep. We arrived in the hotel past midnight, a luxurious suite was put at our disposal. We were very hungry since all day long we hadn't had a proper meal on the train, but there was no room service at night and we went to bed starving and exhausted. In the morning we took a look around. The suite was well-furnished, with fine carpets on the polished floors, velvet curtains, and even a fireplace. Mother told me to be tidy and careful and was very annoyed with Elma who let Norman pee on the bed.

I was looking out of the window and spotted people carrying something under their arms. I couldn't figure out exactly what it was and asked my father. He took a glance at the street and said: "I guess they are bricks. Maybe there is a building site nearby and workers are taking them there on their way to work." Mr. Siikanen and father went to change dollars into rubles and to buy some foodstuffs. When we were having breakfast, we saw those "bricks" on the table, they had turned out to be rye bread loaves in the shape of bricks. These kinds of loaves are called in Russian "buhanka".

It took four days to carry out all the formalities in Leningrad before we could board the train bound for Soviet Karelia. We had to get off the train in the Lodeinoye Pole railway station, halfway between Leningrad and Petrozavodsk.

The name of this small town by the Svir' River originates from Old Russian, meaning Dockyard. Here in the eighteenth century Peter the Great established a dockyard named Olonetskaya. Svir' is a navigable river and it was convenient to set afloat newly built vessels.

On the Way to Olonets

The train pulled in Lodeinoye Pole station in the morning. We got out hurriedly because it was a short stop. Kalle Lahti, the chief of the commune, had come from Olonets to meet us. There were two horse-drawn carts awaiting us. We climbed on, made ourselves as comfortable as we could and the fifty six kilometers trip to Olonets began. Crossing the Svir' River was an adventure in itself. There was no bridge, so crossing was carried out by a primitive ferry. It was hauled by men pulling a rope laid from shore to shore. We had to queue for hours—the ferry could hold only a few vehicles. It also took time to get horses onto the ferry because they were afraid of the gap between the landing-stage and the ferry. We kept our fingers crossed until we landed on the other side of the river.

Then we hit the road to Olonets. Both sides of the road were flanked with trees. It seemed that the area was sparsely populated. Spring is a time of bad roads in Karelia and our advance was slow. Late in the evening we reached the halfway house where we passed the night. The other part of our journey was more vivid. The road followed the Olonka River, where villages were located on both banks. People were doing their daily housework. In one village we saw a curious scene: a woman was ascending a riverbank with two buckets carried on a yoke-like frame fitted over her shoulders. Buckets were swinging one on either end of that gadget. It seemed convenient to carry heavy water pails particularly uphill. Children, playing on the roadside, eyed us with a shy smile.

All the houses were alike, built of logs that had turned gray over the course of time. Houses were one- or two-storied, consisting of two parts in succession under one roof. Habitable quarters were in front to which domestic spaces were attached; in two-storied houses shelter for livestock was in the lower level and hay storage in the upper one. A vertical, wide, bridge-like structure led to the hay storage area along which the horse-drawn hay loads were taken up. Some houses had been painted long ago and the paint had peeled off. The front of the houses turned to the river just as if they were looking themselves in the mirror. Nearly every household had its own sauna on the bank. We passed village after village. There weren't any borders between them, only nameplates separated them from each other.

It happened that absorbed in a lively conversation we passed by our residence-to-be. At long last we reached our destination, exhausted but curious. The house wasn't very impressive – a lined old two-storied gray building. As mentioned before, the owner had escaped to Finland and the house was in possession of the local administration. The second floor had been temporarily given to the commune. In the old days there had been a parlor and a big bedroom. While waiting for us to arrive, the bedroom had been divided into four sections by partitions to enable three families and two bachelors to have their own private space. One of these partitions didn't even have a window. The bachelors agreed to take it. There was no furniture at all in these crannies. Mattresses filled with straw were laid on the floors. These sections were intended only for sleeping. The parlor served as a dining room, a workshop, a place where daily routines were discussed and socializing took place. In a word, it was the centre of our life.

At first we led an unusual life trying to adapt to a new situation. There was no running water and no well – the Olonka River was the only source of water for all purposes including cooking. There was no electricity and we had an outside privy. Reflecting on our life, father used to say," We shall overcome these hard conditions. In a few years we'll be living in our own place."

We arrived in Olonets on the first of May. After a short rest working arrangements were discussed and shoulders were put to the wheel. Elma Siikanen and my mother were to stay on the premises carrying out the household chores and looking after kids, while others were to work on the commune's building site, two kilometers from our living place. Douglas and I had our duties too: we did shopping with my mother and every morning went for milk to our Karelian neighbors.

These families had children and soon we made friends with them. It was amazing how alike our games were. We played hide-and-seek, tag, hopscotch, marbles; our playmates used small round stones instead of factory-made marbles. Childhood is a time of big mysteries. Time runs at a comfortable pace and you can do so many things every day and find something new. Friendship with our Karelian buddies helped us to adapt to a new life in many ways. The linguistic barrier wasn't insuperable: Finnish and Karelian are cognate languages. We found, of course, some puzzling moments in pronunciation and the meaning of the words, but we did our best to understand. Father explained that Finns and Karelians are kindred peoples, and our languages are alike but there are in both of them words of their own. "Try to learn those strange words to get along with your friends," concluded my father. We picked up the Karelian language swiftly and soon we were capable of speaking it fluently. Simultaneously we learned a few Russian words borrowed by Karelians during their centuries-old contacts.

Going Round Olonets

On one beautiful summer Sunday we made a tour of Olonets center. It wasn't far from our temporary living place so we went there on foot. A teacher of the local school offered to be our guide. The main street of the town began from the region's administrative building and led to the park. On one side of the street the primary and secondary schools, the fire department, and some other buildings were located, opposite to them were shops standing side by side in a neat row. We walked along the street to the park. All of a sudden a magnificent view unfolded before us as we had come to the meeting point of two rivers, Olonka and Megrega, between which Olonets lies. A picturesque islet had settled itself on the rivers joining spot. It was connected with the park by a pedestrian bridge. Years ago an Orthodox cathedral had been built in this natural setting. After the October Revolution, as everywhere in Russia, the cathedral was deprived of ecclesiastical attributes and turned into a club. The white face of the building was peeping out from behind the trees.

We spent the whole afternoon sightseeing and following the competition of sport amateurs on the green grass of the stadium. The trip was instructive. We learned some facts about the history of Olonets and were surprised that it was quite an old town. Olonets had been first mentioned in an entry nearly 800 years before. In the 17th century it had been a military administrative and commercial center on the border with Sweden; later it had become the capital of Olonets Subprovince, and afterwards the capital of Novgorod Province. Beginning in the middle of the 19th century political exiles were sent to Olonets. After the October Revolution communist power was established in Olonets, and it became a part of the Karelian Workers' Commune which was transformed into the Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Inhabitants of Olonets were mostly Karelian peasants who lived in rural areas, and the Russian intelligentsia residing in town and occupying different jobs as doctors, teachers, clerks, and so forth. These ethnic Russians knew the Karelian language and were capable of communicating with Karelians whose Russian was poor.

Starting to Conquer Kadaikko

Karelians called the commune's grounds a Kadaikko (Juniper Patch). They were mulling over how this handful of people would manage to put up their households in such an unsuitable place. But the members of the commune trusted in their own strength and judgment and were ready to take the plunge. The machinery which the commune had bought in Canada was ready: modern tech-

nology was needed for construction and clearing the site. When the equipment arrived, it was assembled and the members sighed with relief and took to work.

Soon a rumor spread that an iron horse had arrived in Kadaikko. Curious people from all directions came to gaze at that weird thingamajig. An old man, after circling around the tractor for a while, asked: "How many horses are needed to haul this vehicle?" When the tractor started to plow the soil, onlookers only shook their heads and cried to each other, "Come and see the iron horse! He plows like a devil." The central newspaper "Punainen Karjala" wrote on June 15th, 1926: "It was the first time that a tractor rumbled on Olonets fields. A large number of people had gathered to see how it worked, and they were in the heat of enthusiasm." During the week men worked from sunrise to sunset on the rented field of six hectares, plowing and fertilizing it. Then it was sown with clover and other hay seeds; potatoes were also planted. It took tremendous effort to cultivate this

Commune's first horses.

virgin soil. Juniper roots were deep in a heavy clay ground. In spite of difficulties, sixteen of two hundred and sixty hectares were prepared for spring sowing.

Clearing the land and construction work went side by side. Building was in full swing. In a short amount of time machinery sheds, a shelter for a saw mill, and a smithy were put up to provide the necessary building materials; a sauna was built and a well dug. Besides its main function, the sauna was intended to serve as a night-stay for builders, so they needn't walk to the village every night.

At Juhannus, the sauna was heated for the first time, and we had a housewarming party. Juhannus is honored among the Finnish people as a festival of summer and light.

We celebrated this occasion by lighting a bonfire. It was a joyous and relaxing night and everybody took great pleasure in it.

Building the two-story house for living was next. According to the plans we were to move in before winter. By that time some new members had joined the commune. They were bachelors David Hill, Nehemias Piispanen and the Leppänens Jenny and Kalle. All of them were also jacks-of –all- trades.

Getting a Roof over Our Heads

Fall was approaching fast and forces were joined to complete the construction of the residential house and a barn for three horses, two homebred mares and a gelding, and two cows. The gelding, a big brownish cart-horse with a cream-colored mane and tail was my favorite. He moved slowly. It was hard to get him trotting and I was always far behind Douglas riding on his favorite mare when we rode to the watering place.

One of the cows, a gray smallish roly-poly Mousy, was famous for her kicking abilities. Only my mother had the courage to milk Mousy and that with the cow's hind legs tied up. The yield of milk was very low. We guessed that the man who had sold the cow to us had laughed in his sleeve getting rid of her. Mother thought that the cow had been treated poorly and her udder had got sore, so she started to tend to Mousy. Within a short time Mousy became unrecognizable – milking rocketed up and bad manners were swept away. It seemed that she was pleased with nice treatment and good forage.

The house rose rapidly and was ready in due course. It was the beginning of November when the scaffolding was removed and we hurried to move in. Everybody was excited—there is no place like home! There were five rooms for living, a kitchen, an office space and a big common room with many uses. Cabinetmaker Piispanen had his workshop nook there. All pieces of the necessary furniture for the household were made by him. A large bake-oven heated

Canadian Fordson tractor working the land (Courtesy of the National Archive of the Republic of Karelia).

the common room and the kitchen, where an iron stove, brought from Canada, was used to prepare meals.

Our family was assigned a room upstairs, furnished with two beds, a table, three stools and a bookcase. All of them were painted gray. The room was oblong with one window at the front and an oven in the back of the habitation. The impression was a bit gloomy, and those gray articles of furniture didn't lighten it either. But it was our own place and we settled in.

The Management, Division of Labor, and Daily Routine

In dealing with the internal affairs of the commune, the general meeting was the place where all the main problems were discussed and resolved. It assembled twice a year, in spring and late fall at the end of each accounting period. Sometimes extra meetings were summoned when a matter of utmost importance arose. Day-to-day business was governed by the administrative body which was elected in the general meeting for one year. This body consisted of five members, each of them representing a certain branch of work and a female member who looked after women's interests; they gathered fortnightly. The chairman of the administrative body was elected in the general meeting.

He also functioned as the overall chairman of the commune. A control committee of three was also set up to oversee the bookkeeping. All members of the administration were also engaged in everyday labor.

The first chairman of "Säde" was Kalle Lahti, having been appointed in Canada before departing for Karelia. In 1929 he was sent by the regional administration on a mission to help in setting up kolkhozes (collective farms) in Karelia. A new chairman was elected, Kalle Siikanen. He was one of the founders of our commune and remained its leader until 1935.

There was a strict division of labor in the commune; people worked in fields most suitable for their skills. Every field of work had its own team. Women usually worked indoors in the kitchen, in the cowshed, and in the dairy. A cleaning woman took care of the bachelors' rooms and places of common use, a laundress washed families dirty washing, and the bachelors' laundry was washed and ironed. Women needn't do the same work for years

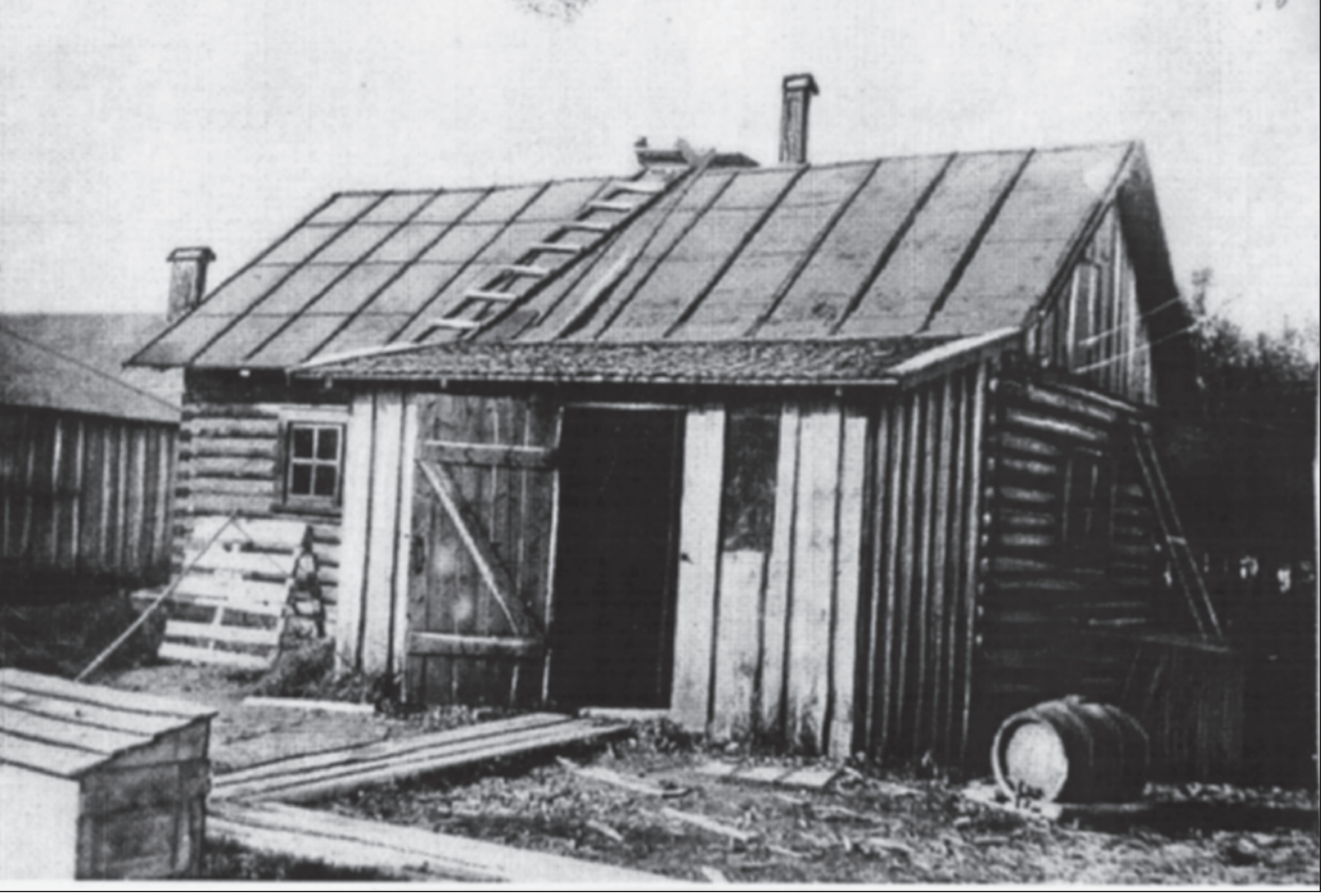
Säde before the land was cleared, an aquarelle by Heinrich Vogeler (Courtesy of the National Museum of the Republic of Karelia).

Clearing the land, an aquarelle by Heinrich Vogeler (Courtesy of the National Museum of the Republic of Karelia).

on end as they could change jobs if they found it necessary. Over the years my mother was engaged in various jobs. I often went to see how she was doing and helped her out.

Those summer days when mother was working as a washerwoman remain fresh in my memory. As I earlier mentioned, the place for the laundry had been found not far from the premises at the site of an old brickyard, where a couple of ponds had formed from clay pits. In the morning mother and I carted the bundles to the laundry shack. We spent there the whole day. At dinner time some of the kitchen women brought the meal for us. While the washing was drying we had a coffee break and popped in the woods to look for wild flowers and berries. These days were like picnic to me.

Afterwards, when other women were doing the washing I used to keep them company, too. I learned from Olga, a Karelian woman, a lot about Karelian domesticity. "Your people have brought knowledge and culture to us," Olga used to say. She repeated once and again: "It's a wonder how easy it is to do the laundry with a washing board and wringer. At home we used to do washing scrubbing up clothes in a trough and then rinsing them in the river beating with a "karttu", a wooden gadget. In winter the laundry was rinsed in an ice-hole. You ought to be very skillful not to drop the item into the river. Wringing big pieces hauled from ice-cold water wasn't an easy job."



Sauna, the first building.

The amount of work wasn't set and everybody worked at full capacity but at their own pace. Opportunities were equal. The busiest time was the sowing campaign in spring and haymaking and harvesting seasons in summer. At those times communards labored twelve-hour days and the work rate was hectic. The kitchen staff and cattle women took to the field too in their spare time. Even children worked treading the hay down in the barns and picking spikes on the field.

Clover was the most cultivated hay species raised in the commune's fields. It was chosen as the number one hay type because it is a very rewarding and profitable plant. If well cultured it yields a good crop for several years and, besides, enriches the soil. Communards made every effort to store clover crop up in time. Clover was mowed the second time at the end of August for the silo. In the fall clover fields made good pastures for the cattle. When clover fields were in full bloom bees buzzed amid the pink ocean of flowers collecting nectar. The honey was amber, clover-scented and thick.

As a matter of routine, wake-up was at 6.30 a.m. A cook struck the gong announcing that breakfast was ready. There were three long tables in the canteen where meals were served. Breakfast usually consisted of porridge, butter, whole milk and homemade rye bread.

The work day started at seven but the cattlewomen, grooms and kitchen staff they to get up much earlier. At ten o'clock was a coffee break. The coffee wasn't actually coffee, but instead was made of roasted barley. Supplies of coffee brought from Canada had run out and the commune's budget didn't allow for the purchase of expensive coffee, and besides it wasn't obtainable in Olonets.

Our people, especially women, suffered severe caffeine withdrawal symptoms and in their craving for coffee hunted for it in Petrozavodsk where it also happened to be sold once in a while. Every family acquired it with their own money and made coffee for themselves. Ladies kept their cream bottles in the pigeon-holes in the sawdust covered ice-pyramid, where ice was stored for the dairy needs. There were no refrigerating stores at that time. This sawdust hill was a blot on the view in the center of the court yard.

It is amazing that North European people are so attached to coffee drinking. Before World War II annual coffee consumption in Sweden, Denmark and Finland was 7-8 kilograms per person while in German it was 2.6 kilograms

The first residential building.

Farmhouse built in 1928 (Courtesy of the National Archive of the Republic of Karelia).

and in England only .300 kilogram. Coffee has been a traditional drink for Finns throughout the ages. Even a ban on coffee drinking in the 18th century couldn't force the Finns to abstain from it. Coffee snuffers made raids sniffing the air in houses, and if they smelled coffee aroma the master of the house was fined.

Dinner at the commune was served at twelve o'clock. Pots of meat soup, bread, butter, skim milk, and buttermilk were set on the tables. On days when an animal was slaughtered a "rich pea soup" was prepared and served with blood pancakes. These kinds of dishes were unfamiliar for our Karelian members. They hadn't used the blood for culinary; this nourishing stuff had been wasted away. Neither had they made use of beestings, the first fluid just after birth of the calf, which is rich in protein. Our cooks made of it a delicious baked cheese. But there is a time and a place for everything and our Karelians became accustomed to many Finnish foods. On Sundays, for a change, the menu was more varied. After dinner people rested for an hour and at 1:30 p.m. they went back to work.

At six in the evening the gong boomed the last time announcing the end of the working day. People hurried to tidy themselves and to have supper. Boiled potatoes with gravy or casseroles, vegetables, butter, milk, buttermilk and bread were laid on the tables.

Whoever didn't feel tired spent the rest of the evening in the common room reading newspapers, listening to the radio, a gift from the government of Karelia, playing games, and shooting pool. My father was good at checkers and taught

Douglas and me to play. Adults talked shop, exchanging views about the day's events. The room was warm and so was the atmosphere. The smell of the fresh baked rye bread and shavings made for a cozy and secure feeling.

The Karelian administration closely followed the progress of our commune. Visiting the commune they perceived the diligence of these self-effacing trail-blazers and gave them assistance.

The commune was exempted from taxes for five years, granted a 2% loan for ten years, and permitted to use a paid workforce. This considerate attentiveness to the commune's needs was inspiring, and people were determined to show, that they were capable of achieving their goal.

Journalists, writers, and painters visited our commune, among them the Danish writer M. Andersen-Nexo and a Russian one named I. Ehrenburg. The Russian painter O. Zhudina and the German H. Vogeler showed in their works in progress; Zhudina painted portraits of several communards. The Karelian

Dining room, kitchen and bakery during the construction (Courtesy of the National Archive of the Republic of Karelia).

Water tower (Courtesy of the National Archive of the Republic of Karelia).

writers L. Luoto and E. Parras stayed in commune for a time collecting material for their books about the commune. As a result Luoto wrote a book Lakeuksien Aunus (Plains of Olonets) and Parras wrote Syvän vaon kuntäjät (The Plowmen of the Deep Furrow).

Relations with Neighbors

Communards were anxious to develop friendly relationships with their neighbors, but everything didn't go so smoothly at first. A portion of the land that the commune now owned had been used by villagers as a pasture, free of charge,

and they weren't willing to cede it to the commune. Demonstrating resistance certain villagers exercised slowdown tactics in surveying, and occasionally blocked up the shortest way to the commune's site. At the same time they were very curious to learn about us. They wondered who we were and where we had come from. When they heard, that we had come from America, they thought we were capitalists. There were also some people who tried to undermine the popularity of the commune by spreading rumors about a lot of gold and soviet currency in the commune's possession. However, most people didn't take these claims seriously. Misunderstandings vanished over time when our neighbors realized that we were ready to help them both in providing advice and in acts of assistance. The result was that warm connections were forged between the newcomers and the peasants.

Cowshed (Courtesy of the National Archive of the Republic of Karelia).

Visiting the Fall Market

A big fall fair was held in Olonets. Our people looked forward to it to stock groceries and vegetables for a long winter and spring time, to buy useful utensils, personal belongings and items to decorate and make our rooms cozier. We were quite taken by what we saw. This outdoor bazaar was spread out over a large area in the backyards of the main street shops. It was quite a spectacular view, a sight for sore eyes. Stalls with every kind of artisan works, items made of wood, clay, colored paper, leather, wool, and metal were all around the place. Fairly traded ceramic dishes, rich in ornamentation, flowerpots, toys made of wood like matryoshkas (sets of nested dolls) and clay whistles shaped like roosters were beckoning and we got to choose the one we liked best! Entertainment facilities were located in the center of the market. A colorful carousel attracted children and a cheerful atmosphere surrounded it. Foodstuff and vegetables were piled on trestle tables at the edge of the market. The choice of vegetables wasn't big – cabbage, carrots, beets, onions and potatoes. Fruits were completely missing.

When we had explored the whole place, and I had ridden a horse on the merry-go-round, we did some shopping. Winter was getting closer and we needed to get warm footwear. Looking around we found the stands where knitwear, needlework and footwear were sold. Very popular winter footwear in Northern Russia are valenki, boots made of felted wool, lacking heels and attached soles, just like Christmas stockings. We bought three pairs of these felt boots. Mother chose black ones; father and I took light brown with red decorations. We also purchased pots for flowers, a sledge made of wood and two pairs of skis (one for my parents and one for me.) My skis were decorated with figures burned on the surface of the skis, I liked them and they served me for many years. At last everybody was ready to go home, and as soon as our purchases were loaded into the carriage we pulled away heading for home.

We arrived in Russia when the most difficult post-revolutionary times had passed and the country had entered into the new era, that of the New Economic Policy (NEP). Prior to NEP there had been the War Communism period, promoted by Lenin during the first years of the Soviet Union, when mass starvation had stalked the cities. War Communism was a system of central economic management. Industry, banks and trade were nationalized, compulsory labor was used and grain in the countryside was confiscated. The program couldn't revive the badly deteriorated economy and it was replaced by NEP at the 10th Party Congress in 1921. It lasted until 1928. NEP permitted private management of small industry and limited private enterprises, as well as loosened restrictions on private trade. To boost production and gain the support of the peasantry, forced requisitions of grain were replaced with a tax. Small farms of limited acreage were legalized, but land could neither be bought nor sold.

Peasants were allowed to sell their output on the open market. NEP boosted private businesses in Karelia.

Olonets fall fair was a good example of economic survival of this new socialist state. I remember a dwarfish sidewalk-vendor named Ipa. His articles were candies and other sweets wrapped in colorful papers and sold by the piece. They were placed on trays, neatly arranged on cartoon boxes. Kids hung around him. We were Ipa's best customers. My father dubbed him a "little capitalist."

Ready to Meet the Karelian Winter

Our potato patch had yielded a good crop so we were provided with potatoes, which along with the vegetables that we bought at the fall market, lasted for the whole winter. The hay barn was heaped up with good quality hay for our domestic animals; firewood was stockpiled, and all the necessary preparations were made to meet the Karelian winter, which we had been told was as cold as that in Cobalt. When the ground froze, the land clearing works were suspended until spring. Now construction could be sped up. There were plans to build another house to settle the last group of the members who were coming from Cobalt in the spring and a big cowshed for the cattle bought in Finland and expected to arrive in the fall.

Douglas and I didn't go to school that winter because we were below school-age. In those days children were enrolled at school at the age of eight in Russia. One Sunday morning my father remarked: "Seems that winter has come. It's high time to prepare for skiing." He fixed fastenings (leather strips) to skis and adjusted them to our felt boots. There were then neither ski boots nor safety bindings.

We made a fire in the yard to tar the bottoms of the skis to get them to slide, and then we gave our skis a try-out. The sliding was perfect although we didn't have ski wax and had polished our skis with candle stubs. But the sliding was too good for me as my skis crossed each other and time and again I found myself lying on the ground. We had a lot of fun, but then father told me seriously: "You must learn to ski well. The school you are going to attend is right across these fields and bushes on the outskirts of Olonets. You and Douglas can get there on skis, when the weather permits. It isn't far away from here, about one kilometer, but walking to school by way of Olonets the distance is three times as long." I kept this in my mind and tried my best to improve my skiing skills. In late November and in December the daylight shrinks almost to nothing in the Northern European countries. I spent most of my time indoors.

Celebrating the Orthodox Christmas and Easter

A memorable occasion of our first winter in Karelia was celebrating a Russian Orthodox Christmas with a Karelian family, one of our neighbors. When we entered their house we noticed that the windows were tightly covered with blankets. The host explained that after the October Revolution all religious festivals were banned and people celebrated them behind darkened windows. The house was cleaned for the Christmas; unpainted floors had been scrubbed out with sand to sparkling white.

A Christmas tree was decorated with paper flowers and chains; candies in shiny colored wrappings, cookies and some straw ornaments were hung on the tree. I can't remember much of the Christmas menu except for Karelian pastries called kalitkas. These open pasties with crimped edges are made of a thinly rolled out rye crust filled with mashed potatoes, millet or barley porridge and greased generously with sour cream and butter. A tasty treat. We children played round the Christmas tree, and at the end of the party we were allowed to pick the goodies off the tree. Wishes of good health and prosperity were uttered mutually, and we said goodbye to our hospitable hosts. It was fantastic to ride home in a sleigh that frosty Christmas night.

Religious people in the Soviet Union longed to celebrate Christmas. In the middle of 1935 officials reconsidered their tactics concerning the fir tree. It was proclaimed an attribute of the New Year's festivities having no relation to Christmas, and thus such trees were permitted. Even Santa Claus was revived, now called in Russian Ded Moroz (Grandfather Frost). People all around the country rejoiced. But not everything went smoothly. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn tells in *The Gulag Archipelago*, NKVD (later KGB) arrested thirty teachers in Sverdlovsk in 1936 for arranging New Year festivities with decorated fir trees. They were accused of planning to burn the schools. Nevertheless, the New Year festivities with a decorated fir tree and a Ded Moroz became a favorite festival in the Soviet Union. Clubs, workplaces, and every kind of organizations held fir tree parties for children with entertaining programs and gifts.

That spring we were invited by the Yllönen villagers to another annual Christian festival, Pascha (Easter). Our ladies had learned about Paschal customs. Rauha, the cook, was enthusiastic over the egg changing tradition, when eggs were cracked with a partner and pronounced: "Christ has resurrected" and after that the partners kissed each other. She said playfully, "Why should we miss the opportunity to be kissed by those nice young men and have fun for a change." On Pascha we went to the village to join the feast. Housewives had baked every kind of pirogi (pies). Mountains of them were laid on the table. In the centre of the table main Orthodox culinary articles – the Kulitch (a spicy cake), the Pascha (a curd dish shaped into a steady cone) and colored eggs were placed. After enjoying the abundant meal people gathered on the bridge to dance and have fun exchanging eggs.

A colored egg is one of the main attributes of Easter. As legend has it the first Easter egg was given to the Roman emperor Tiberius by Mary Magdalene. She had handed him an egg with the words: "Christ has been resurrected." The emperor had answered, "The dead can't get alive like this white egg cannot turn red." He hadn't managed to finish his words when before everybody's eyes the egg had turned bright red. Ever since then colored eggs, especially red ones, are regarded by Christians as a symbol of the resurrection of Jesus. Eggs were considered to have a magical significance in ancient times. Eggs made of clay and marble have been found in pre-Christian burials. In Etruscan crypts ostrich and hen eggs have been found. Legends about eggs as a symbol of life, renovation, a source of everything in the Earth are contained in myths of various peoples around the world. in the Kalevala, the epic of the Finnish and Karelian people, an egg is portrayed as a symbol of creation of the world. That book paints a picture of a scaup which flies over the rolling waters looking for a place to build her nest. The mother of the water seeing the troubled bird raises her knee above the surface to give the bird a nesting place. The scaup takes the kneecap from a tussock moth, builds her nest and lays six golden eggs and one of iron. The knee gets heated up, mother of the water jerks it, and eggs roll in water and break. The lower part becomes the earth, the upper part the sky while the yolks make the sun, the whites form the moon, and the brighter bits of egg make the stars of heaven. How picturesque was the conception of the world by our ancestors!

Karl Faberge, a jeweler, created for tsars Alexander III and Nikolai II fifty-four fine jewelry pieces of Easter eggs and they were never reproduced. After the 1917 revolution the Bolshevik government sold valuable works of art abroad, including the most of Faberge eggs in order to get hard currency.

That winter some cases of scarlet fever were detected in Olonets, and soon it attacked us too. Douglas was laid up with it, and then his little brother, Norman, got infected. We were put in quarantine for six weeks. Fortunately the boys fully recovered from their illness and our life went back to normal again. Winter was almost over, but the hard crust of snow was still firm enough to support the skier. In the depths of winter father and I had laid the ski track from our yard to the back yard of our school-to-be. Douglas and I made a good use of the track. We even timed the trip to determine how long it would take to get to school.

Awaiting the Last Group from Cobalt

Communards were busy building the second house. It was to be two-storied, combining residential rooms with a dairy and two stockrooms. The last group, the Kulmalas, a married childless couple, and bachelors Edward Kaski, Nikki

Tuulos, Eino Stenfors and Hemppa Suomijarvi arrived in the summer. Toko's wife Aliina and their daughter weren't among them. She had broken her word about coming and sent a message to Väinö to go on with his life without them. Everybody was shocked by such treachery. The cargo (another tractor, a thrasher, a mill and some machinery for land clearing) was expected to arrive that summer, too.

The house was ready to receive the newcomers and they settled down in it when they arrived. By that time Karelian young women Olga Nikitina, Pasha Tshetshujeva, Pasha Titova, Anna Luzgina and Tanja had joined the commune. They had been living in the village but now they moved into that new house. The construction of the big cowshed resumed with fresh manpower. The goal was to finish it by fall. The commune had purchased eight cows of an Eastern Finnish breed and they were due to arrive in the fall. At the same time the land clearing was going on. Rooting up the tree stumps and loosening the ground needed modern machinery. The workers waited impatiently for the equipment from Canada to arrive. It finally appeared in the summer. Machines buzzed on the clearings around the clock during that summer and fall. It was clear that this virgin soil needed to be drained and fertilized. To drain it, many ditches had to be dug.

My father was responsible for the reclamation of the land and was dubbed River Master. Every night after his work on the construction site he sat down at the chart of the commune's lands considering how to make this wasteland capable of being cultivated. He planned the drainage system: first of all, the main ditch across the land, to which the covered drains would carry their water, was to be dug. That summer, my father and his partner Hjalmar Uusitalo were busy digging the main ditch. I used to take them coffee and sandwiches. They didn't want to waste their time walking home for the ten o'clock coffee break.

The main ditch was wide and deep. I looked at my father and his partner shoveling rhythmically, plunging their shovels into the hard clay soil with astonishing efficiency. They were shoulder deep in the ditch. During the summer they dug about two kilometers of the big ditch, and, as my mother said, sweated their guts out doing that heavy work. Every night before bedtime father laid himself on the floor and I marched on his back to relieve his back pain, as I had done in Canada. Altogether on the commune's lands workers dug twenty kilometers of ditches. To enrich that nutrient-poor soil and make the land living it was essential to find peat, which also absorbs moisture. Thus, two birds could be killed with one stone, even three birds – the dried peat also makes good bedding for the cattle. Lahti, the chairman, and my father set out to look for a peat bog. They found an ancient swamp where peat could be hoed. Tons of peat were excavated and dried on that swamp which bore the romantic name of Swan Marsh (Luikkusuo).

Our Commune Moves Towards Its Main Goal: Dairy Farming

The "Säde" members had come to the conclusion that the most profitable use of their lands would be dairy farming. That's why they had bought those pedigree cows from Finland. The construction of the big cowshed was completed on time. It was built in a practical way, but was also capacious, warm, and light. The upper part of it was used for storing the hay. The cattle were placed in the lower part. In the middle of the shed, from one end to the other stretched a platform to which hay was dropped from the top. On both sides of this "table" ran spouts to which silo, cattle-oilcakes, concentrated green fodder and turnip was distributed. Each cow had its own water which was fixed to the "table". Cows were chained up on both sides of the platform, separated from each other by bars. Narrow channels carried urine into a special well, dung was collected from them and carted to the shed added to the cattle yard. Nothing was wasted to make the fields fertile.

We were expecting the cattle to arrive from day to day. At long last we saw them walking along the newly built road and rushed to meet them. These small-ish thoroughbred cows were hornless, reddish-brown with white spots. They were marching towards us bellowing. And then we saw something peculiar: they were wearing on their hooves covers, like slippers. Kaarlo Kannas, the stockman who drove the cattle, explained that he had ordered those covers to protect the cows' feet on the icy and cloddy road. Describing the journey, he told that from Finland to the border they had ridden by train, and then, with a twinkle in his eye added: "After crossing the frontier where the chairman met us we continued our way on Shank's mare for more than fifty kilometers." Kannas told that he couldn't run a risk of driving a bull with a cow herd; the pedigree bull arrived later.

Messu, the bull, was a big muscular red-hot guy. Cattle tenders were scared of him. Only one man, Herman Suomijärvi (nicknamed Hemppa) ventured to approach the bull and look after him. Messu got accustomed to Herman's mild ways with him and even showed a liking for him. Herman was a stable boy and could drop occasionally into the cow-shed to take care of the bull. Herman brushed the bull every day and Messu looked well groomed. It was quite a sight when Herman walked the bull. Messu stepped obediently behind Herman on a short leash almost touching his bottom. When asked why he kept the leash so short Herman noted that it prevented the bull from taking run-ups. It really took character to walk that unpredictable animal.

Hemppa was a stout young man, cool and collected, with rosy cheeks and a kind expression. He was always dressed up when he went to the town to do some shopping. We were often asked what that capitalist was doing in our commune. It was rumored that he was rich since he bought expensive stuff like fine wines. Indeed, now and then Hemppa called the ladies of the house

Cattlebreeder Kaarlo Kannas and the bull Messu (Courtesy of the National Archive of the Republic of Karelia).

to drop in to sip some sweet wine. When mother told about those samplings father playfully remarked, "Don't you ladies get drunk at those parties or you'll be castigated." Hemppa was friendly with kids and he never ignored us. Being conversant with animal care he put us wise to dealing with animals.

Messu's offspring raised not only the commune's but also the neighboring village's pedigree livestock. The commune's herd consisted of bred and native stock. Some of the native cows had been purchased, some had been acquired by doing a swap. Once a woman walked a cow to our yard and asked to take it for slaughter and to give her a milk cow. She told us that the cow milked only one liter a day after calving and they had five children to feed. The woman was given a milk cow. Her cow was washed, brushed and fed properly and as a result her milk output increased and after calving she gave 27 liters of milk a day. Another cow, a Manka, acquired also by switching, after proper tending gave even better results, 29 liters of milk a day. Thus it was shown that native cows could be very productive when they were taken good care of. The commune's cattle were tended according to the instructions of the cattle-breeder Kangas who had been qualified professionally in Finland. He scheduled the milking and feeding times, the rations, and kept an eye on cleanliness and order.

In spring some plots had been cultivated and sown with hay species like clover, timothy, and vetch to provide the cattle with forage during the fall and winter. A piggery was built next to the cattle-yard. Three pedigree sows and a boar were first to occupy the pens. Those sows were extremely prolific: they bore piglets by 25-27 at one go twice a year.

Losses and Gains in the Membership of the Commune

The amount of work increased. The small group of members was struggling to get the work done well and on time. Besides, the commune had lost two capable men. Väinö Toko, whose wife had stayed in Cobalt, married a Karelian woman who had a household of her own. Because she didn't want to move away, Toko left the commune. Then we lost Leonard Holm. He passed away putting out a fire. The chauffeur of the Olonets executive committee had become ill and nobody there could drive a car to bring some bosses from Lodeinoye Pole to Olonets. Holm was asked to do the job. Back in Olonets, Holm had put the car

My father playing checkers.

in the garage and started to walk home. On his way he looked back and saw the glow of a fire. He ran to town. The garage was burning. Firemen used a hand pump. Holm had grabbed the handle and pumped until he collapsed. His tragic death was an irreplaceable loss, and we all were shaken by it.

The taxing life style wasn't bearable for everyone so some families moved away looking for a more comfortable life. Also a few amorous relationships broke up families and the divorced usually left the commune. That being said, the commune had become known all over Karelia. People sent applications to join it. New members were desperately needed, but there was no place to house them. Paid workers were trying the commune's finances since every penny was saved up to invest in the commune. We worked for bread and butter.

The construction of the new dwelling was completed in 1928.There were sixteen rooms for living (afterwards big rooms were split in half to get more housing), recreation and offices. A few families (the Kuokkas, Lehmukses, Rokkas, Rajalas, Tomminens, Heggstroms) from the vicinity and the Tervos from Uhtua in North Karelia joined the commune. These families had small children, and the question of day care came up.

Starting School

With September drawing near I got a bit agitated. There was no Finnish elementary school in Olonets, so Douglas and I were enrolled to a Russian school. My parents and I visited the school in August and got to know my teacher-to-be. Her name was Glafira Nikolayevna Krylova. She was Russian but spoke fluent Karelian. She told us what school supplies we should buy and showed us my classroom. It was a big and light room. Desks, each for two students, were standing in three rows, they were painted black. The bench and the desk were joined to each other. The desk could be opened rising the top under which was a shelf to keep a bag. Nikolayevna assured my parents that she would take care of Douglas and me and give us additional instruction after school.

After visiting the school we walked to the center of Olonets to buy the necessary school supplies. The teacher had told that textbooks and the basic items such as notebooks, pens and pencils were free, so we needn't buy them. First we looked for a school bag. The selection was very limited. The bag we bought was made of cardboard covered with grey material outside and striped material inside. There were straps to carry it on one's back. We also bought a pencil box, crayons, water colors and erasers.

On September 1 our chairman, having some business to do in the town gave us a lift to our school. While the horse trotted along the road I tried to picture to

myself what I should do after entering the classroom. Not comprehending the Russian language made me uncomfortable. My mind was calmed down when I caught up with the girls I had made friends with living in the village the year before. Most of the students were Russians, some Karelians, two Tartars and we two Finns. In short, the class was a mixed bag of about thirty students.

The bell rang and our teacher entered room. Some of the smartest students had already chosen their desks and desk mates. Nikolayevna made me sit next to Vera Grigoryeva, whose parents she knew well. Vera didn't speak Karelian. When everybody was seated textbooks, exercise books and pencils were handed out. The lesson began. I didn't understand anything, and it made me timid. Vera was very helpful and showed me what to do. The first day in school is one of the most stressful times in a child's life. For Douglas and me the language issue wasn't the only concern; the unfamiliar environment also made us also feel ill-at-ease.

The school day began at nine in the morning and lasted up to one in the afternoon. The curriculum included reading, writing, arithmetic, singing, drawing and handicraft lessons. Arithmetic wasn't a problem for me since I had learned the rudiments of it attending the first grade in Cobalt. Learning to write and read Russian was more complicated. It was a bigger challenge for us, non-Russians, than for the Russian children who could guess the word after recognizing its first letters. The Russian language uses the Cyrillic alphabet attributed to Saint Cyril, 9th century apostle to the Slavs. Some of the letters are similar in sight and sound to Latin character, but some are quite different. It was all new to Douglas and me. Step by step we got through this maze of letters and sounds.

At breaks we stayed indoors, but during long recesses we went into the yard. There was no sports ground and neither did we have physical training lessons. Instead, we stretched out while playing games. After a while I didn't find myself anymore alone in these new circumstances. I made friends with some Karelian girls. They weren't fluent in Russian and preferred to speak in a language I understood. When our teacher heard us speaking Karelian she strictly advised the girls to speak only Russian with me.

We had our lunch in the dining room. Everybody brought a bottle of milk and bread from home. I had a lunch box while the others wrapped their sandwiches in old newspapers. Some country children had thick slices of soft dark rye bread moistened with melted fine sugar. We were in the habit of exchanging sandwiches, and I liked the smell and taste of those sweet and sour chunks. Hot vegetable meals were served at lunch. They were made from produce grown on the school's garden plot along the Olonka River, opposite our school. Students were scheduled to work in the garden a few days during the summer, weeding and watering the plants. Grasshoppers whirring and dragonflies soaring brought some variety to the tiresome work, but mosquitoes were a real a cause of trouble. After finishing the task we took pleasure in plunging into the river to refresh our-

selves. All those difficulties were forgotten in fall when the crop was gathered and we took pride in knowing that we had helped to produce our lunches.

Bullying wasn't generally overly harsh at school. Troublemaking mostly involved some mischievous tricks like tripping, pushing and teasing. Being told by the teacher to stay after classes was taken as a punishment, a shameful occurrence and abusers made use of it. Because Glafira Nikolayevna gave Douglas and me extra help after classes, we were often teased by some bullies. Vocal bullying was tougher to put up with. My language blunders aroused mockery often reducing me to tears. At the same time it was a lesson for me. I tried not to repeat those mistakes and my lack of confidence little by little melted away.

Our outfits also provoked interest for obvious reason: they differed too much from other children's wear. A boy named Ivanov excelled in devising ways to sully my clothes. Once as I was washing my hands at the washstand (there were no running water) he came up and accused me of dropping the soap into a slop pail, something I hadn't done. "You must dig it up", he said and pushed my arm into dirty water. It made me sick and my pink sweater got badly soiled.

I had a very dear friend Polya Averkiyeva. She was very determined and brave. Polya used to chase those bullies away and they were afraid of her. She lived in Olonets. Every morning I dropped in and we walked to school together. Our friendship lasted past the school years extending through all of our lives until she passed away.

Having arrived from completely different circumstances we experienced a new and exciting life in that strange language and cultural environment. There was a lot to learn! To improve one's Russian language skills a student must get help and support not only at school but also in everyday life. My father backed up my interest in reading Russian books for children and bought them for me. When I grew older he asked me to translate from Russian into Finnish stories from my textbooks. Once when I was in the fourth grade, to my amazement father brought a book about growing potatoes in Karelia and asked me to translate it into Finnish. I wasn't much interested in applying my mind to such subject. Nevertheless, I sat with father and we studied that potato book hoping to get help in growing good quality spuds on that clay soil. I think father heeded the advice of that book because potatoes in the following years tasted better.

Our Road to School

As father had told me, there were two routes to school from our place: a straight path across the fields a little more than one kilometer and a round-about way via the centre of Olonets which was much longer. Douglas and I traveled to

school together. We used the short way in fall and spring when it was dry, and in winter, when the weather permitted we took that shortcut on our skis. I often am amazed at how hardy we were. Rain or shine we had to take to the road. In fall the wind was often harsh, and walking along the road we had to shield our face from dust eddies which swept across it. Rainy days were unpleasant. Mother insisted that I put on my raincoat which made me a constant laughing stock of other students. Approaching the school I took it off and tried to sneak to the cloak-room as fast as possible. When the weather turned cool and there was little snow, the fact that it squeaked under our feet made us walk faster. Sometimes we were lucky to get a ride on a passing sleigh. Kind carters might cry to us: "Hop on the runners!" Unfriendly ones would shake their fists at us and tell us to clear off when we leaped on runners without permission. When the weather got very bad the stable man drove us to school. Walking was a good way to fit physical activity into our day, but it was also tiring. If we had bikes ... But to get a bike was beyond all expectations. There were no bikes for sale at that time, and even if they would be available our parents couldn't afford to buy them.

My First Teacher

Primary school in Russia was a four year course of study and all subjects were taught by one teacher.

I was lucky to have a person like Glafira Nikolayevna Krylova as my first teacher. Thanks to my exacting and understanding teacher I picked up the Russian language swiftly and gained proficiency in it. Her image has lasted throughout my entire life. As a teacher she was very strict. The discipline was rigid, but we all were very fond of her. Nikolayevna's pedagogic efficiency was exceptional. We were given a good knowledge of basic subjects, instructed in intelligible speaking and expressive reading. She always stressed how important it was to read good literature. I started to read Russian fairy-tales and adventure stories already in the second grade. There was a children's library in Olonets where I borrowed books written by the Grimm brothers, Jules Verne, Hans Christian Andersen, Mark Twain, Daniel Defoe and other Western writers translated into Russian. Out teacher's attitude towards us was motherly. She constantly kept looking after our health and cleanliness.

During reading lessons she used to call out a student to her table to read aloud. Before starting Nikolayevna examined each student's hands and ears, and if they were dirty the student was sent to clean them up. Following the reading our trim teacher searched the students' heads hoping (I guess) not to find any

lice. This kind of training in hygiene yielded good results. She paid incredible attention to healthy communication with our parents.

Our teacher was always dressed perfectly, her hair nicely trimmed, and when she walked by in the classroom we gasped at the scent of her perfume. We girls, among ourselves often discussed what we wanted to be when we grew up. Most of us wanted to be teachers. Without a doubt, this idea was aroused by our teacher. I was very much attached to her and had a connection with her until she passed away.

I have never forgotten one unpleasant event when I wasn't on my best behavior. Vera and I had a bad habit of chatting during our lessons and Glafira Nikolayevna had to shut us up every now and then. Once when we were discussing something important from our point of view our teacher called our attention, but we didn't obey. We were separated. My new partner was Kostja who had running nose. I got very upset and told my teacher: "I won't bring you butter anymore." The fact was that the commune sold fresh churned butter to Olonets residents at a low price and it was in high demand. Our teacher bought it regularly, and I was the distributor. "Just as you please," she answered. After that incident I was very ashamed of myself and apologized. At first Nikolayevna gave me a piece of her mind and then accepted my apology. This episode stuck in both of our memories so deeply that we recalled it and laughed even at our last meeting.

I finished primary school in 1931. There was no Finnish general education school in Olonets and I was enrolled in a Finnish secondary school in Petrozavodsk. My happy schooldays at home were over. I wondered what was awaiting me in that big town so far away from home.

Our Commune Is Moving on and Winning Renown

By 1929, in less than four years, the small body of communards had cultivated the swampy waste land and a new successful place had arisen. There were three residential houses, a cook-house with a large dining room, kitchen and a bakery, sauna, cowshed, piggery, stable, silo tower, smithy, sawmill, shed for machinery, garage, storehouse for potatoes and vegetables, drying barn, storehouse with a granary mill, dairy and eight hay barns on the fields. A road to Olonets and a sidewalk were built. The electric line was laid from Olonets' power plant to the commune. Communards had put down firm roots in their new homeland. The high level of motivation of the commune members and their determination to carry out what they had decided to achieve had brought prosperity to the household. They had endured humble living, plain food and

slight income because they believed in a better future. They regarded the commune as their own household.

Those peasants who had laughed at the supposedly ridiculous location they had chosen only shook their heads. It was hard for them to understand the guiding principles of those gutsy pioneers. But the communards themselves had a clear idea of those principles. Their aim was self-sufficiency, achieving a good life and supporting the development of Karelian agriculture. There were now practically all the preconditions to fulfill those far-sighted goals, including manpower. More people were needed to run the household, but as it turned out it wasn't a problem getting new members.

The commune had become well-known all over Karelia and other regions of the Russian Federation. Newspapers, magazines and radio described commune's attainments, such as the incredible grain and hay crops and high milking yields. It was stressed that these results were reached by hard labor, sound business practices, and a good work ethic among the members. "Säde" was said to be a model of cultivated farming and a new way of life, a pearl among the Karelian collective farms.

Ivan Petrov, an agronomist at the Karelian Collective Farmers' Union, was well informed about the commune. He wrote articles about it and in 1930 published a book in which he gave a detailed description of the state of affairs in commune. In his opinion the feedback in the 1928-1929 accounting period was astonishing: dairying had made a 2,147 rubles profit. The annual milking of the best cows was 3,370 kilograms and on average 2,500 kilograms while local cows yielded on average 800 kilograms. The grain crop had made a 3,825 rubles profit. Comparing the yields per hectare with the local results, it appeared to be much higher: oats 3,670 kg. vs. 930 kg.; barley 2,538 vs. 800 kg.; clover 4,600 kg vs. 2620 kg.; swede 55,000 vs. 27,800 kg. Thanks to the efficiency and of high quality of seed production costs were considerably lower than market prices. Summarizing, Ivan Petrov stated that the members of the commune had done an admirable work in building socialistic agriculture.

The leadership of the Soviet Union focused on building socialistic agriculture. In 1927 at the 14th Congress of All-Union Communist Party, the collectivization of the country's agriculture was proscribed. It was said that individual farming could not serve as a reliable support for the proletariat dictatorship. The building of socialism assumed that the small-scale farmers' commodities were to be replaced by large scale mechanized production which could raise its output to the level required by the country and overcome the backwardness of Russian agriculture.

It was also announced that the building of socialism presupposed eliminating the breeding ground for capitalist elements, which included the kulaks (well-to-do peasants who owned more than one cow or one horse and used paid labor were called "kulaks", which meant "fists").

The idea that a rich exploiting class existed in villages in those days seems doubtful. Landowners and rich farmers who had used paid workers had been liquidated earlier, after the Revolution of 1917. The well-to-do farmers in the late twenties were those enterprising ones who had prospered under the NEP. Attacks were launched against them. V.M. Molotov, Stalin's comrade-in-arms, planned the destruction of "kulaks". Millions were stripped of their possessions, displaced from their homes, sent to the Gulag, and deported to Siberia, Kazakhstan and northern parts of Russia. Houses of the deported were handed to the village paupers who supported the government's actions. George Bernard Shaw's remark: "A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul" characterizes vividly the Soviet collectivization policy of those days.

My mother-in-law who lived in Orlovskaya region, which is called "a black earth belt of Russia" told me about their neighbor who had been given the house and the plot of a deported family. Within a short time the new owner had managed to ruin the whole household. At first he had sold the tin roof replacing it by thatch; then he had cut down oaks and sold them. Soon he was as poor as before.

Collectivization was met with considerable resistance. Farmers didn't want to give up their lands, socialize their livestock and means of production. There were local insurrections, including the mass slaughter of farm animals. To escape the forced collectivization or deportation farmers moved illegally to cities. The countryside lost about 20 million people through arrests, deportations and migration. Stalin and his supporters declared a "class war" to provide a stimulus to the collectivization process. Into the countryside OGPU (later the KGB) expeditions were sent to crush the farmers. Forced collectivization resulted in disastrous decline in agricultural output which led to shortages of grain. To feed urban populations a campaign of ruthless grain requisition was conducted by squads in the grain growing areas. As a result a large-scale famine spread there. Ukraine suffered the most when over the winter of 1932-33 about 7 to 10 million starved to death; in the North Caucasus and the lower Volga area 2-3 million died.

Meanwhile the organized kolkhozes ran into serious difficulties based on their low level of technical skill, low labor productivity, insufficient organizational know-how, a shortage of trained cadres and almost total absence of the necessary experts, not to mention the lack of motivation to work hard. State aid to kolkhozes through credits, supplying some machinery and tools, tax exemptions, and even those thousands of advanced workers sent from cities on permanent assignment to work in kolkhozes couldn't make them capable of marketing the necessary quantities of products.

When collectivization was started tractors were bought from abroad. There wasn't much industrial agriculture in the Soviet Union at that time. The first tractor plant, Krasnyi Putilovets in Leningrad, opened in 1924. Other plants were put into operation in Stalingrad in 1930, in Kharkov in 1931, and in Chelyabinsk

in 1933. To serve the needs of kolkhozes the MTS (Machine-Tractor Station) system was established in 1929. Despite this, the reality was that the kolkhozes had neither a proper organizational or economic basis nor adequate human recourses to meet the unrealistic expectations of the Soviet leadership. Faced with an economic disaster brought by forced collectivization, Stalin wrote an article "Dizzy from Success" in which he blamed local officials for departing from the voluntary principle in collectivization.

The result of that article was unexpected: 50 million peasants left kolkhozes. They were delighted, but the pleasures didn't last long. Soon they felt the pressure directed at them: they were allotted the most unfit plots of land, large grain quotas and fines were imposed on them and they were deprived of ration cards. Life became so arduous that they had to rejoin the kolkhozes. Some of the communist leaders, such as N. Bukharin, A. Rykov, M. Tomsky, opposed the accelerated formation of kolkhozes and called for an end to extraordinary measures in the countryside. They saw that the terror regime was destroying the fruits of the NEP.

They were condemned by the Politburo and afterwards, during the Great Purges, executed.

Collectivization Takes Its Toll in Karelia

In March 1930, the Central Executive Committee and the Council of the Peoples' Commissars passed a decree "about collectivization and the liquidation of the kulaks as a class". By the fall of 1930 there were 150 communes and kolkhozes in Karelia. Members of commune "Säde" took part in promoting propaganda about the advantages of collective farming over individual farming. With a help of our people, two communes were established, one in Olonets, the other in the neighboring village of Nannula. But as time would reveal, most of the Karelian collective farms were on shaky ground and struggled for existence. Their material basis was weak, including the fact that they didn't have proper machinery. Grain crops were reaped by sickle or scythe, threshed by flails or other manual methods; cattle were lost because of poor tending and shortages of hay, and many crops rotted in the fields.

Such mismanagement resulted in low income payments. On the average a kolkhoz member earned 1 ruble 9 kopeks for a workday. There were cases when calculations were conducted arbitrarily. Local administrations appointed chairpersons to kolkhozes. Sometimes it turned out that those appointees were ignorant of agriculture or worse, too fond of the bottle.

After visiting some of those troubled collective farms my straight-speaking father, who had a sense of what was right and proper, exchanged his views

about inefficiency when he had the floor at the meeting. In his opinion the government was wasting money trying to support those feeble collective farms. Individual farms could do much better if they were backed and supported by the government. Afterwards, when the Party cleansing took place, this unorthodox statement was defined as unacceptable and he was expelled from the Communist Party.

The second part of the Karelian government decree on collectivization referred to the sequestration of property and exiling and deporting the "kulaks ". Confiscation was conducted on a large scale: means of production, cattle, food, forage, seed grain, excessive household items and money were taken up. People were left only with the necessities and money in the amount of 500 rubles.

At first the expropriated were allowed to stay in villages. They were assigned to fulfill specified tasks, to hand over to the government farm production and to work on the logging sites. If they didn't carry out those tasks they were refused ration cards to buy manufactured goods (clothes and footwear). In a word, they were put in an awkward position. Villagers were at the mercy of local authorities who often acted arbitrarily.

The Central Executive Committee of Karelia was inundated with farmers' letters complaining about the actions of local officials. In one of the letters a woman, named Gagarina, wrote: "My husband was arrested as a kulak. During all his life he had worked with his calloused hands to sustain his family. His only implements were an ax in winter and a boat-hook in summer. He acquired a house, a cow, a horse and a half of a shared sweep-net. We didn't hire workers. All our possessions were worth 200 rubles". A peasant named Manishev had served in Red Army, and after demobilizing had worked hard to set up a household. He was criticized as a kulak and his property was confiscated. His son, a teacher, was arrested for his comments about Stalin's article "Dizzy from Success". His property was cataloged for auction, his land handed over to the kolkhoz.

Well-to-do farmers were deported to remote parts of the country or sent to settle on barren lands in Karelia. They were allowed to take along only 2 axes, 1 saw, 1 cart, 1 harness, a horse for four households, a plough, 1 harrow, and foodstuffs for two months. Altogether the permitted load was 6 poods (about 100 kg.) per person. They were moved to a fixed location under the OGPU escort. A group of these spets pereselentsy (special resettlers) as they were called, was moved to Kashina Gora (Karelia) in the fall of 1931. They were permitted to take along 50 cows but little forage. By February 1932, thirty-one cows had died.

They were given accommodations in a school building, living in cramped quarters like sardines. Food rations were meager; the able-bodied received flour – 15 kg., sugar – 1.5 kg., groats – 2.5 kg., meat – 2.5 kg., fish – 4 kg., butter –200 gr., and sunflower oil – 400 gr. The disabled weren't provided with food cards at all. Provision for children was unsatisfactory; only sick children were given

milk. Health care and medications were totally lacking. There were no individual cooking facilities as meals were prepared in a small common canteen, where people had to stand in line for long periods of time in order to get their meals The canteen was situated by a river. Upstream of it was the bathhouse, outside toilets and cesspits of the barracks which housed the workmen. All the filth flowed down the river to where the cooking water was drawn.

These special resettlers were denied ration cards for manufactured goods. As a result, their worn-out clothes and footwear didn't protect them in the severe climate.

Some groups of special resettlers were deported to the islands of Lake Onego to work in the "Karel-Granite" mines. The work process was poorly organized, with no real machinery. For this difficult manual labor workers were often shortchanged wages or payments were delayed. Living conditions were inhuman, as workers had to contend with overcrowded barracks that were cold and damp. There is a monument to Lenin in the centre of Petrozavodsk. Admiring that gorgeous monument, viewers probably don't have the faintest idea that hundreds of human lives were sacrificed in those granite quarries to prepare the monoliths for the monument to the great founder of "the Workers' Paradise".

Karelian special resettlers were also sent beyond the Arctic Circle to build the Niva power station. They lived in tents all year round. Conditions for living and working were unbearable. During five months 371 people died, 318 of them were children. The administration didn't consider it necessary to build housing for special resettlers. These deprived people suffered from physical violence and they were under constant emotional stress. Closely guarded, they weren't allowed to leave the settlement without permission and had to rigidly observe the rules set up by the OGPU administration. This was a tragic event in the history of Karelia that had a negative impact not only on those directly targeted, but on people from all walks of life.

Members of "Säde" Struggle On

In late fall of 1930 communards witnessed the deportation of a family which they had known as hard working people. Their property had been confiscated and auctioned and the family had been ordered to leave their home village. A gloomy scene appeared before the communards eyes: frightened children had been seated in the cart, the mother in tears was trying to calm them down while their possessions were sold off. The mere sight of this remorselessness upset our people. "Why is collectivization carried out so brutally? This isn't the way to develop Karelian agriculture," they brooded. A feeling of helplessness pressed

on their minds. But what could they do? "There is no way back, we must move forward, life must go on," they mused. The commune's own household was in a good economic state.

Some Karelian families, including the Steppijevs, the Savins, the Izotovs, Olga Nikitina and Pasha Tshetshujeva, had joined the commune earlier from the neighboring village of Yllönen. They continued to live in their own houses, which was a great help to the commune with a restricted number of rooms. As additional housing was built more new members could be accepted. Many Karelian peasants were eager to join our commune, but not every family was able to pay the membership fee, so it was decided to establish the fund for those with limited means to help them to cope with the fee. New Karelian members were added, such as the Vlasovs, the Ublijevs, the Shalgujevs, the Olhins, the Petrovs, the Trofimovs, the Rudzhijevs, the Vasiljevs, and the Virtas. They arrived from remote villages.

The workforce also grew with the arrival of additional families from North America . Having learned about our commune the Lahtis, the Lepistos, the Longs, the Manninens, Ida Niemi and Jukka, Niemi along with Signe and Budolf (originally from Sweden) and bachelors Harhio, Ojala, Niemi, Pasila, Uusitalo added to the ranks. There were also some supporting members from the Olonets intelligentsia who occasionally worked on the commune's fields for a certain number of hours during the summer. Two of them lived on the premises: bachelors Agafonov, a bookkeeper, and Sakarinen, an agronomist and a teacher.

The membership also started to grow from the inside. The first baby was born to Olga and Nikki Tuulos in 1930.Olga was a Karelian young woman, while Nikki had arrived from Canada. The baby boy was named Toivo (Hope). Our women, Rauha, my mother and especially Elma, who had a baby of her own, were anxious to help and give Olga advice in child care. In those days in Russia a newborn baby's body was wrapped entirely in long narrow bands of cloth, he couldn't move his legs and hands. When Elma saw those long swaddling clothes she brought Olga some diapers and safety pins and showed how to change the baby. Our smith made a bathtub for Toivo. I liked to help Olga bathe the baby. When the baby was ready to go to bed Olga tied me to the rocking chair with Toivo in my lap, while she washed diapers. Toivo usually fell asleep cradled in my arms.

There wasn't any problem with child care until new members with small children arrived. The question of daycare came up, but there was no suitable space for a nursery. The way out of this problem was suddenly found when the small children from the Olonets Finnish Children's' Home visited us and performed. "Our children could get a good upbringing there," decided the parents of preschool children. An agreement was made with the Children's Home and five of the commune's kids were placed there. Our commune paid the costs

and provided the Home with milk, butter, vegetables and meat. The Children's Home wasn't far away and parents could see their children in their spare time. Nevertheless this arrangement wasn't the best one because children and parents missed each other. In a couple of years a house fit for the purpose was bought and transferred to our site. The kindergarten was equipped with furniture and toys, and two teachers were hired.

Gaining New Lines of Work

Now that the commune was firmly standing on its feet and the membership had grown it was much easier to go forward. All along the way communards had had a plan to try to raise wheat; they had pined for white bread and pies during these years of scarcity. This great ambition was fulfilled in late summer in 1930. One fine day my father was all smiles, carrying a small pouch in his hand. "Here is something I want to try on our fields. We have succeeded in growing rye, oats, and barley. Let's see if wheat will adjust to Karelian climate." Those two kilograms of winter wheat seeds were the beginning of wheat cultivation in Karelia. The plot for wheat was chosen by the main ditch behind the smithy, close to the residential buildings. The soil was properly prepared and father sowed the seeds by hand. Everybody was anxious to see how the sowing made it through the winter. In spring when some thawed patches appeared on the field, the earth was covered with vivid green sprouts. The wheat plot was the apple of my father's eye. When the wheat ripened, my parents reaped it with sickles.

Golden-yellow shocks were standing close together on the field. Then the sheaves were taken to the drying barn and threshed with flail. These two kilograms of wheat yielded 34 kilograms. In 1931 the crop wasn't as good because of poor weather; those 34 kg. produced only 1054 kg/ha; in 1932 450 kg were sown and the yield was 3700 kg/ha.

Encouraged by good results with winter wheat, the communards were ready to try their hand at growing spring wheat. They discussed this bold plan with the agronomist Sakarinen who had connections with the Leningrad Experimental Station of the Agricultural Academy. They were interested in testing the possibility of growing spring wheat in northern conditions and allotted 10 kg. of spring wheat to "Säde". "Nothing ventured, nothing gained," the communards thought and sowed the seeds into well-prepared soil. The outcome was amazing. The spring wheat had yielded a good crop, 50% higher than in those more southern areas of Russia. Every year the whole crop was left for seed grain, and a certain amount was handed over to other collective farms. It took some time before white bread was served at the commune's meals.

Contacts with Leningrad's Agricultural Academy went on. In summer time students were trained by the scientists conducting their experiments on the commune's site where a patch and a conservatory with all necessary equipment were put at their disposal. Housing and meals were also provided. I still remember one of the field workers, a pleasant dark-haired young scientist Zhanna Kulyova. I went often to see her and offered my help in small matters and in language problems. The Academy proposed that the commune become their experimental estate, but our people declined the offer.

Undulating fields of wheat were a pleasure to the eye. The most incredible crop of wheat was in 1934. A part of it was milled for own needs. As the harvest festival got closer the kitchen staff was busy baking buns and pies of freshly ground wheat. While the guests and our own people enjoyed the gifts of the fields at the feast the chairman Mr. Siikanen, who had recently returned from Moscow where he had reported on the commune's achievements, gave a short and vivid annual review. The year had been success in every field of work; taxes and contracts had been paid and fulfilled on time. He stressed that good results were achieved thanks to a frantic pace of work, wisdom of planning, and being economical. These words were justified and couldn't been underestimated. The main body of the commune had a solid foundation in farming; their knowledge came from Finnish agricultural experience; traveling around the world they had gained useful manual skills and they were accustomed to discipline and order. Their economic wisdom stressed that time had to be valued and money had to be counted. The entire life of the commune was organized on these principles.

Then the chairman presented the most interesting news: the commune had been awarded a prize consisting of a gold medal and a car. He finished his speech by stating, "In Canada, deep under the ground, in a mine, we often dreamed of fresh air, of the smell of freshly plowed earth, of growing and harvesting crops ... Now our dreams have come true and we are very happy."

The festive tables were adorned with jars of our own honey. A new line of work, beekeeping, had been developed. There was a school in Olonets with an agricultural orientation that had a subsidiary household with dairy farming, some arable land, and an apiary. It happened that the school's administration had difficulties in running the household. They couldn't hire enough workers and did not have the appropriate machinery. Their budget was meager and it didn't cover expenditures. The household was in a terrible condition. They didn't have a cowshed, their cows were placed in peasants' barns, fields were cultivated badly, and the beehives rotted.

The newspaper Punainen Karjala (Red Karelia) described this miserable state of the school's economy in its August 27, 1930 issue. Agronomist Sakarinen fixed the commune administration's attention on this article and gave more infor-

mation about the situation in the school. Members of "Säde" decided to give a helping hand by building a cowshed. The school's thirty cows were temporarily taken care at the commune and students had an opportunity to practice there. In a short time a proper cowshed was built for the school's cows.

The school was also in trouble with bee-keeping and they decided to quit it. Our commune took on those neglected bees and thus the new branch was started. Nehemais Piispanen, one of our oldest members who worked as a carpenter and a voluntary librarian, took responsibility for beekeeping. Under the guidance of Sakarinen he learned the basics of apiculture and continually progressed in the subject by reading the specialized literature. Piispanen constructed practical beehives. He became a good apiarist. Sometimes one could hear sweet tones of the violin from the apiary. It was Piispanen playing there for his bees. Beekeeping became a profitable line in the commune's economy and sweetened our life.

Dealing with Authorities

Dealing with the Olonets Administration required patience. They had adopted a two-edged approach to our commune: on the one hand they were proud that the commune was flourishing, that the crops and the cattle were one of the best in Karelia, that the commune won prizes and diplomas at agricultural exhibitions in Moscow. We served as a model for their propaganda. In 1930 the Olonets authorities organized a conference where the delegates of the entire Olonets region were represented. The chairman of "Säde" was asked to report there on the results of the year. The intention of the meeting was to show to the delegates how well the Olonets plains will reward industriousness and good organization. Siikanen recounted all our achievements. Then the delegates were taken to see the commune's premises. When they had observed the household and seen the light and clean dairy, cowsheds, piggery, canteen, outbuildings, machinery, the living quarters and the vast well-tended fields, the chairman of the meeting told them, "You have seen the model farm, follow their example." One of the delegates answered, "It's impossible for us to achieve what we have seen. We have neither the resources nor the abilities." Olonets leaders stressed that "Säde" was thriving thanks to the Bolshevik style of work under the guidance of the Communist Party and they took credit for it.

On the other hand, these same leaders weren't of help when the commune really needed it. The big problem was in getting clothing and footwear. The local co-op didn't allot the commune their share even of makhorka, the inferior variety of tobacco. Our chairman had to complain about this unfairness

to government officials. Siikanen wrote in his letter, "The local cooperative has a negative attitude towards us, they don't sell us even makhorka (tobacco) to say nothing of other items. Please send us the list and the amount of goods we have the right to buy. We are in urgent need of 17 pairs of men's, 6 pairs of children's and 7 pairs of women's boots. It's hard to work in the fields barefoot, our women are staggering in bare feet, and we can't send our children to school without shoes. We expect a prompt answer and boots." When the situation was discussed my mother remarked, "It's OK to ask for boots, but that makhorka is good for nothing: the smoke is pungent, it smells bad and makes eyes water. Besides, making cigarettes by rolling makhorka up in a piece of newspaper and licking the edges to stick them down isn't healthy at all." My father wasn't really a smoker, but sometimes he rolled up a "goat's leg" and took a puff at it.

Punainen Karjala (Red Karelia) printed an article in August 1930 dealing with the matter. It wrote, "The Olonets Cooperative has imposed a boycott on the commune 'Säde', the oldest and the most advanced commune in Karelia. The communards haven't been sold necessary goods, and they have to work barefoot. This boycott is a criminal act. Are they aiming to hit the most progressed household or is it the manifestation of chauvinism which, as it has been told, is already been shown in Olonets? 'Säde' was founded by internationalists; chauvinists and counterrevolutionaries have been looking askance at its vigorous development and flourishing." In the course of time the local authorities began to control and interfere more and more with the commune's affairs. Two of our men, the first chairman Kalle Lahti and the mechanic Eino Stenfors, were taken from the commune by the local administration to improve their operations, although they were needed in commune. Officials directed plans which didn't coordinate with the commune's own way of planning. There were a lot of do's and don'ts in their instructions. The commune's office was overflowing with orders, directions, questionnaires and schedules requested to be answered and completed promptly. Some of those papers were of little worth and ridiculous, such as asking how many times children were washed in the kindergarten, whether the temperature was taken every morning, and how much produce had been used in a month's time.

This pedantic and patronizing attitude annoyed and even angered our calm chairman Siikanen, who kept saying: "We don't have time to deal with such nonsense, we have to work." Afterward he was accused of sabotage and ignoring the authorities. In addition to his duties as a chairman Siikanen acted as a bookkeeper and took part in labor. Every morning he checked the temperature in the storehouses and grain barns. During the haymaking and harvesting times he was seen in the fields; in springtime and fall he often sat behind the tractor's wheel plowing the soil.

Once, a clerk from the town's executive committee came to get some kind of information. He didn't find the chairman in the office. He encountered

Siikanen's wife who was taking coffee to her husband and told the clerk to come with her. When they reached the field there was only one man driving a tractor. When he drew up to them the clerk said, "I am looking for the chairman, can you take me to him?" "Here I am," the man said with a laugh. The clerk was amazed by seeing a man all covered with dust telling him that he was the chairman. "I must get some information, can we go to the office?" asked the clerk. Siikanen answered that all the figures and important information were in his head so the clerk could take notes on the spot. "I have to finish plowing this field today, and can't waste any time", he explained. The town bosses were also shocked when our chairman arrived at meetings straight from the fields in his work clothes. Siikanen was a man of few words, sober-minded and exacting. He was respected by the commune's members as well as by villagers and city dwellers.

The government approved loans to the commune without hesitation. They knew that the communards were very accurate in dealing with the government. But the promised loans were not always delivered in time and consequently planned works suffered from lack of finances. Now and again the chairman had to remind the authorities about sending the money. "If there is no special reason not to send the money, so would you be kind enough to remit it. The loan was promised long ago for construction," he wrote once in his letter. Shortly after sending the money officials demanded the blueprints. "How can we send them, the architect started to work only a couple of days ago. Please examine the statements we sent and get the picture of how the money is planned to be used. It would be good if your representative come to see everything with his own eyes," the chairman answered. Again in June 1928 he had to remind them about the 1300 ruble loan (financial assistance for new farms) which had been granted in January but hadn't arrived six months later.

There were problems with ordering fertilizer, machinery and materials for construction. "We didn't quite understand that brochure in Russian on acquiring fertilizer. We must know what is offered and the prize before we buy. It would be appreciated if we could get those papers in Finnish." Ordered machines were often mixed up; in some cases they were sent to the wrong address or not sent at all. "We are not going to accept machines we didn't order. We don't need the plow you sent, but please let us know when we shall get the harrow on wheels which we ordered from Finland," Siikanen wrote again. Orders for cement and glass were delayed which put a break on construction activities. Dealing with officials in this jungle of bureaucracy was a constant struggle, and it tried our chairman's patience.

The government acquired produce from agricultural households by so-called contracts, but those contracts were not agreements made by both parties since there were no negotiations. Instead, officials dictated the quotas, prizes and deadlines of the settlement. The state procured the production by low fixed

prices. Compared to market prices they were 100% , 200%, or even lower (butter was bought for 3 rubles per kilo from households and sold for 15 rubles). Payment for procured production was delayed or not paid at all. Our commune didn't receive payment in 1931 for 40,000 liters of milk, 70 piglets and 8000 kg. of grains in. Sometimes households were given receipts for goods instead of money, but it often happened that it was impossible to get stuff against those receipts. "In America we worked for the capitalists, here for the government bosses," was a thought that entered the minds of many communards minds. Nevertheless our commune fulfilled the quotas on time and often in excess of the planned rate.

Obligatory Lumbering

Lumber was one of the main export items in the Soviet Union in those days. Every agricultural household had to engage in the lumber industry according to given plan. Karelia had its own quota. The allotment given to Olonets region from the center was divided up among the households. This obligatory lumbering affected the commune's interests in many ways: important winter jobs could not be done. In 1932 six hundred loads of peat and manure weren't hauled onto the fields, which had a negative effect on the crop.

There was also a problem with clothing. "Working in the deep snow you need a good footwear and waterproof pants, but we don't have them", the communards complained.

Siikanen, turning this problem over in his mind and came up with an odd solution. "Yes, the situation calls for prompt action. There is no clothing on sale in those general shops, but there is Torgsin (a shop where foreign currency or precious metal was taken in payment of the purchases) with a wide selection of goods. We no longer have Canadian dollars, but we have... gold." He went to the dentist and his gold crowns were pulled out and men were equipped with perfect pants sewn of "devil's skin", a robust waterproof material.

"Säde" was given wood lots in Koivahanmägi, Koveri and Ulvana, far from home. Men drove there for a week every Monday, setting off early in the morning with food packed for men and forage for horses; a cook was also part of the team. There were neither canteens nor huts in the logging sites, so our people stayed with the villagers. On Saturdays our loggers, who were sorely missed, were greeted warmly. To our great delight there were always some kinds of goodies in their bags. The timber industry was provided with groceries which weren't available in general stores. After a hard work week the men relaxed in the sauna and took a good rest on Sundays.

"Säde" exceeded the given quotas every year. When the regional logging plan was under the threat of breaking down, communards didn't leave the site although their own bit had already been done. Good results were achieved owing to good equipment (crosscut and buck saws) and rationalizing the process. Communards used their skills and know-how constructing special sleighs, pankkoreki, like those used in Finland. Strong horses safely hauled large loads of logs on these two-piece sleighs; the roads were iced up to make them capable of carrying the weight of the loads. Woodcutters were paid well. The selfless effort of the logging team brought a substantial sum of money to the commune helping to defray various expenses.

Engaging in Social and Cultural Activities in Town

Hard physical work didn't prevent the communards from participating in community activities. They looked forward to socializing from the bottom of their hearts. Members were involved in political activities of the local communist party organization. They helped the Olonets Executive Committee carry out orders and meet quotas set by the Karelian Government in lumbering and agricultural production by exceeding the quotas fixed for the commune thus closing the gap caused by households unable to fulfill their tasks. Communards were also eager to support the state financially subscribing to State Bonds (obligations) more than was required. The Government issued bonds for domestic borrowing every year. A subscription to them was obligatory: every working person was to subscribe an amount equal to one or even two month's salary. The payment was partially withdrawn from one's salary for that year. The obligations in circulation were issued for a 20 years term. They were not freely bought or sold, and could not be presented for redemption. Nor was interest paid. A draw was performed once in a year, and a certain number of obligations won, but it was only a drop in the ocean. After 20 years, the government declared that obligations had lost their force. People were distressed. It is said that bonds were flying over the main street of Leningrad, the Nevsky Prospekt, when people had learned that their obligations were worthless. My parents bonds were destroyed years earlier when the commune had been set on fire in the summer 1941.

The commune's budget provided a certain amount of money to satisfy the spiritual and educational needs of its members. Different circles and social evenings were organized where our people tested their abilities and skills. The Russian language circle was popular. Learners tried their best to understand the mazes of the Russian script and pronunciation which fundamentally differ from the Finnish.

In the early stages of Soviet rule, when everyday life seemed to have been stabilized enthusiasm for building the ideal society drew people to participate in different voluntary organizations. The most popular was Osoaviahim (a society for assistance to the aviation and chemical industries). In fact, OSO was a civil defense organization. Every adult communard was a member of it. Our neighbors, officers of the Finnish Infantry Battalion, taught them how to use arms and held marching drills. It was hard to keep a straight face looking at our ladies when they marched skirts flaring to the rifle range with a gun slung over their shoulders. Those whose efforts were crowned with success were presented with a badge "Voroshilov marksman" (K. Voroshilov was the Minister of Defense).

MOPR (an abbreviation standing for "International Organization to Help the Fighters of the Revolution") was also a mass organization. Lecturers visiting commune described the intolerable conditions of prisoners of conscience in capitalist countries; money was collected for women-prisoners of Tammisaari jail in Finland. Communards also supported the Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations. Public holidays such as Women's Day, the First of May, and the Anniversary of the October Revolution were celebrated with feasts followed by entertainment programs. On Women's Day men created a day fee from work for women by performing their jobs as well as they were able to. Guests from Olonets and the neighboring communes were invited. It is sad to say that sport wasn't cultivated as much as it had been in Canada. There was a small sport ground where in the summer time some team games were played, but otherwise there were few sporting activities. Longing for recreation and fun, the communards made good use of their experience gained in Canada. At first there weren't big musicians among the members and when people felt an urge to dance especially on Saturdays, Mr. Piispanen, a fiddler, and my father who played a mouth organ were asked to provide music and dances were set up.

Once in a while our people went to dances and movies in Olonets that were run by the municipality. The movies were silent, and mostly foreign. The viewing was accompanied by a lady tinkling on the piano.

Budolf Niemi from Sweden was an excellent accordionist, and he and his wife Signe were good dancers who arranged a dancing circle. Nikki Long, his daughter Vieno, and son Veikko formed a band which provided music for dances. A drama group and a mixed choir were organized. The choir was conducted by a choir master from the town's school. We performed not only at our own social gatherings, but we also toured around the Olonets region. Our programs featured working class songs, Finnish folk and popular songs, and ethnic dance numbers.

As children we were very eager to take part in entertainment events. We put on plays based on contemporary humorous stories which we translated from Russian into Finnish. I still remember one of our creations, "Mihei Kuzmitsh in the Spa," which portrayed an old country man, a grand-dad, who constantly

In front of kindergarten building, Vieno's mother and Vieno on the right. Rauha Grönberg on the left. Jenny Leppänen with Norman Siikanen in the middle.

fell into comical situations in the unfamiliar surroundings of the spa. The audience enjoyed our performances and we were encouraged and appreciated by the adults. Often on Saturday nights dances were held. Kids ran from door to door letting people know that a dance evening was about to happen. I had been wild about dancing since my father taught me to dance in Canada, where children were anxious to whirl on the floor at the Finnish Hall.

My father had earned a reputation as a good dancer and showed to our Karelian young people how to move on the dance floor doing the steps of Western dances. Karelians in turn taught us how to dance the quadrille, which was very popular in Karelia. It is amazing how this dance of French origin had reached this remote part of Russia. This square dance of six figures is performed by four couples. Quadrille was danced not to French music, but to Russian melodies.

Saying Goodbye to Domesticity

The summer of 1931 was almost over. My departure for Petrozavodsk to study there in the Finnish secondary school was only a few weeks away. Mother and I went through my belongings and found that I needed new clothes because I had grown

Giving a quest performance in Iljinskije sawmill.

out my old ones. My friend Polya was a practical girl. Seeing a bunch of ripped cotton stockings we were preparing to discard, she said, "It's a shame to throw them away. I have never seen such fine stockings." So we started to darn them.

There were neither readymade clothes nor material in the shops. Mother searched our closet, and picked up some pieces of her and father's clothing of which my new garments could be made. I didn't even have proper shoes. In the summer mother and I had waited in line for hours to get shoes for me, but we had ended up empty-handed. In the countryside adults and children wore boots made mainly of raw not colored leather. To keep them waterproof they were smeared with tar and they smelled awful. Certainly I couldn't wear those stinking boots in town. The only way out was to buy shoes and some other items I needed in Torgsin My parents didn't have dollars any more so the purchases were made at the cost of their engagements rings.

There were tearful farewells on the day of my departure. Mother saw me off to the spot where truck drivers picked up passengers bound to the railway station. There was no passenger traffic. My friend, Polya, was already there. The truck turned up, people threw their suitcases into the truck's bed and rushed to climb on it. The truck was loaded with people, and the driver pulled off heading to the railway station 56 km. away. It was a bone-shaking ride as the truck jolted down the rutted road, but we survived. In Lodeinoye Pole station we boarded the train

bound for Petrozavodsk. The trip took about ten hours. In the morning after a sleepless night, we had only sitting tickets. We found ourselves in an unfamiliar situation and wondered how to find our school. Luckily for us passenger buses ran to the Freedom square where the boarding school was situated. On arriving there Polya and I were taken to the hostel for girls just behind the school building. It was a one-story house that had previously served as the residence of the school principal. There were six rooms, three of them interconnected. Junior students were placed in them. Our room accommodated eight girls. It was the most inconvenient room in the house because all the inhabitants have to pass through it.

We faced plenty of challenges living in the hostel, but it provided practical experiences of many ways of life; sure, it wasn't the life of Riley. There was no running water which meant that we washed up using a wash-stand filled with cold water. Once in a week we went to the public bath house and waited in line for hours to get in (there were only three bath-houses in the whole town of about 100,000 inhabitants). We washed our laundry by hand. The most difficult chore was to heat the stove. At first we had to saw logs up into shorter pieces and then chop them. If the firewood was damp, it was tricky to get a fire going. My bed was next to the stove and girls used to sit on it warming themselves by the fire. There was another hostel on the opposite side of the square. It was a two-story building including rooms for students, a kitchen, a lunch-room and a sick-room. It accommodated students of both sexes and different grades.

We had three meals a day: a breakfast, lunch and supper. The menu wasn't varied: bread, a knob of butter, sweet tea with milk, porridge, and soup. Vegetables were rare, mostly potatoes, carrots and cabbage; fruit wasn't served at all. Those meager meals were a reflection of the shortage of foodstuffs that had swept the whole country. We used to save a part of our bread portions to swap them for milk brought to the hostel by peasants. Mother's food packages were of great support. Lunch was served during the long recess at noon. When the bell rang the whole school dashed down the steps, crossing the sidewalk and the square to get to the head of the line in the lunch-room. Passers-by had to be on their guard not to get knocked over. This race was an everyday sporting event.

Studying in the Secondary School

It wasn't an easy transition for a country girl from a rural Russian elementary school into a Finnish secondary school in the city. A lot of things were different. I had left behind my friends who had emotionally supported me in difficult situations and backed md up when things had gone wrong. And I often recalled my dear teacher Glafira Nikolayevna. The beginning and the first weeks

of classes in the new school were stressful. I thought, "What new opportunities am I going to discover, and what will my new teachers and classmates be like."

The fifth grade consisted of three groups. The 5 "a" was formed by students who didn't know Russian, but were fluent in English and understood Finnish. This group was formed mostly of North American immigrant children; the 5 "b" and 5 "c" were made up of students who were able to use to some extent Russian and Finnish. Polya and I were placed in group 5"b". The Americans differed from other students. They were taller, wore nice clothes, including colorful sweaters, denim jackets, and blue jeans. Girls wandered the streets in slacks, their shoes were seasonable, and everyone had a watch. Many of them wore fancy glasses. Everything they had was smart. We, the local kids, were filled with wonder and envy. One day a classmate suggested that I put on her glasses to see how I would look in glasses. I put them on and looked out of the window. Oh, everything seemed so distinct, bright. Thus I found accidentally that I was nearsighted. The eye specialist prescribed me glasses but, sad to say, they didn't look great at all.

The Finnish secondary school was located in the heart of the town, on Freedom Square. In pre-revolutionary times it had been called Cathedral Square. A grand Orthodox Cathedral stood in the centre of the square. The Soviets had transformed it into an eatery; it was also used as a sport arena. A parachute-tower had been installed on the steeple of the cathedral. The parachute slid down along the cable on which a jumper was hanging. Our school was opposite the cathedral and we used to watch those performances from the windows of our classes. Once a jumper got stuck half-way. We followed his efforts to get unstuck. Finally he was somehow released and came thumping down. In 1935 that imposing Cathedral was blown up. A monument to S. Kirov and a theater were put up on the vacant space.

Our school occupied a building which had been a gymnasium (in tsarist Russia a secondary school for students preparing to enter a university). It featured spacious classrooms, laboratories and a large well-equipped gym but no recreational fields. The town stadium was close by, where athletic and extra-curricular events were held. The physical education program featured courses like skiing, athletics, and gymnastics. We didn't have swimming lessons since there were no swimming pools anywhere in the city. The water in Lake Onego was too cold in the spring and fall, and thus it was out of the question to use its beaches.

Our P.C. teacher, Sulo Kokko, was devoted to sports and teaching. He was one of three brothers who had been champions in wrestling and boxing in Finland before migrating to Russia, and had occupied a responsible position in the field of education. We liked him although he kept a strict discipline. He was a qualified teacher—keen, enthusiastic, and always there for students, bring out their full capabilities. He advised and trained us to develop our abilities, competitiveness, and drive. Our teacher organized intramural competitions

and our teams competed against other schools teams and in regional. We won numerous medals, trophies, and honors.

Skiing was very popular among students. Most of us were involved in the cross-country program, participating in skiing events at different skill levels. The most notable achievement of the school's ski team was receiving first place in the all-Soviet Union school championship in 1935. The team returned from Moscow with awards, and everyone was dressed in an elegant light-blue sports-wear. Our athletes also performed well in gymnastics and track and field events. Their efforts won them the privilege of attending on a scholarship the famous P C University named after Lesgaft in Leningrad. My friend Polya was one of them.

I'd like also to single out our English teacher, Maria Kuusiniemi. Her lessons were vivid, and she used to bring heaps of supplementary material to illustrate the use of words, grammar elements, and phrases in order to better develop our language instincts. Our teacher put in a great deal of time to conduct extra-curricular lessons and to run a club that met regularly. We learned English songs, listened to the teacher's stories about Canadian ways of life (she was Canadian by birth). How lively she described barn dances singing and showing the steps of a square dance. Our English teacher was also an amusing lady.

English was the most widely taught foreign language in Russia. Karelia had the privilege of having well-educated English teachers of Finnish origin from among the immigrants from North America. Our teacher was one of them. English and physical culture teachers remain one of my fond memories of the Petrozavodsk Finnish secondary school. Our art teacher, Veniamin Popov, was a professional artist, a famous Karelian painter. Unfortunately his teaching methods were far from pedagogical etiquette. Our artistic flops provoked him to make unfavorable remarks, embarrassing us for our failures.

We developed a familiar relationship with the young history teacher. He lived in a teachers' house located in the same yard as our hostel. The house faced an amusement park. Our teacher's apartment windows looked straight onto the park. Occasionally he let us get there through the window. Thus we were spared having to pay the entrance fee. Most of the teachers were immigrants from North America or Finland. They were experienced and devoted teachers concerned not only with teaching their subject but also with the holistic development of students. We learned more than just mathematics or science. Once a biology teacher speaking about personal hygiene told us that there are two kinds of dirt: a pure one such as mud or dust which can be cleaned, and a dirty one such as cosmetics that close the pores so fluids may not be absorbed or discharged. It was a hint to those girls who were using make-up. The teacher's remarks about behaving socially sometimes escaped our understanding. There was a smart Alec in our class. This know-it-all named Armas tended to tease our Russian language teacher, a heavy, middle-aged lady. Once when the teacher

was showing her index finger and asking, "What is this?" a hand shot up and Armas promptly answered, "A very long and thick finger." Indeed, the finger wasn't petite. Once again he embarrassed the teacher by giving an inappropriate answer. The teacher was explaining formation of compound nouns. "The letter "o" connects two different words and a new word is formed, for example, par (a steam)+o+voz (a drive)so we get a new word "parovoz" (locomotive, a steam engine). "Who wants to give an example?", the teacher asked. Our smart Alec enthusiastically exclaimed: "Voroshilov" (Voroshilov was the name of the Defense Minister of the USSR) and went on explaining: vor (a thief) + "o" + shilo (an awl) so we get "a thief of the awls". The teacher turned red and was dumbfounded. After a while she composed herself and explained that the word Voroshilov is derived from the verb "voroshit" (to turn hay); it isn't a compound word.

Students were offered many enjoyable things at the Palace of Pioneers where they had educational experiences outside of the classroom in art, handicraft, visual arts, drama, and chess. I attended a checkers club, took part in competitions and once even won the town's student competition. Actors and a choir entertained students at social gatherings. After performances the floor was cleared away for dancing. Our school was one of the few schools that had its own orchestra. Juniors were allowed to stay for a while to enjoy dancing. We admired the skillful dancing of the American students. There was a pair, Alice and Rick, whose smooth gliding on the floor was terrific. In winter the town's stadium was converted into a skating-rink. It was brightly illuminated, a brass band played there, skaters made rounds; boys used to approach girls stretching a hand and the skating went on easier. New acquaintances and friends were made. The administration of the stadium organized skating contests. My roommate, Rauha, won one of those contests and was presented with a huge cake. We bolted it down with friends straight on the ice.

Riding on a kick sled (a sled with a seat and hand-bar on long steel runners) where the driver stands on runners holding on to the hand-bar and kicks from time to time to move the sled forward was also a good sport. It was exciting to go down the hill with a skilled driver, but God help you if a sled was steered by an inept lad.

Little by little I settled down and got used to the school routine and city life, but there were times when I felt wretched being so far from home. Homesickness was tough especially on the weekends when girls from the nearby villages and the logging settlements close to the town went home. Luckily there were some of our family's acquaintances and friends whom I could visit. My parent's friends from Cobalt, Aino and John Tuomi had immigrated to Russia, to the Don District at the beginning of the twenties and then moved to Karelia lived on the state farm Hiilisuo on the outskirts of Petrozavodsk. There wasn't any kind of public transportation to get there. I walked that 7 km. distance along the rails. It was a couple of kilometers shorter than by road, but dangerous.

The other family who also helped me to overcome anxiety was the Usenius family. Mr. Usenius was the Commissar of Industry. He was keenly interested in our commune's progress and often visited us to see how things were going. Mrs. Usenius volunteered for many things and was well-known among Finnish people for her selfless aid as an interpreter. Their son, Kurt, studied in a Russian secondary school. He was good at drawing and helped me to do my homework. I wonder if our stern teacher suspected any wrongdoings in my perfect performances. The Useniuses lived in a two-story wooden house, sharing the apartment with a family of another government official.

They occupied three rooms: a dining room, bedroom and Kurt's nook. There was also a fourth room in their quarters where a widow of the Petrozavodsk Ski Fabric manager lived. One can say that a family of high-ranking government officials lived in very modest circumstances. On my way to the Usenius home there was a small bakery. It spread a delicious odor reminding me of mother's sweet-smelling buns and cakes which she had baked in Canada.

The Usenius family often spent their vacations at our commune, working along with the communards. Kurt used to stay for the whole summer and was treated the same way as the commune's children. One summer when Kurt, Douglas and I were twelve or thirteen we decided to attend the Pioneers' camp. Those were the first experiments to put up summer camps for school children in Olonets. The camp was located in Andrusovo on the monastery territory (monks had been removed earlier from there), 27 km. from Olonets. It turned out that the organizers had left out of consideration many essential things. Children couldn't endure poor meals and other trying conditions and started to flee for home. Douglas left, but Kurt and I decided to hold on a little longer. At home Douglas had told a story invented by himself about a bear he had narrowly escaped on the camps' territory. My parents were worried. Father harnessed a horse and without delay set off to Andrusovo. Kurt and I had decided to leave the Camp and we were on the road heading home on foot. We hadn't had anything to eat since morning and dropped into a hut by the roadside and asked for something to eat. The little they could do was to give us two slices of chaffy bread. It scratched our throats but we swallowed it piece by piece to take the edge off our hunger. We were delighted to meet my father and glad to climb onto the cart to rest our feet and get home.

Vacations and Everyday Life

Despite traveling difficulties I spent vacations at home. I wholly enjoyed being with my parents, the luxury of sleeping a lot, and reading books by my favorite

authors. During summer vacations we worked for some time in the kitchen garden. Everyone had a bed to tend. When the leaves started turning color it was time back to school again. Oh, those vacations didn't last long enough. It was extremely hard to part from my parents and leave comfy home. Returning to school in fall wasn't like homecoming. You had to find a place in the hostel, and the later you arrived, the worse the accommodations you ended up occupying. You could be placed in a room packed with 10 to 15 girls or in a hostel far from school. In spite of the inconveniences we lived in harmony. We also tried to be aware of current trends. When hairdressers introduced permanent waves, almost every girl in our room took the perm. We varied our clothes swapping garments as none of us (except the American girls) had an ample wardrobe. I achieved good grades in many subjects. Languages, literature and sports were my favorite subjects, and I learned them willingly. Math was hard for me. I had to struggle to get through my math exams. When I was studying in the sixth grade I came down with measles. I was put in the sick room where I whiled away my time in isolation. Father came to see me when I was recovering. We went for a walk to the park. It was a sunny spring day, birches were budding, and birds were singing. I was glad to hold my father's hand and breathe a fresh vernal air after a long while indoors.

I Am Home Again

I was fourteen, studying in the seventh grade when the homesickness became so nagging that I headed for home. I told my parents that a doctor had advised me to take a break because of my health condition. To tell the truth, it wasn't just like that. The doctor had found an anemia and prescribed for me an iron preparation, but he hadn't mentioned anything about interrupting my studies. The day I arrived home has been stamped in my memory. Looking out of the window into the rainy fall day and the pattern of rain against the window pane I got the heartwarming feeling of safety and joy.

Surely, my parents didn't take my whole story seriously, but they were concerned about my health and I continued to take those iron pills. As to my sick leave, it was out of the question. I enrolled in the seventh grade of the agriculturally-oriented school. It turned out that the curriculum didn't differ much of the general schools, only that some subjects related to agriculture were added. This school had only seven grades. I took up to these new circumstances at school, made friends, and even found myself for the first time attracted to a boy, a classmate who was serving in the Infantry Battalion's orchestra as its ward.

Father paid a lot of attention to my studies, and in his spare time played checkers with me. In the winter we went skiing, and in the spring we checked

starling nesting boxes; if needed we repaired or replaced them with new ones. Father was a birder at heart. He even listened to a common sparrow chirp, "They are jolly birds, and so hardy that they can resist frost and hunger." Usually he was the first to perceive the arrival of migratory birds. We marked in our calendar the dates of their arrival and departure. Meanwhile, mother pampered me. I felt so happy in this familiar environment.

Life in the commune was running smoothly without big disagreements, although in some cases new members weren't as community spirited as the old ones. The immigrants who joined the commune were entitled to the special supply called "Insnab" (provision for foreigners) which the Soviet government had prescribed for the immigrants. Instead of giving the groceries for the common table they kept coffee, sugar, white flour, tobacco, and other delicacies to themselves. They baked cakes and pies, generously using the commune's butter and cream, but didn't share them with others. The new Karelian members also practiced baking their kalitkas (stuffed pies) for their personal menus while freely using our dairy products.

Thus the members were split in ones who munched sweets, enjoyed coffee, cakes, pirogi and the others who got to watch on and smell the delicious aroma of pastry. As a result of that lavish use of the commune's butter and cream, the supplies were dwindling. The problem was solved by rationing butter. The carpenter made two molds for butter, 50 gr., for dinner, 30 gr. for breakfast. This was the first break with the commune's principles. The founders of the commune who had strong cooperative feeling considered it necessary to get all members to regard the commune as a single household where all members were equal. Most of the newcomers adjusted themselves to the commune's style of life. However, some of the immigrants found it difficult to accept the insignificant and equalized payment, the strict rules, plain food, and cramped living conditions. Signe, from Sweden, used to grumble about potatoes. She was sickened by the idea of having to eat them every day. My father, who had carefully selected the best potato species for that clay soil, said to her, "What's wrong with potatoes, Signe? Potatoes have been the main food stuff for northern people since the 18th century when German smiths brought the plant to Finland. The potato is packed with nutrients and tastes good in every way – boiled, fried, baked or mashed."

Those whose attitude differed too much from the communards guiding principles left the commune. Karelian members were more flexible in orienting themselves to the new way of life. Maria Steppiyeva, looking back on the past, said,

The members of "Säde" got acquainted with us from the first days they arrived in our village. They were elegantly dressed, and we couldn't believe that they were able to farm. I remember an instance when I was pregnant and was reaping the rye. Your mother came up to me, took the sickle from my hand and said: "Take a rest, I'll reap." Looking at her I doubted whether that lady can handle the sickle

to say nothing of reaping. But Emma reaped fast and evenly, and the shock was erected in no time. The members of "Säde" were friendly with us. When we joined the commune I worked there as a baker, and loved my job. Women had sufficient free time. We didn't have to prepare meals or do the wash. I did a lot of needle work, read, took part in social activities, watched movies demonstrated in our club.

Anna Ubliyeva recalled that her wedding was held in the commune. Her fiancé, a member of the commune, had arrived with his friends on three teams of horses to take her from her home village. She had liked to live in the commune. "Every day was like a festival," she added. The Vlasov family joined the commune in 1934. "We liked that perfect order, good food and warm attitude to us, especially to children. It was a pleasure to live in the commune," she concluded. Her oldest son, Misha, said, "If we could turn back the clock, the commune would be the only place I'd like to live."

In 1933 the commune underwent a big change – it was transformed into kolkhoz by the decree of the higher organs of power. The principal difference lay in the way of payment. In the commune it had been equalized, but in the kolkhoz it depended on the amount of performed work and the nature of the workload. For every line of work the administration of the commune determined the rate of output for a workday (a unit of payment in collective farms). For example, helping a cow to calve equaled 3 workday units; filling in a hay pole amounted to one workday unit. At the end of the fiscal year, state procurements were filled first and set nearby a part of the crop reserved for seed grain, and then the rest of it was distributed to workday units. Members were free to sell their share at the market price. Receipts from selling products were partly invested, set aside for the kolkhoz's expenditures and the leftover distributed to workdays. In 1933 the workday unit included: 5 robles of tax-free money, 5kg of wheat, 40gr of honey, and 50gr of butter. This income was based on a firm foundation laid earlier.

The piecework system raised working efficiency and, as one member recalled, even those whose philosophy of life had been "Why should I work for others," toiled with all their might to earn more money. The communal style of life didn't change utterly. Meals were served as earlier in the commune, but now they weren't free. Payment for meals and bread was made by vouchers which were set up from members' incomes at the end of the year. Some other services were also preserved.

I Am Returning to Study in Petrozavodsk

I finished the seventh grade of the agriculturally-oriented school, but since it was only a 7-year program I was compelled to continue my studies in my for-

mer school in Petrozavodsk. As the summer of 1934 was coming to an end, I packed my suitcase and headed for Petrozavodsk to continue my studies. After being away for a year, I was anxious to see my friends, classmates, and teachers and experience once again the city atmosphere. I convinced myself to adjust to the new circumstances.

The Soviet educational system of the early 20th century relied on standardization and tight quality control. Students were expected to learn the same things at the same rate and in the same way. Schools were owned, operated and controlled by the state. There were no alternatives to the educational mainstream. All children were to attend school for ten years (grades 1—10) from age 8 to 18. After finishing the 7th grade students could choose to complete their schooling by enrolling in the 8th grade of a secondary school or in a vocational school.

The curriculum for secondary school included the following subjects: mathematics (arithmetic, geometry, algebra, and so forth), natural science (zoology, botany, chemistry, and physics), humanities (literature, history, geography), languages (Russian, a national language, one foreign language to choose from English, German or French; Latin and Greek were not taught), drawing, physical education, woodworking, metalworking, and military studies. To advance to the next grade students had to pass annual exams. Schools used a verbal grading scale: excellent, good, satisfactory, bad, and very bad. Upon completion of secondary school, students were to pass the final examination to receive their Certificate. There were also exams to enter the university or other institutes of higher education. Admission was selective and highly competitive. Exams on all levels put students under a lot of pressure. Studying, however, was tuition-free. Students were provided with state stipends depending on their academic achievements.

The primary purpose of the educational system in the USSR was to provide the young with a communist upbringing. It was carried out all along the line of education, starting in kindergarten through patriotic stories and pictures, and in every grade communist doctrine penetrated all subjects. A joke illustrates this fact. A Soviet kindergarten teacher tells her pupils what a wonderful country the Soviet Union is. She says it's a place where all children are happy and they have a lot of good things. A little girl starts to cry. "Why are you crying?" the teacher asks. "I want to go to the Soviet Union," was the reply.

The glorification of the military spirit is a characteristic of dictatorial governments. That spirit was wildly disseminated in the Soviet Union, including, of course, the school program. As noted, one of our subjects was military studies. Students were taught to dismantle a rifle, to throw hand grenades, to shoot, and how to use gasmasks. I remember one frosty winter day when our instructor sent us on 3 km. ski track wearing gasmasks. It was laborious skiing and we sweated and by the end were exhausted. In fact, many students couldn't finish the distance. Practical lessons on the subject turned out sometimes to lead to tiresome tasks.

Advances in the Economy and Culture of Karelia

The government of Karelia functioned quite independently from 1923 to 1930. During those years it strove to develop that backward Russian region into an economically and culturally thriving autonomous realm. However the circumstances were unfavorable to realize such ambitious plans. A big problem on an economic plane was the lack of skilled permanent manpower and a lack of modern machinery. The economy of Karelian Republic was dependent on the lumber industry and related industries.

When the first Five-Year Plan went into effect in 1928 with a program to prompt industrialization throughout the Soviet Union, Karelia was seen to be an important part in it. The Karelian wood industry's products were exported to western countries, bringing in badly needed foreign currency to support the plan. The shortage of workers in several sections of the Karelian economy had been filled by bringing in seasonal workers but it had proved to be very problematic, so the government had decided to create a permanent workforce. Thousands of Russians and other nationalities moved to Karelia. Migrants brought a change in the national composition of the population insofar as the percentage of the indigenous people declined. In 1920 there were more than 60% Karelians, Veps and Finns and 37% of Russians in the region. By1932 there were only 37% of indigenous people and Russians constituted the majority of the Karelian population. As the Republic bore the name Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, it presupposed that indigenous Karelians and kindred groups such as the Veps, Tver Karelians, Finns and Ingrian Finns ought to represent the majority element of the population.

This conception reflected the principles of the nationality policy of the Soviet Union. Karelization was adopted by the 12th Congress of the KPSU and described in the decree issued by the Central Executive Committee of the Karelian Republic. The solution to the problem was found by deciding to recruit skilled laborers of Finnish heritage from North America. It was known that they were familiar with modern technology and were able to bring equipment along. The Karelian Government's decision to recruit workers from North America wasn't novel in the Soviet Union. Lenin had written a letter to American workers in 1918 inviting them to immigrate to Russia. It had inspired the believers in socialism around the world to leave behind the oppressive capitalist world and to join the builders of a new fair society.

The first workers' state had won international fame. As early as in 1921 when the Soviets had passed a resolution "About American industrial immigration" (this project was confirmed in 1930 by the Congress of the Russian Communist Party) and opened recruitment offices in New York and in Europe (Berlin). People from all over the world made their way toward different parts of Russia.

In 1922, 458 immigrants arrived in Kuzbass, a mining district in West Siberia; during the next 2-3 years the number of immigrants there rose to 1,000. They had come from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and the USA. The colony was given seven collapsed mines and some other ruined enterprises to operate. The manager of the Kuzbass colony, a Dutchman named Sebald Rutgers, wrote in his report to Moscow that it was impossible to describe the absolute chaos and breakdown they encountered putting up those enterprises in a limited period of time.

The American Trade Union sent several freight cars to Kuzbass loaded with materials, mining machines and equipment. American Construction Groups Cement -1, Cement -2, Cement -3 worked in Kazan building an aircraft plant, in Mariupol, an iron and steel works in Lipetsk, and a motor-car factory in Lyanozovo. A construction team from New York where our acquaintance Ida and her spouse were members worked first in Moscow, then they were transferred to Nizhny Novgorod; their last assignment took them to Komsomolsk-on-Amur in East Siberia. The building of that town was begun by enthusiastic young volunteers from all around the Soviet Union at the beginning of 1930s. The spirit of the time was high in Russia. People, Russians and immigrants, were devoted to work zealously for a cause of socialism. Poets and composers wrote songs full of enthusiasm to keep up the enthusiasm.

To complete the building of Komsomolsk, skilled manpower was needed and the New Yorkers' construction team was sent there. Ida described how hard they had worked and how much they had achieved. In the course of time they had adjusted themselves to the place and were determined to stay there for good. But then frightful things began to happen. At night time NKVD agents knocked at peoples' doors, searched homes and took men away. Sometimes even teenagers and women were arrested. Women were left to cope in strained circumstances. Ida told us hilariously about her attempts to get her stove repaired. Nobody had agreed to do the job for money; a bottle of vodka, as usual, was the only acceptable compensation for the work. It was hard to get the stuff since liquor stores were often stormed by crowds. Ida had dealt with the problem cleverly: she had thrust herself forward through the crowd towards the counter pricking with a safety pin those in front of her and had obtained a bottle.

It is widely known in the West but not in Russia that automobile factories in Gorky and Moscow, coal mines in Kuzbass and Donbass, the industrial complex in Magnitogorsk and many other industrial enterprises were planned, constructed and equipped by Western companies, manpower and financing. So it's probable that recruiting manpower and getting assistance from abroad was official Soviet policy at the time.

The Karelian Government's decision to recruit North American Finns had Stalin's approval. Lenin had conducted negotiations as early as 1921 with the first

secretary of the Karelian Communist party Kustaa Rovio about moving American Finns working in Kuzbass to Karelia. The idea of recruiting North American Finns to Karelia was welcomed across the Atlantic Ocean. The "Soviet Karelian Technical Assistance" offices were opened in Canada (Toronto) and the USA (New York). A widespread campaign was launched to recruit skilled and ideologically reliable laborers to immigrate to Soviet Karelia. Leftist papers praised the Soviet way of life, and communist speakers were frequent callers in Finnish communities agitating to move to Soviet Karelia. Their propaganda found an auspicious ground and people responded to their appeals. For the most part, the would-be migrants had lofty ideals and great hopes to take part in building a prosperous and just society with the Karelian people; there were also folks escaping the Depression, people longing for an environment where their own language was used; parents who hoped to give their children good educations, and adventurous, young people looking for the right place to live. People of all walks of life were represented among them. "Karelian Fever" as the movement was dubbed spread all over the Finnish communities of Canada and the USA.

Donations started to flood in to the "Soviet Karelian Technical Assistance" organization. People donated money and goods, some in a small way, some in a big one; even tens of thousands of dollars were contributed by some families. Two brothers, pilots Lehtimäki, Jalmar and Werner, raised money in Finnish communities in the USA to buy aircraft. They brought airplanes to the Soviet Union which were shipped to Leningrad and Petrozavodsk . A Finnish-American named Joonas Harju, a bachelor, who immigrated to Karelia from Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio, where he had worked for decades, donated about 100 pure-bred cows bought in Finland to Hiilisuo farm, as well as a tractor and two cars. It appeared that he had donated most of his hard earned money to the socialist cause. An active member of an athletic club in Detroit, Albert Lonn brought baseball equipment to Karelia. Thanks to this contribution several baseball teams were created in Petrozavodsk and soon the game was known, and games were played in Moscow, Leningrad, and elsewhere in Russia.

When the left America, migrants took along their professional and trade equipment and much more, even machinery for paper making factories, ski factories, typographers, and assorted workshops. Material contributions were on a grand scale. It is estimated that the donated money and equipment brought to Karelia from North Americans was worth millions of dollars. The exact number of immigrants who made it to Karelia varies by publication. According to Irina Takala's calculation 6,000 to 6,500 people arrived from North America in Karelia between 1931 and 1935. This figure seems to be more or less accurate.

Then there were thousands of Finns who had arrived illegally from Finland skipping across the Finnish-Russian border during the Depression years at the beginning of 1930s looking for work and bread. They were lured to Russia by

Soviet propaganda. Finnish language radio programs described happy life in the Soviet Union, where they were told there was no unemployment, plenty of food, free education and medical care, etc. Labor was needed and had to be gotten by some means or other. The real state of affairs in Russia included shortages of necessities, the brutal treatment of people when minority nations and well–to–do peasants were transferred to Siberia, Kazakhstan, and the Far–East weren't facts people abroad knew about. Ugly secrets were nicely covered up in this secluded country. The border-hoppers suffered most of all. They were detained, exiled and deprived of amenities North Americans and other migrants were provided. At the beginning of the 1930s the situation in Soviet Russia was extremely difficult. Notwithstanding that immigrants didn't have high expectations (American newspapers had reported about hardships in Karelia) people were eager to go and ready to give up some of the advantages they enjoyed in America. But the difficulties they met there were beyond their comprehension.

The most burning matters were food and housing. These issues were settled more or less satisfactorily in cities and their nearby vicinities. Relief addressing food shortages was handled by special shops called "Insnabs" (Provisions for Foreigners). Only those who had store cards were allowed to enter and shop. Thus immigrants were provided with food that was of low quality by North American standards. There were also shops called "Torgsins" (Trade with Foreigners) where goods were bought for currency. Locals could also shop in "Torgsins" by paying for goods with items such as precious metals or works of art. There weren't "Insnab" or "Torgsin" shops in places distant from centers. Workers and their families had their meager and pricey meals in common eateries where they had to endure long lines. Food was often of poor quality and because it was unfamiliar to foreigners, it often led to gastric illnesses. Medical aid wasn't always available, and neither wee medications.

Housing in some logging areas was substandard. People were placed in log barracks heated by stoves, no running water, electricity, and poor washing facilities. Several families could be set into one room. In towns accommodations were a little better. Rooms in barracks were separated by partitions so families got their own poky holes. Those partitions weren't sound-proof, and thus private life was put to the test. Rumor had it that a man couldn't get to sleep because of the noise from behind the partition. A male's voice was repeating continually, "Whose little bum is it?" At last the irritated man knocked on the wall and shrieked, "For Christ's sake tell him whose bottom it is. We must get some sleep, tomorrow is a working day."

North American loggers were annoyed by the poor working conditions and bad planning. They complained that technical devices weren't used properly, innovations weren't always introduced, work was unnecessarily hard, the wages were too low, and to change one's work place was almost impossible. Not all

immigrants who were accustomed to better and technologically advanced living and working styles could endure these conditions. Many became disillusioned, returned back to North America. According to various sources 20% to 40% managed to get back, leaving Karelia disgruntled. Returning was easier for those who had retained their American passports and had currency.

However a majority of American immigrants stayed. The difficulties they encountered did not discourage them. They contributed their time and effort to help to develop the Karelian economy and culture. Spirits were high at that time. People aspired to work better in order to produce more. On days off, especially on Saturdays, people performed unpaid voluntary work collectively. These events were called "subbotnik," from the Russian word "subbota" (Saturday). An arts centre in Petrozavodsk is one of the results of such voluntary work. People donated money for two aircraft, a tank named for Kuusinen, and motor vehicles for border guards. They also bought bonds and even lent money to the Karelian government.

During the first decade of autonomy, Karelian economic and cultural institutions were rearranged and were improving. Improvements on different spheres were furthered with the help of professionals and skilled workers recruited from abroad. North American Finns and Finns from Finland worked all around Karelia. Immigrants made significant improvements to Petrozavodsk's municipal economy. They installed a water main to provide the town's inhabitants with running water, along with a sewage system and sidewalks.

The forest industry was extremely backward. To be brought up-to-date it needed modern equipment and skilled workers so many of the immigrants were directed to lumber camps. There were several logging sites in the vicinity of Petrozavodsk: Dereviannoye, Ladva, Lososinnoye, Matrosa, and Vilga. This Onego logging area was one of the biggest in the country. Those logging camps produced daily more lumber than any other in the Soviet Union. The Matrosa camp had a training center where the methods of organizing the work and facilitating it were taught. Loggers also received important information on the maintenance and use tools from various publications. There were lunch rooms and club houses at those lumber camps. The loggers lived in their own houses that they had built for themselves. They always included kitchen gardens.

Children from lumber camps attended the Petrozavodsk Finnish secondary school. Once a friend of mine, Rauha, took me for a week-end to Interposiolok (International Settlement), where her family lived. Her father was the director of the site. Besides his main job as a logging manager he had to do farming and animal husbandry. This subsidiary venture provided the logging camp's lunchroom with food that wasn't available in stores. Such auxiliary undertakings were also practiced in other lumber camps.

In fifteen years the Karelian government succeeded in fulfilling the official plans to advance industry, agriculture and education. New plants were estab-

lished: Petrozavodsk Ski and Furniture factory, Mica factory, Paper and Cellulose mill in Kondopoga, saw mills, power plants, repair works, and more. The Onego tractor plant was reconstructed; granite, pegmatite, and quartz quarries were opened, roads were built; research into mineralogy was carried out, and the mining industry was increasingly more productive. By 1928 industry and agriculture reached the level previous the World War 1. 85% of households were collectivized. Pedigree cattle and farming machines bought from Finland helped to raise the output. A fish refinery was built in Knäsö. Forest industry production was on the rise. During the years between 1930 and 1935 logging results were doubled. Karelian lumber export was a significant source of income for the industrialization the country. The number of industrial workers in Karelia was rising: in 1920 there were 1,300 skilled laborers, in 1935 there were 20,000. Income had risen from 4 million rubles to 95 million. In 1923 a publishing house named "Kirja" was founded in Petrozavodsk. It published books by Karelian authors, and translated literature, textbooks, and periodicals.

A viable educational system was set up. Schools of general education, vocational schools, rabfaks (schools that trained working youths preparing them to enter higher educational establishments) were founded all over Karelia. Often schools in the countryside were built by voluntary work as the neighborly spirit was booming at the time.

Adults learned languages, both Finnish and Russian, at evening courses. Almost a half of literate Karelians had a good command of Finnish or both Finnish and Russian. Pedagogical Colleges in Petrozavodsk and Uhtua and a Pedagogical Institute in Petrozavodsk were opened. Illiteracy was liquidated almost entirely. All children from eight to twelve were attending schools. Seniors were taken care of. The Government published a decree concerning financial assistance for seniors.

Stimulus to development Karelian national literature was given by the Finnish immigrant poets and writers J. Virtanen, L. Luoto, E. Parras, and H. Tihlä. With time Karelian poets and writers N. Jaakkola, P. Perttu, J. Rugojev, O. Stepanov, and A. Timonen developed and their poetry and books were published in Finnish. Cultural life was developing. A symphony orchestra was formed by K. Rautio who had conducted an orchestra in Astoria, Oregon; a folk ensemble "Kantele", and national theatres in Petrozavodsk and Uhtua were founded. Clubs and reading rooms spread across the region. Composers K. Rautio, L. Jousinen (a skilled violinist who had recorded Finnish folk music for Columbia in the USA), L. Teplitsky (who, incidentally, introduced the Soviets to jazz), and sculptor Y. Rutanen had a marked impact on Karelian arts development. All kinds of orchestras had sprung up: brass bands, light music, dance music bands. There was no shortage of conductors or players. For the most part orchestras consisted of American immigrants who had played in school orchestras and

studied music in the USA or Canada. Orchestras and bands performed at clubs, parks, and dance pavilions, entertaining and bringing people of different nationalities together, young and old. The Karelian Science Research Institute was established in 1931. Edvard Gylling was one of its founders. Twenty-two newspapers and more than ten periodicals were published in Finnish and Russian. The 100-year anniversary of the national epic, The Kalevala, was celebrated extensively in February 1935.

In his opening speech, Gylling stressed that The Kalevala wasn't only a Finnish national epic although it was composed by Finnish scientist Elias Lönnrot, its content derived from Karelian rune singers. The program of the celebration consisted of the epic's themed numbers. The Karelian symphony orchestra performed "Karelia" by J. Sibelius, the symphony "Aino" by local composer Pergament, the Kantele ensemble and the national theatre presented acts from the book, and a new edition was published. Our homeroom teacher took those of us who had performed at the school's Kalevala event to the festivities.

As chairman of the Karelian Council of the Peoples' Commissars, Gylling was an economist and a capable organizer. He kept in close contact with people when moving around Karelia. Gylling's chauffeur recalled that he enjoyed meeting people. Being straightforward and friendly, he gained vast popularity among the Karelian people and was highly regarded. He was even nicknamed "ukko" (which literally means "an old man") and was frequently called on for help in times of crisis. When Karelians were asked why they called him that name they explained that it gave them a feeling that "he is one of us." Gylling did everything in his power to raise the Karelian standard of living and reminded true to his principles. That was his life's work. His spouse, Fanny, was devoted aide to him. She edited a women's magazine, wrote stories and poems, took part in establishing kindergartens and schools, and was involved in social activities at the same time that she took care of household chores and their children. No domestics were hired. The Karelian Autonomous Republic was indeed a classless society. High ranking government officials walked in the streets among others without bodyguards. There were no palaces or luxury villas built for the chairman, and neither was a guard placed at his modest apartment door.

The President of the Soviet Union, M.I. Kalinin, paid a visit to Karelia in 1924 to see how the republic was developing. As a result of the visit funds were received to finish the Kondopoga power plant. In June 1935 a Karelian delegation was called to Moscow. Gylling gave the Kremlin a detailed account of advances made in the spheres of economics, education, and culture during the years of autonomy. Kalinin responded warmly to Gyling's report and expressed belief that there would be more achievements. The development of Karelia during the 1920s and the first years of the 1930s were indeed impressive. By mutual efforts of the government and the Karelian people a foundation for effectively

functioning as an autonomous republic was laid. It had been a period of turn-around. The VIII All-Karelian Congress of Soviets stated that the government had performed satisfactorily and its course had been the correct one.

Trying Times Set in

Dark clouds were hovering above the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1930s. Stalin was a suspicious man who feared opposition. He started to liquidate elites, high ranking officials, and members of the intelligentsia. Purged members of the elite were denounced as Trotskyists and condemned to death. An anecdote was circulating about an eight-story NKVD (KGB) building on Liteiny Street in Leningrad which was dubbed "the highest structure of the city". The anecdote told that from the cupola of Isaac Cathedral one can see only Kronstadt, whereas from this Liteiny building one can reach the Solovetsky concentration camp. But people were ignorant what really was happening in the country. The media didn't publish information about arrests or concentration camps. They wrote instead about great construction projects such as the Baltic-White Sea Canal. This infamous 227 km. canal was built between 1931 and 1933 by slave labor. Inmates worked and lived in severe conditions. They died of starvation, diseases, and hard work. Trains brought new prisoners to replace those who had perished.

The other notorious concentration camp in northern Russia was Solovetsky Island camp in the White Sea (a former monastery). Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Russian writer, referred to the Solovetsky camp as "the mother of Gulag". It was one of the first Soviet concentration camps for political prisoners. Thousands arrested in Stalin's purges were imprisoned there, worked to death, murdered from 1923 until 1939. It is estimated that of a total of 170,000 inmates around 25,000 died. The first victims were the intelligentsia, including legal scholars, historians, philosophers, philologists, priests, and military officers who were charged with being enemies of Bolshevik rule.

Punishments were ruthless. Inmates could be tied to a stake, kept on it during hot summer days so mosquitoes fed themselves on these poor fellows; inmates might also be tied to a log and flung down the steep hill Sekirnaya (Pole-Axe). One can only assume that those brutal punishments were planned by insane minds. As we see, the terror had besides its political targets another goal, which was to provide free labor for those great projects. Today the Solovetsky monastery has been resettled by Russian Orthodox monks. A part of the monastery was turned into a Gulag Museum which does homage to the inmates of the camp and to the 20 million people killed nationwide in Stalin's concentration camps.

After settling an account with these initial enemies, Stalin levelled political persecution at minority nationalities. They were accused of local nationalism, classified as enemy nations, and were exposed to mass deportations, arrests, and executions. Attacks on "national deviation" throughout the Soviet Union began in the mid-1930s. Over a twenty year period, 3.5 million people from 58 nationalities were deported from their homelands. Among them were Crimean Tartars, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Koreans, Turks, Kalmyks, and Greeks. In August 1941, according to a decree issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, the whole population of the German Autonomous Soviet Republic on the Volga River was deported. They were accused of having among them spies and saboteurs. Men were separated from their families who were deported to remote places in Russia forever. The German Autonomous Republic vanished from the map. The ancestors of these Germans had moved to Russia in the 18th century following the invitation by the German-born empress of Russia, Catherine II. In 1944 Stalin deported the entire Chechen and Ingush nations to Siberia and Middle Asia, accused of being German collaborators. Ingermanland Finns who had thrived economically and culturally in the neighborhood of a big city Petersburg for centuries were arrested or forced to leave their old haunts in the 1930s and driven away to Hibinogorsk, Siberia, Middle Asia. Their lands were settled by migrants from Russia, Belorussia and Ukraine. In 1942 the Leningrad oblast' was purged of Finns and other minority nationalities.

Accusations of local nationalism were first announced in 1933 in Ukraine and Belorussia, where a resolution declared that local nationalism was the greatest danger in their regions. This declaration started the process of determining where else in the Soviet Union local nationalism had become a problem. It turned out that also in Karelia according to some articles published in Karelian newspapers that local nationalism in the Karelian party organization had become threatening to national unity. The Leningrad District Communist Party Committee was ordered by Moscow to inspect the activity of the Karelian party organization. The personnel of the Leningrad District Committee had been changed due to party cleansing after S.M. Kirov had been murdered. The new Committee wasn't as supportive and helpful to the Karelian administration as it had been in Kirov's time. The attack against the Karelian party organization was launched on the Fifth Plenum of Karelian District Committee in 1935.

M. Tshudov, the secretary of the Leningrad District Party Committee, stressed that the Karelian Administration had distorted the Leninist-Stalinist nationality policy in favor of local nationalism, thereby exposing the local population of Karelians and Vepses to Finnization; that bourgeois and nationalist elements had established an anti-revolutionary nationalistic organization aiming to incorporate Karelia into Finland; that Russian as a tutoring language

in schools had been discriminated against. Tshudov accused Gylling and Rovio of trying to recruit more American Finns in order to enlarge the number of spies and other enemies of the Soviet Union. P.A. Irklis, one of the members of the Leningrad commission, denounced working arrangements claiming that local workers could work as efficiently as immigrants if they were given more attention.

In his defense, Gylling denied convincingly those made up accusations and assured the investigators that actual mistakes could be corrected. He firmly denied that the party organization had supported nationalism and clarified that if the Russian language teaching had been neglected somewhere it wasn't done deliberately. The administration had issued instructions many times that schools were responsible to guarantee the teaching of the Russian language. Gylling was extremely upset being charged with receiving Finnish loggers who had complained about unjust instructions given by Karelles (the head office of the forest industry). He pointed out that as he understood his duty, it was to listen and speak with people about their problems and to help them. Accusations advanced by Tshudov and Irklis were contradictory and factually incorrect, or in short, fabricated. The accusers had forgotten that Finnish as a state and instruction language had been proclaimed by the First Congress of Karelian Soviets and Lenin had had a notable part in setting it up.

Discussions concerning the Finnish language had put the Karelian leaders between the devil and the deep blue sea. On one hand they were accused of uniting with fascist circles in Finland to incorporate Karelia into Finland, while on the other hand they were said to harbor thoughts of setting up a socialist regime in Finland preparing cadres for the government apparatus. These accusations were clearly politically motivated.

As to the plan for developing Karelian as a written language, the First Congress of Karelian Soviets in 1921 had decided to renounce it. But the Karelian government members didn't entirely reject the possibility. Rovio had written that the question would be on the agenda when the circumstances were favorable. Although Karelian wasn't a state language, Gylling considered it necessary to employ it within the administrative apparatus. Some of the local soviets had used spoken Karelian when dealing with monolingual persons since 1927 and in five regions Karelian had been taken into use in written form. In more than 50% of Karelian primary schools students started studies in their own spoken language.

The Leningrad Commission's accusation that students were not provided opportunities to learn Russian was untrue. In 1932 there were 512 primary schools in Karelia and instruction in Russian was provided in 233 schools; of 34 secondary schools Russian was an instruction language in 25 of them. Many regions of Karelia were inhabited by Karelians who didn't know Russian, so it is clear that Finnish, a cognate language, was more suitable for them. A dialect

spoken in North Karelia (Viena) is also very close to Finnish, so it was natural to provide instruction in Finnish in those areas. Children who spoke Karelian dialects not so close to Finnish did not have a difficult time studying in Finnish. All my Karelian classmates with whom I studied in the Finnish secondary school obtained a good command of the Finnish language. In some regions where along with Russians there were Karelians, Finns and Vepses, the instruction was only provided in Russian. Children who didn't know Russian were compelled to enter the Russian language school—as had happened to me.

There were actually no conflicts concerning the language policy until this Fifth Plenum. True, in 1931 the Presidium of the Nationalities Soviet of the USSR Supreme Soviet had given orders to the Karelian government to start working on creating the Karelian written language, but a few months later the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party had revoked the order declaring that the line taken by Karelian authorities on the language question had been sound. In 1936 the language problem was again under consideration. A proposal was put forward to start working on developing a written Karelian language. A linguistic conference was held to discuss questions connected with the issue. Within a couple of months a unified Karelian alphabet based on Cyrillic letters was created. Linguistic standards were set in the "Grammar of the Karelian Language" by Professor D.V. Bubrikh.

Manuals, textbooks, reading materials and other literature were published in Karelian. Plans for a Karelian language newspaper were formulated in Moscow. The first issue of Sovetskaya Karelia was published on January 1, 1938. The Constitution of Karelia was altered: Finnish was no longer a state language, neither was it a language of instruction. It was replaced by Karelian. In fact, Finnish was proclaimed a fascist, people's enemies' language. All activities conducted in Finnish ended and Finnish language papers were shut down. Finnish literature was prohibited, and withdrawn from libraries and the market. Speaking Finnish in public was banned.

Hastily created written Karelian proved to be a muddled combination of different dialects which was hard to read and understand. Teachers were promptly introduced to that new version of Karelian but neither they nor students were capable of using it. A Karelian language chair was established at the Teachers Training Institute. I happened to be one of the students there. A Karelian writer named Jaakko Rugoyev was appointed teacher of Karelian. He was from Viena, North Karelia, and the southern Karelian dialects were unfamiliar to him. Our lessons were sometimes very amusing. Students who represented different dialects were eager to regard their versions as the only right ones and argued severely with each other. To settle their debates wasn't an easy task for the teacher who had his own challenges working with that tangled written language.

The banning Finnish often resulted in absurdity. A queer episode is fixed in my mind. Once the rector of the Institute approached a group of students that I was part of and said, "I see you are discussing something interesting. By the way, what language are you speaking?" The rector was Russian, knowing neither Finnish nor Karelian. We answered, "Finnish." He shook his head, "You should not speak Finnish. It is our enemies' language. Karelian is your special subject, so speak it."

The experiment with the Karelian language came to a sad end when once again politics intruded into the language question. The Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic became the Karelian-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic at the end of the Winter War. Karelian was abandoned by the Decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government, replaced by Finnish, which operated on equal footing with Russian.

A Finno-Ugric chair was established at the university. Students who had studied Karelian language at the Pedagogical Institute were transferred to the Finno-Ugric department. The rector was the same person who had reprimanded us for speaking Finnish. Now he urged us to study Finnish diligently. His turnaround brings to mind an anecdote about a man who had been asked if he ever had diverged from the party policy. "Yes, now and then I flickered in company with the party itself." Some students at the Finno-Ugric department were engaged in teaching Finnish to members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Government. My student was Mr. Bashkirov, a secretary dealing with agriculture questions. I can't say how effective my instruction was, but my student was very industrious and kind. Once he ordered his chauffeur to drive me home for spring vacation knowing that traveling was hard on public transport.

When in 1956 the status of the Karelian Republic was lowered to an autonomous region, the Finnish language was eliminated, it was cancelled from school programs, and the Finno-Ugric chair at the university was closed. I had occupied the position of chair for eight years and now I was unemployed. Russian became the only official and instruction language. This Russification policy was carried out throughout the Soviet Union.

After World War II, national hostilities were triggered by the government's discriminatory policy. In personal papers you had to identify your nationality. Everyone knew about the so- called notorious "fifth-point" (the paragraph in the passport indicating nationality) which closed the doors for some nationalities to enter certain universities and prestigious government and party jobs. Racism was deeply rooted in this policy. The banning of Finnish hit everyday life. You could encounter prejudiced people who reprimanded you for speaking Finnish. Once in a food line we were speaking Finnish with my son. A woman behind us reproached me for it, "Why don't you speak Russian to your child?" I answered, "I speak the language I want to, but you, poor creature, can speak only your mother tongue and even it, as I noticed, not correctly." Once a tragi-

comic situation took place at our doorway. There was a knock at the door and mother opened it. A gypsy woman was trying to enter but mother didn't let her in. An irate roman cried out, "All you Finns and Jews should be driven away from here." The policy spilled into family life as many Finnish, Karelian and Veps parents avoided speaking to their children their own language. Children became estranged from their own language and culture, and thus they were robbed of their ethnic pride. They were ashamed to be Finns, Karelians, Veps and afraid to speak their own language outdoors because others would call them names. When a census was taken there were people among the national minorities who registered themselves as Russians, so the statistics don't provide an accurate portrait of the national composition of the country's population.

Disaster Strikes

The reports of the Leningrad Commission were confirmed in the resolutions of the Fifth Plenum of the Karelian District Communist Party Committee in 1935. All the good that had led to creating a functional autonomy were in fact twisted, condemned and turned upside down. The putative bourgeois nationalists, the members of the Karelian government, were purged and met tragic fates. The acts of the new rulers were driven by cruelty. The remains of two former members of the government, Santeri Nuorteva and M. Rutanen, were ordered transferred from the cemetery for meritorious people in the centre of town to a more modest graveyard.

A group of Karelian officials including N. Jushchijev, the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, N. Arhipov, a member of the government since 1920, P. Pottojev, and V. Voronin were arrested and executed. Gylling was relieved of his position and appointed researcher at the Moscow Institute of World Economy, but he wasn't free to leave the city without official permission.

Gylling's family was housed in an upper floor of a hotel. The dwelling place was dank and the ceiling was sinking. Gylling was an exhausted ailing man. His leg had been amputated due to tuberculosis in 1923. He had been under constant pressure for years, and the purges had been a source of great mental anguish. In July 1937, he was exiled to Sakhalin, while his spouse was sent to Siberia. Fanny Gylling perished in concentration camp grief. Gylling died on February 13, 1940 in the concentration camp in Sakhalin far away from his dream world. Decades later, these Karelian leaders were rehabilitated posthumously. There is a street in Petrozavodsk named for Gylling. The portrait of Kustaa Rovio, a friend of V.I. Lenin, whose life ended in a Gulag camp by the Arctic Ocean, is located in the Lenin museum in Moscow.

Those times were fatal for the Karelian Autonomous Republic. The leaders were liquidated and accusations of Finnish bourgeois nationalism intensified, the claim being that Finns participated in anti-revolutionary organizations, engaged in spying, and similar accusations were directed not only at intellectuals, but also at ordinary people of Finnish ancestry. A search for people who had submitted to such activity began in places where Finns worked. Mass arrests were surging and prison camps were established.

My personal encounter with those acts of violence took place in August 1935. One day I met Aili, who had lived in our commune with her parents before marrying an officer, Ville Oksa, who served in the light infantry battalion stationed in our neighborhood. Officers were Finns, graduates from the Leningrad International Military Academy. They had moved to Leningrad from Finland after the left had lost the 1918 Civil War. There were good relations between our people and these officers. Both sides helped each other in all sorts of ways. The state holidays were celebrated together. Dances were held where officers met and began to date our girls. The romantic engagement between Aili and Ville had ended in marriage. A year later a healthy baby boy was born. They named him Arvi. Now their happy life had ended. Aili carrying the baby in her arms told me, choking back tears, that her husband and many other officers were arrested at night and families were ordered to move away. A father of my friend, Lyyli, an officer, was also arrested. I went to see them. Their room was a mess. My friend and her brother were packing up. Their mother had already gone to look for a place to move to. What they were going through was impossible to imagine. I returned home panic stricken. These sad occurrences were the beginning of my schooling in adversity.

That fall my departure from home to study in Petrozavodsk was harder than ever before. I was leaving behind not only my parents but also grieving friends. Gradually I settled into a routine. but something was troubling me. For some time I hadn't received letters from home. Then all at once everything changed. I got a letter addressed with unfamiliar handwriting. I opened it. There was a letter written by mother (usually we corresponded with father). I was amazed. But the content of the letter was more astounding. Father and two other men, K. Siikanen and J. Niemi, had been arrested, and their families had been evicted. They had ended up in Soroka, a small town by the White Sea. Mother was given a nook by some sympathetic people who took her in and found work for her at a saw mill.

All looked dire when I finished reading the letter. The questions that rushed through me were frightening: what happens to my father and is my mother safe? I was anxiously wondering what the future held for us. Every following day was filled with fear and insecurity. I was afraid to confide in anyone, afraid to be branded the daughter of a peoples' enemy. I lived under oppressive isola-

tion and kept my grief to myself. One of my roommates, Martta, whose parents also lived in our commune, did not reach out to me. I think her parents had written her about the arrests, but she didn't sympathize with me. It was hard to concentrate on my schoolwork. My normal life had been taken away.

Then something happened that I couldn't understand at all. A member of our commune, Jenny, came to Petrozavodsk . She dropped into our hostel. I was glad to see her, to ask about my parents and get some advice and support what I badly needed. But Jenny turned her back on me. She spoke only to Martta and took her out for dinner. It made my heart hurt. How could she do that to me? I felt that my longstanding sense of belonging was shattering. This unfortunate event was an educational experience for me that helped me to understand people better. There were people who were afraid to be in contact with the families of the arrested, there were people who reiterated time and again Stalin's words, "Innocent people are not arrested in the Soviet Union" and called the arrested the "enemies of the people", a concept that originated with Stalin.

All of a sudden things took a turn for the better. The principal of the hostel encountered me in the hallway one day and said, "There is good news, the "Säde" men are free." I was relieved, thinking that my desperate times were over. I concluded that in spite of people who treated the arrested and their families without compassion, there were still people like our principal who remained decent. The next day when I was walking to school I saw two familiar figures coming the other way. I couldn't believe my eyes. Indeed, those women were my mother and Lempi Siikanen. They were heading to the hostel to see me. We hugged and cried in the middle of the street. I noticed that they had aged. Their faces were weather-beaten. We went to Maija Usenius'es place where mother and Lempi were staying. When we came to our senses I learned from them what had happened after men were arrested.

On the following day an official from the Olonets District Communist Party Committee had arrived and summoned a meeting to denounce the arrested. It had been heartbreaking to listen to how workmates labeled them as enemies of the people, bourgeois nationalists, spies, and so forth. It had seemed that the accusers had lost their consciences. Siikanen's sons, Norman and Douglas, were present at the meeting. Twelve-year old Norman was crying his eyes out and repeating, "My father isn't an enemy of the people, he isn't a spy, he is good." It was decided unanimously to evict the families of the arrested, to cancel their member cards, and to provide no food for them.

To remain at home, the Siikanen sons were compelled to renounce their father. Norman, the younger, felt bitterness towards the whole commune and refused to stay.

It was late fall when they had to set off. The destination was unknown. They were told not to move into the immediate area (it was a frontier), but to head

north. The railway station was 60 km. away from Olonets. Our ill-fated women began their way towards a vague future. It was bitterly cold. The road was in bad repair—rutted and bumpy. The horse pulled the load with difficulty, while the women and children walked behind it. They had made it only half way when the boys' felt boots gave way and their toes stuck out. Norman and Toivo sat on the roadside crying. It was hard to get them moving. At last they reached the railway station and booked tickets to Petrozavodsk. They weren't allowed to stay there and were told to go further north, to Medvezhegorsk. They were not accepted there either and instead were directed to Soroka. This small town was the last possible point to settle. They were utterly exhausted and broken when they stood on the platform in Soroka inquiring about shelter. They were guided to an obscure Silmia village. There were deserted houses left by people who had been arrested or sent into exile.

Our ladies found work at the saw mill in Soroka. The village was five km. away from there. The distance was made on foot since there was no public transport. Some workmates who dwelled in the barracks owned by the mill took pity on them and suggested to room with them. My mother shared a room with a Finnish woman and her daughter. The man of the house had been arrested. They lived in pitiful conditions. When the girl was asked how she had learned to speak Russian so fluently, she answered, "Surely you learn to speak if you have learned to go hungry."

Wages were low, with the women earning only 30 rubles a month. The mill wasn't able to pay in full even that small amount, but provided small advances during the whole month. Workers had to wait in lines for hours to get their money. For extra money mother and Lempi sold their belongings. Lempi was in a most difficult situation because she had two boys to take care of. When there was nothing left to sell, Lempi sold the legs from her husband's boots to a man for a leather apron. Her husband was glad to have the feet of the boots when he returned from jail. He made legs for them out of tarpaulin. Thus his footwear problem was solved. Lempi's sons felt slighted with every stride at school and outside of it. Often they returned from shopping in tears and empty-handed. People in the line had shouted and screamed not to sell anything to those strangers who were exhausting their foods.

Finally this hard exile time ended. Mother and her fellow sufferers returned home, to "Säde" where their husbands were already waiting for them. There had been contention about the issue between mother and father. Mother hadn't forgotten that slanderous meeting and their eviction. She wasn't eager to go back, but father held onto the belief that the only place to live was the commune which they had founded and built up. It was their home. There were no alternatives. Besides, father wanted to show that they had been arrested despite their innocence, and that they had clean reputations and clear consciences.

It's hard to describe our feelings when we met. We rejoiced seeing each other, but father's looks upset me. I found that his whole manner had changed. The twinkle in his eyes and his broad smile had disappeared, he was pale, and he walked with a limp. He wasn't the dad I remembered, full of energy and ready for action. Those charges reflected the physical and mental pain he had suffered. Siikanen's homecoming was darkened by his younger son's illness. Norman had taken the eviction and exile so gravely that had developed a heart disease which put him near death.

Nevertheless it seemed that something approaching normal life was setting in. Communards were looking forward to a bright future. Desired achievements were getting accomplished. Fields were in proper condition, so were the cattle, and the loans had been paid off. The commune was self-sufficient. Their wishes had gradually come true. People were delighted with the good results of their work. The year 1937 was very fruitful, it yielded a good crop. The value of the workday was higher than never before. Plans for the road ahead were to improve living conditions. The commune members had a vision to build nice cottages with a small garden where families could lead private lives, as well as setting up medical services and an elementary school.

Back in Säde my parents concentrated on work. I wondered how they felt in that environment, among people who had treated mother so cruelly. I didn't hear a one word of complaint crossing their lips. They wanted to persevere. Father still nursed an idea to show how prosperous farming could be in the southern part of Karelia, "We want to show in practice where the Karelian daily bread and future lies. A field of grain is like a beloved child whom you tend and take good care of", father lovingly declared. In his opinion effective farming could provide additional produce to share it with townspeople who were on short rations.

I continued to study in Petrozavodsk and finished the 10th.grade in 1937. A spokesman from the Leningrad Second Medical Institute was seeking students to enroll in that Institute. He stirred up our interest. My friend Eila and I decided to apply, hoping to become pediatricians. I spent the whole summer preparing for the entrance exams we had to take for admission. We both passed them, but we didn't find our names on the list of admitted. Later we learned that Finns were restricted from living in Leningrad. Education was free in the Soviet Union but some Institutes of Higher Education were open only to elites and some nationalities were prevented from entering certain colleges and living in certain cities. It was too late to apply to other Institutes. I started to look for a job. I found work at the children's library as a librarian. The head librarian was very supportive. Under her guidance I learned the needed professional skills. I liked the job. It was interesting to discuss with my young readers the content of the books they had borrowed.

A Turn for the Worse

The political situation in the country again became gloomier. Stalin's reign of terror was tightening its grip. The order by the NKVD of July 30, 1937 decreed the liquidation of anti-Soviet elements within four months. The NKVD offices filled quotas indicating the numbers of people to be arrested and executed. Every republic was set a quota for the expected number of arrests. The limit for Karelia was 1,000 people, with 300 of them to be executed. So called dvoikas (pairs) and troikas (trios) established by the NKVD sentenced people without the accused having an opportunity to offer a defense.

The Karelian troika in 1937-1938 consisted of the chief of the NKVD Matuzenko, public prosecutor Mihailovitsh, and the first secretary of the District Communist Party Committee Kuprianov. After fulfilling the quota the troika asked the centre to increase the quota for executions. They were permitted and the initial goals were exceeded. During the fall of 1937 the troika sentenced to death 1,640 people (72% of the sentenced) instead of 300. Matuzenko, educated in a parish primary school and OGPU (NKVD) school, decided to completely destroy what he saw as anti-Soviet activities in Finnish organizations. Arrests surged. People were terrified. Everybody expected to be taken away. Some people didn't even stay home at night Arrests took place both day and night, at people's homes, on public streets, and at work places. At large enterprises people were loaded on trucks and carried to overcrowded jails. From Petrozavodsk Ski factory 120 workers were arrested in the middle of the day. At Kondopoga Cellulose and Paper plant 450 people were arrested, mostly Finns—including the director, engineers, and technicians. The plant shut down for two weeks. The arrested were taken to the art centre. Now the builders were interrogated and tortured in the cellar of this cultural place.

In Petrozavodsk the places for interrogation were in Peski and Kamennyi Bor. Interrogations of the arrested sometimes lasted for months. Investigators used inhumane methods of torture, including intimidation, physical abuse, and sleep deprivation. The persecution of Finns reached far outside of Karelia. At the Tsheliabinsk tractor plant, 300 Finnish workers were arrested; among the arrested Finns in Moscow and Petrozavodsk were high ranking Soviet officials. The fabricated case against the so-called anti-revolutionary nationalistic organization in Karelia (the Gylling-Rovio case) provoked a mass witch-hunt. The charges of conspiracy against them were based on fantastic conjecture, not on the facts.

During 1937-1938, 9,536 people (3,189 Finns, 2,820 Karelians, and 2,838 Russians) in Karelia were arrested and 85% of them were executed. Families of the arrested were evicted from their homes and driven away. From Petrozavodsk families were moved outside of Karelia, to places situated on the other side of

Lake Onego (Pudozh, Zaonezhye), to the lime island Olenia. People were hauled on barges to their destinations. A participant of these events recalled the horrific day of July 21, 1938. "Trucks were running to the barracks where families of the arrested lived. People were taken to the trucks and told to climb up. Weak women and children had to summon up all their strength to get there with the bit of belongings they had managed to gather up."

A singer named Katri Lammi stood on the back of a truck and started to sing clearly the popular Soviet song "My land is vast..." about a vast and beautiful homeland where a man breaths freely and is a master of the land. She sang the whole way to the port where caravans of trucks loaded with people were waiting their turns to unload their riders on to barges. Our barge was heading to Olenia island, a rocky barren place where a lime stone quarry was located. On arrival some lucky ones got accommodations in empty houses, while the rest of us were lodged in the old stable where every family was provided with a stall. Town-dwellers had a lot of trouble coping with manual labor. Every day brought dozens of questions like "How do you harness a horse? How do you attach a horse to a cart? Results of our performances varied from comical to tragic. Our singer was ordered to plow the earth and was given a horse and a cart. She circled the horse and the cart for some time, at last attached the horse to the cart but backwards.

It was a hard job to build the furnaces for incinerating the lime. They were built of stones, 4 to 5 meters high. Women carried stones on wheelbarrows along a plank; one had to balance like a circus artiste to keep the wheelbarrow on track. When the furnaces were built up a fire was started to obtain lime from stones. Heating up the furnaces with long logs also taxed one's strength. Peoples' health was at stake. The air was polluted by lime dust, and quicklime pieces were scattered all around the area. A tragedy occurred one day. A little boy was picking stones and found a nice white one like a piece of sugar. He tried it and died. Food was scarce. People died of malnutrition and starvation.

Evicted from their homes families were placed in inhumane living conditions. Over a span of one month 395 families (922 people, 417 of them children) were exiled from Petrozavodsk. Members of "Säde" were not spared. On November 27, when another busy day had begun and people were at work, a truck at top speed rushed into the yard. Militia men and seamen sprang down from the platform. They collected the men on their list, ushered them to the office telling them that they were under arrest. My father was cleaning a well. He was ordered to get out and was taken to the office. Then the militia started searching the rooms of the arrested. They rummaged around in our room, leaving it in complete shambles. They seized father's camera and some other things.

We gathered some clothes for father to change his wet ones but we weren't allowed to hand them to him. The Siikanens' family situation was extremely

dramatic. The wife, Lempi, had given a birth to a baby boy. Her husband had gone straight from his work in a mill to the hospital to bring them home. When they arrived home militia men met them at their doorway. Mr. Siikanen laid his son on the bed and was taken away. He returned shortly. Looking at his wife he said sorrowfully, "They are arresting me. But now there is a little boy in memory of me. A new Norman. He will keep you busy, you won't long for me so much. They cannot send you into exile with a baby. Stay here. "Säde" is in a good place, and you won't starve. I may not come back this time. What is awaiting us is uncertain." It was a sorry sight to see them parting. I stayed with Lempi for a while to calm her and look after the baby.

When I got to our room mother was alone, crying. She placed her arms around my neck saying, "Cry, don't fight back your tears, it doesn't help, it leaves you feeling tense. I know, losing your father in this ambiguous way is hard to understand. Deep down in my heart I feel your father may never come back. We have to cope with the realities. People have been arrested, and nobody knows what have happened to them. It was a big mistake to come here, but your father was so attracted to the ideals of the Bolshevik revolution."

The men who has been arrested were kept in the office for some time, then taken to the truck. With a poignant glance, they observed the yard as if saying farewell to all they had accomplished. They took one last grief-stricken look at us. The truck started up. We stood broken, numb with terror looking how our loved ones were dragged away from home. Our lives had suddenly changed so dramatically. I was then eighteen. There was tightness in my throat those first weeks after father's arrest, and my voice was edgy and hard. I began to feel much older.

That saddest day of my life, those hours of unspeakable horror have remained in my memory in all their gloomy details through all my life. Emotional memories are hard to forget. It is said that time cures the wounds. Indeed, the pain of agonizing memories slackens but never fades away. Instead, it becomes a chronic ailment of your soul. Our adversities continued without ceasing. I was fired because my biography wasn't in order and I was a daughter of the peoples' enemy.

A friend of mine, who worked in the Education Board, gave me a helping hand. He explained to me that I was dismissed illegally. "Children are not responsible for their parents. You can sue the Education Board and demand to be reinstated." I was reimbursed and restored but not to my former post since it was already occupied by a spouse of a Party Committee secretary. I was offered a position in a village library, six km. away from Olonets. I liked the place. The environment was favorable and people were friendly. I had good practice in Karelian. There was a club where Saturday performances were the main weekly entertainment.

Mother lived and worked in "Säde". I visited her frequently. Discussing our lives, we understood that things couldn't be returned to their familiar order. We had to look at life from a new perspective and move forward. I wondered who I was in the present situation and what value I had. I felt apprehensive about my future. We agreed on one thing: I must continue my education.

Some choices in life are easier to make than others. Choosing the course of my life wasn't a problem for me. Teaching was my thing. I had dreamed of becoming a teacher since my early school years. It seemed that I could not dismiss that thought from my mind. Within my bounds of possibility there was only one place to continue studies. It was the Pedagogical Institute in Petrozavodsk. I put in an application to enter the Philological Department and received a positive answer. I quit my job and moved in with my mother. There were some exams to pass to enter the Institute. I spent the summer preparing for them.

Daily life in "Säde" had changed after the vanguard had been arrested. The chairman, appointed by the town officials, wasn't familiar with the routine practiced earlier. But the worst crisis was yet to come. It erupted in late summer. One early morning I met Akulina Kilpinen in the yard. She was crying. "What's happened?" I asked her. She stammered out, "My husband and all Finns except the oldest two, Hill and Piispanen, were arrested last night." It was a crucial blow to the commune. There weren't enough hands to make hay or harvest the crop, and we had no specialists to fix broken machines. The very next day the chairman and his stooge carried all the commune's documents written in Finnish to the bath-house and burnt them. "No memory of those nationalists and enemies of the people must be left," they declared. The next step in rooting out the memory of "Säde" was the decree issued by the Karelian Supreme Soviet to rename "Säde" into Papanin after the researcher of the North Pole. The once bright "Säde" (Ray) was put completely out. It was the beginning of the end of the prosperous commune.

With gloomy thoughts about how unfair life can be, I said goodbye to my dear mother and left for Petrozavodsk to enter the Pedagogical Institute. It was a big turn in my life again. The procedure for taking an exam in Russian history to enter the Institute was very odd. There were three examiners. One of them was the rector himself. Finns were examined by him. We wondered for what reason. It became clear to me when I was sitting opposite the examiner.

All-of-a-sudden the rector asked me, "Was there anybody arrested in your family?" Aha, that was the catch! I didn't lose my head. Looking him straight in the eyes I gave a spirit reply, "There aren't enemies of the people in our family." I was approved and granted a scholarship. My line of studies was Karelian language. In the late fall of 1939 our studies were interrupted by war. The Soviet Union attacked Finland. Wounded soldiers were brought to Petrozavodsk. Hospitals were overcrowded. Schools and hostels were

transformed into hospitals. The Winter War ended in spring of 1940, and our studies resumed in the fall.

Germany Attacks the Soviet Union

The academic year was coming to an end when yet another terrible event occurred: the Nazi regime invaded our country. It was June 22, 1941, a Sunday. A heavy snowfall had been at night. Our front door was blocked and we could barely get out. Walking to the lunch room we heard the news flash from radio loud-speakers (gadgets inserted on telephone poles.) We were scared. Our studies were interrupted. Students were sent on vacation. When I arrived home I noticed perceptible changes. The household was no longer properly run. Due to lack of labor and the inadequacies of the leaders, some lines of work had been totally neglected. Even butter was scarce. This problem turned out well thanks to the Border Guard Unit. They had surplus butter and swapped it for farm products. I distributed the butter among the members. Fall was approaching. I hadn't heard anything about studies and went to Petrozavodsk to find out if our studies were to resume. The town was deserted. People had been evacuated and businesses shuttered.

I went to my friend's place to get my winter clothes, which I had left there for summer. The door was locked and nobody answered the bell. The apartment was on the second floor. An amiable young man brought a ladder, climbed up to the window and opened the door for me. Then I went to see if my friend Eila was still in town. She wasn't but her parents appeared to be at home. We made an agreement to evacuate together and arranged to meet next morning. When I came, they had already gone. I went to the port where barges were ready to take people on board. The railroad to the south had already been cut by the Nazis, and thus the waterway was the only possible route to evacuate. I looked but couldn't find them. I met our English teacher, Maija Kuusiniemi, with her two children. We decided to stick together.

Evacuation

A tug boat pulled our barge across Lake Onego. This part of the voyage was quite dangerous. Enemy planes had already bombed some of the barges, but we made it. We continued on our way through a system of canals to Bielozersk, Rybinsk, where evacuees were transferred to a river boat navigating the Volga. We were

packed into a ship's hold where the cargo is usually carried, and slept on the floor. At regular stops, I went into towns to buy food for our company. In Asrtrakhan, a port on the Volga River delta, we were moved to a bigger boat to cross the Caspian Sea to Kazakhstan. The boat took us to Gurjev, a small town in North Kazakhstan. The majority of evacuees from Petrozavodsk were taken to the mining areas. The Honkas, Ester and Inga, with whom I had befriended during the voyage, and I decided to stay in Gurjev. We found a room and started to look for a job.

I learned about a vacancy in the editorial office of a local newspaper. I thought, "Why not get a start in journalism." The position was available. I filled out an application form. Unpleasant news was awaiting me the next day: I wasn't hired. I understood that my nationality was again involved. I was in an awkward situation since there were limited possibilities to get work in that small town. I went to the District Education Department to inquire if Russian or English teachers were needed. There were no vacancies in the town, but some provincial schools required language teachers.

While my documents were verified I waited anxiously, like a cat on a hot tin roof. Much to my relief they accepted me and suggested a post in a nearby fishing settlement school. The place, called Kamenny, was twenty km. away from the town by the Ural River where it empties into the Caspian Sea. The principal of the school picked me up. The road to the settlement ran through the vast steppes. During the trip the principal described to me my future working place. It happened to be a small school setting. The size of the school population was just under one hundred. They were enrolled in grades one to seven. The instruction was in the Russian language. The teaching staff wasn't large. The principal had already arranged for me a room and board situation with a Russian family. Their home was a small one room mud hut with a porch. The Russian oven, a big structure for baking and roasting foods, heating and drying things, and warming the place for sleeping took up a lot of room. I was given a bed, two boys slept on the floor, while parents slept on the upper part of the oven.

To my amazement, I had landed in a strange environment. All around were vast steppes, with no trees at all. Living conditions were primitive. But I had a positively wonderful culinary experience. Never before had I eaten such tasty fish dishes and I had never sampled caviar. The father was a member of a fishing team. They fished for four varieties—beluga, sevruga, osjotr, and ship—of large bony fish with rows of spiny plates along the body and a projecting snout. These were a source of caviar and isinglass. In English these fishes are described by a single word: sturgeon. Fishermen were permitted to keep part of the catch. Our master salted the eggs of those fish making two sorts of caviar: pressed and unpressed. The mistress baked tasty fish pies.

When the catch was abundant we eat these delicacies in ample amounts. As a drink we used camel's milk and kumiss, a mare's or camel's fermented

milk. A camel is a common beast of burden in Asia. Occasionally I was given a ride to the town on camelback but usually I covered that 20 km. distance on foot. There were wolves roaming on the steppes. I was told to keep matches to frighten them. I can thank my lucky stars that I didn't encounter any.

I visited with my friends the Honkas every now and then. Once when we were on an outing with Inga, we met an officer who, as we noticed, was eager to keep company with me. He was a Tartar, Bulat. Every time I arrived in town he came to Honka's place bringing some good food. Once the table was laid out as if for wedding festivities. "Inga, are you going to marry?" I asked. "No, not me, but you are. Bulat said that he is going to marry you," she answered. "I hadn't the faintest idea. So, he is going to marry me, but what about my consent?" This was one of those cultural shocks I met in those unfamiliar circumstances.

During those long winter nights, I thought about the future—about what it was holding for me. I had learned that life is unpredictable, that there are very few things of which we can be certain. I felt apprehensive about my future. But I understood that I had to look ahead by continuing my studies and graduating. I wrote to Alma-Ata University inquiring about the possibilities of continuing my studies there. I was accepted to continue my studies in the Russian language department provided that I'll take some exams, including one on the Kazakh language. I quit my job and moved to Alma-Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan . The teaching staff of the Philological Department included professors from Leningrad University. In war-time Alma-Ata (which can be translated as "The Father of Apples") was not only a scientific but also a cultural centre. Noted writers and actors evacuated from different parts of the USSR and settled there.

By sheer luck I found in Alma-Ata Sanni Nuorteva, the widow of Santeri Nuorteva, along with her grandson Reima and son–in–law Lev Varshavski. Sanni's daughter, Kerttu, had been sent to Finland as a spy. The families of secret service agents were provided monthly with special rations. Every month I went with Sanni to the NKVD shop to get those provisions. One day we were told that the name wasn't on the list and supplies would no longer be provided. That was the sign that something had happened to Kerttu, but we were never given an explanation about what had happened. We were stumped.

Trying to Find What Happened to Petrozavodsk University

I continued to search for the whereabouts of Petrozavodsk University. I found out that it existed in exile, having been evacuated to Syktuvkar, the capital of the Komi Autonomous Republic of the Russian Federation situated on the north-western slopes of the Urals. To get there I had to obtain permission for

travel. When the official saw my passport he said with surprise, "You were born in Canada! Canadians are our allies." I was given the travel permission and a package of food. This time my biography work for me. It was a long and complicated way from Middle Asia to the northern part of Russia.

The reunion with my fellow students was moving. This was the last year of our studies. We were completing a course in Russian philology, writing our research projects for degrees and preparing for state exams. It was hard to concentrate on studies because the dormitory wasn't heated and my stomach was rumbling for food. The scholarship was minimal. I found a temporary job at a nearby school as an English teacher. Teachers were provided with an additional ration of vegetables. We made a vegetarian soup thickening it with flour. But at last the hard winter was over and we enjoyed the warm sunny spring days. The good news from the front raised our hopes about the prospect of getting home soon. The excitement was overwhelming when peace was declared in Europe on May 8, 1945.

Our course of studies was completed, but the graduation ceremony was postponed so that it could be held in Petrozavodsk when we returned home. Preparations for travel took quite a while. We arrived in Petrozavodsk in August. The sight of the town was devastating. We couldn't believe our eyes. The town had been reduced to rubble, with countless buildings demolished. The University and Pedagogical Institute buildings had survived, but needed to be repaired thoroughly. The graduation ceremony was set for the end of August. I had some time to go home to see my mother. I hadn't heard from her for years and was anxiously waiting the moment I could hug her heartily.

I rushed to Olonets. The centre of the settlement was ruined. I walked to the familiar crossroads but didn't find the road to the commune. The road had disappeared. There was a grass-grown trail. I started to follow it. I walked and walked but didn't see any buildings ahead. Then at a distance I observed a group of women making hay. I turned towards them. Getting nearer I recognized them, and discovered mother among them. I ran to her, grasped her and held her tight. Everybody stopped mowing, and our eyes were filled with tears of joy. It was a heart-warming meeting. But as it happens sometimes, things alternate between joy and sorrow. When I wondered why I couldn't see the commune's buildings, a deathly silence set in. Then Olga said with a broken voice, "Vieno, there is no commune any more. The premises were burnt at the beginning of the war. Our people live now in the neighborhood villages and in Olonets. Mother had found housing in Olonets in an old two-story house. We went to her place and cooked a modest meal after which we told to each other our stories.

Mother recounted that soon after my departure for Petrozavodsk they were ordered to evacuate. They could take along only a few things, some essentials

they had packed in trunks and buried. Their journey was cut short by the Finnish troops advancing along the highway to the south. When they returned, the premises were on fire. The most heartrending was to hear cows bellowing in the burning cowsheds. Women rushed to free the poor animals and succeeded in saving some of them. The fire was set by one of the latest chairman, Onuyev, along with a couple of other men. How could they be so merciless to animals? Our buried trunks had been dug up and looted. Mother had hoped that I could somehow get back from the burning Petrozavodsk. The glow of the fire had reached even Olonets. During the war years she hadn't known what happened to me. Neither had she heard anything about father. I spent a couple of days with my mother and then left for Petrozavodsk.

Graduation

The graduation ceremony was held in the Finnish Drama Theatre. High ranking officials were present at the commencement. After the official ceremony a party was given. We enjoyed eating tasty foods which we hadn't seen for years. The Ministry of Education had granted our university a post for postgraduate studies. We two candidates—a young lady who was going to study Karelian folklore and me aiming to research the history of the Karelian language—had a stiff competition. There were three examinations to pass (the special subject, the history of the Communist Party and a foreign language). Academic ability was the last criterion for selection. I got the post. It seems that this time I was at the right place at the right time. There was an urgent need for a qualified specialist at the Finno-Ugric languages department and this circumstance had been the relevant factor in selection. The supervisor of my studies was academician D.V. Bubrikh. I was given two years to write my dissertation. I defended my thesis in time and was awarded an academic degree of Licentiate (in certain European and Canadian Universities, an academic degree between that of bachelor and that of a doctorate) and was appointed as a senior teacher of the Finnish language at the Finno-Ugric Department. The chairman was D.V. Bubrikh, whose full-time position was at Leningrad State University. In 1950 he gave up his position in our university, and I was promoted to the chairman position. In the 1960's the Finnish language was abolished as a state language, and the Finno-Ugric chair was closed. I was transferred to the Pedagogical Institute as a Chair in English.

In 1965 I retired and moved to Estonia. In 1989 I was permitted to visit my relatives in Finland. I moved from there to Canada. In 2014 I immigrated to Estonia to stay with my grandson's family. Living under a totalitarian regime in

an atmosphere of prohibitions and control when you are told what you can do and what you cannot and put in your place, people didn't feel safe and secure. Lacking even basic freedoms we lived under oppressive isolation. Listening to foreign broadcasts, corresponding with relatives and friends living abroad were prohibited, to say nothing of visiting them. I applied for years until I was permitted to visit relatives in Finland whom I had discovered. Moving out of the country was out of the question. These restrictions were loosened in Khrushchev's time when Jews were permitted to move to Israel and visiting permits were extended. Life alternated between joy and sorrow, a sometimes good things occurred while at other times difficulties caused us to suffer. We endured hardships and had struggles, but we also found pleasure in our lives. We took joy in all good relations we had, especially with our friends. We shared laughs, attended and threw parties with friends, and succeeded in our careers. One had to find a sound balance in life. My mother used to say, "You must take the rough with the smooth."

Different people had different attitudes about life. There were optimists, pessimists, and even fatalists. I was neither a pedantic optimist (cheering to everything) nor a consummate pessimist (seeing only the dark side of things) and far from a fatalist. I took life as it was, worked conscientiously in the fields of education, scientific research, and literature, along with translating books from Russian into Finnish and vice versa. I feel there was a purpose in my life and I contributed something to Karelian public education.

Judging the USSR on its merits one can say that some social services, security were provided, but there always appeared restrictions and the ruling caste was the one that who got the upper hand. Education was free but some institutes of higher education were open only to the privileged. But in a world of things beyond our control we can find circumstances that help us to achieve our goals. Among Finnish immigrants and their children were people who succeeded in getting higher educations and scientific degrees. They were those who were persistent, had inner strength, were optimistic, and didn't get discouraged by failures. They combined personal tenacity with opportunities created by the government. Medical care was free, but the elite had their own well-equipped clinics and hospitals. They did not have to queue for hours to make an appointment to see the doctor. Government officials and party bosses had special shops equipped with low priced groceries which average people couldn't even dream of. Social welfare wasn't affordable for farmers. They did not even have access to pensions.

My mother was sixty five years old when she moved to live with my family in Petrozavodsk. She arrived at our door with a sack over her shoulder which held all her worldly possessions. Mother didn't have a penny to her name from the government. This was the gratitude for decades of hard work. Responding

to her hurt feelings, I told her a white lie that her pension was deposited to our account. There were three of us in our family then. I had married a Russian young man, a border-guard in 1945. Our son was born a year later. After demobilization my husband, Mikhail, graduated from the university and worked as an English language teacher at school. He was a good sportsman, a weightlifter, and won several champion's title of the Karelian Republic. We were glad for the opportunity to support my mother.

Searching for My Father

We hoped that father would be released from prison. Hope is a wonderful emotion because it keeps us going even in the darkest times. I never gave up searching for my father. For years I sent letters to officials. I even sent a letter to O.W. Kuusinen, a President of the USSR. My letters weren't answered. It was not until 1956 (those were Khrushchev's times) that we received a death certificate recording that father had died in 1942 in a Moscow region prison of a heart attack. Afterwards it turned out not to be true. Those certificates sent to people were a pack of lies. To learn the truth I wrote a new letter, but again there was no answer. Only in 1992 when the communist regime had collapsed did we get a new death certificate. It listed the day of his death as February 4, 1938 and the cause as execution. My father was shot two months after his arrest. It is obvious that trial couldn't be held in such a short time. It was a lawless murder.

I went to Petrozavodsk (I was living in Canada then) to see his interrogation files. A friend of mine accompanied me to the KGB office. At the door an orderly officer asked us what brought us there. We said that we came to learn about my father's fate telling him that he had been arrested in 1937. The young man turned to face the dim hallway and yelled, "Here are two babushkas, ["grannies" a word for elderly women in Russia]. They have come in connection with 1937." A female officer arrived. She ushered us to a small room. I explained our situation to her. The officer brought my father's interrogation files. I started to read. Those two days were heart breaking. At the same time I was so proud of my father. He had stood firmly by his positions in spite of provocative questions by his inquisitors. He hadn't admitted to the charges and hadn't denounced anybody. I learned a lot about him by these actions. He had always had the courage of his convictions, and this didn't change at this dark moment. The commune had been his life's work. He had even written the commune's hymn.

I was given an address of the Military Tribunal of the Northern Military Region in Leningrad where I was told I could obtain a copy of my father's rehabilitation decision. I received an answer in which the Tribunal stated that my father was

sentenced to death by the NKVD and the public prosecutor of the USSR committee on January 7, 1938 on the grounds of affidavits given by seven "Säde" members (their names were mentioned). He was accused of being a participant in an anti-revolutionary organization, carrying out anti-Soviet nationalistic agitation, and pursuing a policy of stirring up hostility between Karelians and Finns.

These accusations were not confirmed when the case was revised. It had become clear that the testimonies of those people were unfounded. The members of "Säde" named Izotov, Ojala and Agafonov, the same man who had given unfounded affidavits, were interrogated at the revision. They testified that they hadn't heard any anti-Soviet comments uttered by Elis Ahokas and described him as one of the best members of the commune. However, it was no longer possible to question these six persons. Three of them had been purged and sentenced to death, and the three who had survived had since died. The Military Tribunal pointed out that there was not sufficient prove of guilt, the accusations being groundless. The NKVD and Public Prosecutor Committee decree of January 7, 1938 was revoked. My father had been rehabilitated. I was shocked when I finished reading the Tribunal's decree. That grievous injustice hurt too much. How could my father's workmates betray him? My faith in humanity was shaken. The death certificate didn't indicate the place of burial. In spite of my repeated inquiries, I still don't know where my father's remains are located. The places of burial of other arrested communards are also unknown.

The map of Russia is marked all over with a multitude of execution and mass burial places, like Somovo in the vicinity of Voronezh, where ten thousand people were executed in two years; the Bytovski training ground, called the Russian Golgotha, where bulldozers dug long trenches to bury daily about 500 bodies; the Golden Mountain near Chelyabinsk, where a shaft in an abandoned mine was filled with corpses; and the Levashovo Forest of Leningrad District, where almost 40,000 victims were buried, 13,000 of them Ingrian and other Finns.

In Karelia the secret burials of the victims of mass political repression were found in the Sandarmoh woods near Medvezhegorsk, a town on the Murmansk railroad. More than 9,500 people from 58 nationalities were executed and buried there. The condemned were stripped to their underwear, their arms and legs were tied with ropes, they were gagged, stacked into the backs of the trucks and taken to the execution pits, where they were put on their knees and shot in the forehead.

Long after these horrible events, the Government of the Republic of Karelia established the Sandarmoh Memorial Cemetery. A road was constructed, a chapel was built, and crosses were set up. The monument, a granite stone with sculptural bas-relief and writing: "People, do not kill each other." was unveiled on August 22, 1998. Another burial spot in Karelia is in the "Krasny Bor" wood close to Petrozavodsk on the Petrozavodsk-Voznesenye road. At that place 1,196

people were executed: 580 Finns, 432 Karelians, 136 Russians and 48 people from other nationalities. The memorial cemetery there was also opened in 1998. The monument was unveiled in 2006. On plates the Biblical citation is inscribed, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matt. 5:4)." It is written in Finnish, Karelian, Vepsian and Russian.

The evil deeds of the ruling villains who created those places of agony were large-scale. The total purge losses are numbered far over twenty million or 11% of the total population of the Soviet Union. These monstrous atrocities of Stalin's regime are incomprehensible. How was this possible? What were the root causes, the rationales, and the purposes of communist leaders who treated their own people so cruelly? Who on the earth were these leaders? Why wasn't this regime stopped either by Soviet citizens or by outside intervention?

The Soviet people lived in constant fear, were harshly controlled, and didn't dare express their true thoughts and beliefs. An atmosphere of public dread led to conformity, following the rules of the regime. The national media was totally controlled by the Communist Party, and thus there was no critical media to question government actions. The prominent Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in The Gulag Archipelago inquired: "Where does this wolf-tribe come from? Does it really stem from our own roots? Our own blood?" His response to these rhetorical questions was, "It is our own." The West didn't do anything to prevent the Soviet leadership from the persecution of its own people; on the contrary, Stalin's words were often taken at face value. I wonder why they didn't see through his words. The situation brings to mind the words of Edmund Burke, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." It is astounding how intelligent people were mesmerized by the "father of all nations" and sang praises to him.

The German writer Lion Feuchtwanger visited Russia in January, 1937. As a result of the trip he wrote the book Moscow 1937 describing the life of the Soviet people. He had found that they were merry and enthusiastic, while the intelligentsia approved of it wholeheartedly. Life was improving, and everybody was content and confident about the great future ahead. Feuchtwanger met Stalin and was fascinated by him. He noted that in speaking about freedom of the press and democracy Stalin demonstrated intelligence, contemplativeness, and a thorough knowledge of the subject. Stalin was depicted as a monumentally great organizer. The book was translated hurriedly into Russian to let Russians know how happy they were. Similar authors also failed to see the terror of the Soviet regime. The history of Stalin's terror, including the slaughtering of millions of people, has never been truly addressed in Russia. The criminals haven't been officially denounced and punished.

The Eastern European nations have settled their scores with their Stalinist past. The whole world knows about Hitler's concentration camps, and Holocaust,

but isn't informed to the same extent about Stalin's terror victims. During Remembrance Day some monuments honoring the victims of political repression have been established, but they aren't sufficient. Those murderous crimes of Stalin's brutal regime must be officially acknowledged, the culprits condemned.

The evil that was inflicted upon the country should never be forgotten. As Winston Churchill once said, "A nation that forgets its past has no future."

Regrettably True

Life seldom provides exactly what you hope it will bring to you. If the members of "Säde" had it their way, the commune would have succeeded. But they weren't allowed to achieve those goals. Their ideals were betrayed and they were doomed to destruction. The commune's buildings were burned to the ground. This devastating fire was the closing scene of the prosperous enterprise set up by very special, honest and industrious Finnish-Canadian idealists who played a major role in the development of the Karelian Republic in its early days. They should be listed among the people worth of recognition. One can't help but think about the ironies of life. Nothing is left of the successful commune. The fields have reverted to scrub, and the place has reverted to the same thicket that it was when the communards arrived there. Only memories are left, some sweet, some heartbreaking.

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Vieno Zlobina

Their Ideals Were Crushed

A Daughter's Story of the Säde Commune in Soviet Karelia

As a young girl, Vieno Zlobina moved with her parents from Cobalt in Canada to Soviet Karelia, and tells the story of an idealistic Finnish community, the Säde Commune (säde means 'ray of light'), from its foundation, through the years when it flourished, to its final destruction. Vieno's family, like all the members of the Säde Commune, belonged to a wave of around 6500 people who left North America for the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, to build the new socialist society. After an enthusiastic and promising beginning, the migrants gradually came face to face with the Soviet regime of terror. Only two of the men in the original community survived. Parallel with this history, Vieno tells the wider story of the Finnish Soviet Republic in Karelia, a story which traces the same arc as that of the Commune: a flourishing beginning, and a violent end.

In Vieno Zlobina's autobiography, she offers from the perspective of the women and children a detailed account of everyday life: school, leisure, studies, and language questions. The determined daughter of hard-working parents, she overcame the obstacles in her way to become a respected linguist and university teacher in the Soviet Union. Now 97, and living in Pärnu in Estonia, Vieno Zoblina honours her parents by sharing the Commune's story, within the wider context of the history of Soviet Karelia.

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